

1089. *Mr. Skellon.*] Of course, if a high explosive were used, and the deputies were to charge the hole, the deputies would have to do the tamping?—No. Everything should be done to insure safety.

1090. *Mr. Proud.*] Would it be practicable to introduce the panel system here?—No; the bord-and-pillar system seems to work very well. We have a large margin of safety.

1091. Could you not drive gateways to the boundary, and work the face back by jads or lifts? The roll in the strata would not allow of that.

1091A. The explosion appears to have exhausted itself in the old workings behind the electric motor?—Yes.

1092. Have you any other suggestions to make?—I think strong representations should be made with regard to the disposal of the funds collected for these accidents. There is a large fund accumulating, and no provision is made for the wives and children of the men killed in ordinary accidents in the mines, such as by falls in the roof. I think some provision ought to be made to relieve these cases also from the large fund now accumulating.

The Commission adjourned at a quarter to 4 o'clock p.m.

INSPECTOR MCGOVERN examined.

In reply to the Chairman, Inspector McGovern said he was in charge of the Nelson and Westland Police District. He received no precept regarding the inquest after the accident in the Brunner Mine. There were numbers of miners available for service on the jury who were not employed at the time. He saw them in Court, and heard them give evidence that they had not been employed. The inquest was adjourned to the 15th of June, on application of the foreman of the jury. The Coroner was about to adjourn the inquiry for a week when the request was made, as the experts could not be ready with the plan sooner, to adjourn to the 15th June. He got a telegram from Mr. Stratford asking him to get all the evidence together—this was on the same day as the accident.

HENRY ANDREW GORDON examined.

1093. *Mr. Park.*] What are you, Mr. Gordon?—Inspecting Engineer for the Mines Department.

1094. What experience have you had in mines?—About forty-three years.

1095. You know the Brunner Mine?—Yes.

1096. You know that there was an explosion there on the 26th March?—Yes.

1097. Did you at the request of any one make an examination of the mine?—I came from Wellington on the Monday after the accident, and went into the mine on that day to examine it.

1098. Did you take charge of the mine?—No.

1099. What did you come down for?—To endeavour to ascertain the cause of the explosion.

1100. And you made a thorough examination?—We could not make a thorough examination that day. The mine was not safe; it required to be put into order before we could make a thorough examination. It wanted ventilating. Stoppings were put in, and the ventilation restored before we could examine the mine.

1101. How far did you go down?—To the water-level. In the lowest level there was water, and we could not get into it excepting at one end. There was a truck standing at the end of the level on rails; the truck was in the water.

1102. Did you go down to there and return?—We followed the workings down the east face.

1103. *Sir J. Hector.*] Who was with you?—Messrs. Brown, Lindop, Scott, Hayes I think was with us the first day, Cochrane, and two miners.

1104. *Mr. Park.*] Did you make an examination of the eastern workings?—We made an examination, but could not find anything that day that would clearly have caused the explosion. Then we decided to get the ventilation restored before going down again. We went down again two or three days afterwards.

1105. And did you find the cause of the explosion?—No doubt the cause of the explosion was a blown-out shot in No. 4 bord. The hole was there, and it showed the coal coked all around it. Rails had been laid in that particular place. The coking was excessive in that bord.

1106. Did you notice the extraordinary coking before you found the hole?—The hole was found before I came. I believe Brown found it. I was at Kumara when the hole was found; it was the day I came back that I went down to see this particular place.

1107. Did you make an examination of the western side of the main dip?—Yes; but I could not see anything to show what was the cause of the explosion.

1108. Did it appear as though the force of the explosion had come from the east side of the incline, and had travelled into the west side?—Yes.

1109. Did you notice if it appeared to get stronger away to the far west or less?—Less as it got to the west. [Witness indicated on the plan the direction the explosion, in his opinion, took.] There was an immense quantity of dust lying in the incline.

1110. Did it blow out all the stoppings?—Yes.

1111. What do you think of those stoppings?—They were safe enough.

1112. I suppose if they had not been blown out the blast would have gone up the main incline to the top?—Yes.

1113. And have wrecked the machinery at the mouth of the pit?—The force would have broken almost any kind of stoppings that could be put in the pit.

1114. It is said that the mine is one that has a rising floor and a falling roof, and for that reason the stoppings made of crib are the best that could be used?—They make a very good stopping.

1115. Had you been at the mine before, or at any other time?—I have been there several times.