

233. And they came together below?—Yes.
234. And did that cause any fall of earth?—Yes.
235. Did the bricks slip when the sills were taken out at the bottom?—Yes; they slipped all over, top and bottom as well.
236. *Mr. Flatman.*] You say the sills were not taken out at the King-country tunnel?—No.
237. Was the same Inspector with you at each tunnel?—No.
238. A different Inspector in the King-country?—Yes.
239. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] Is it the centre sill that they insisted on taking out, not the bottom one?—There was only one.
240. The centre sill?—It was the sole-plate underneath that had to come out, because it was of no use.
241. *Mr. Blow.*] The witness stated that the sills were not removed in the tunnel in the King-country. (To witness.) Was there an invert to that tunnel?—No.
242. You say that Mr. Witheridge unduly interfered with the contractors. Can you indicate in what manner he interfered?—In taking up those sills.
243. Is this paragraph in the report a fair statement: "The contractors must be aware that the Inspector has never interfered in their way of timbering, only when it came to a question of building these sills into the brickwork. Neither the Inspector nor I myself considered it advisable, and, as I stated, it could easily have been avoided." Is that paragraph a correct statement of the case?—No; I do not think it is.
244. Will you say how it is incorrect?—I do not see how he could possibly take out the sills and keep the brickwork up.
245. You stated that the other men employed in charge of shifts—Smith and Hunter—were experienced men. What knowledge have you of their experience?—I think Smith has been an old miner in the South Island. We all worked in the tunnel in the King-country.
246. Then you all came from Brittain's contract?—Yes.
247. *Mr. McLean.*] I would just ask Mr. Clemow whether there was any heavy ground besides the 5 chains you speak of at both ends of the tunnel?—We came upon patches.
248. Quite sufficient to cause you to be particularly careful and attend to the timbering in a proper manner?—Yes.
- [On the motion of Mr. Flatman, the Committee at this stage adjourned.]

MONDAY, 13TH DECEMBER, 1897.

ORLANDO WELLS, shipwright, Onehunga, gave the following evidence on behalf of the petitioners in reply to questions put to him by Mr. M. McLean:—

1. *Mr. McLean.*] For how long a period have you been engaged in working on engineering contracts?—I have been following contracting off and on for the last fifteen years.
2. You were employed by me on the Makarau Tunnel, were you not?—Yes.
3. In various positions?—Yes.
4. And were working in the tunnel for a considerable time?—Yes.
5. For how long?—From eight to ten months.
6. You were in charge of a shift of men when the slip took place?—Yes.
7. How long were you in charge of this shift?—In charge of that one for three months; but I was in charge of another for the balance of the time.
8. In connection with the work, I myself did the full general supervision, and was in and out at different times during the day and night, and standing attending to the work?—That is correct.
9. Who were the other shift-bosses at the time?—Jack Russell and James McKay.
10. Were both these experienced men?—Yes.
11. For how long had they been working on the tunnel?—McKay, from the start; Russell, I could not say.
12. Was the length taken out in a proper manner, and were the bars well put in and propped and supported in the usual manner?—Undoubtedly.
13. In fact, it was secured in every possible way; the bars were well strutted, and the poling-boards were all put in in a proper manner?—Yes.
14. What, in your opinion, was the cause of this breakdown that took place?—In my opinion, the cause was that we had no support to carry the back end of the bars, only the crown brickwork; the sill had been taken out previously. Consequently the whole weight was on the brickwork.
15. You talk about throwing the weight on the crown brickwork; but under that brickwork were not the laggings, the sills, and everything supporting the brickwork in at the time?—They were never taken out until the side walls were bricked up.
16. So that the brickwork was supported at the time, but the sill was taken out?—Yes.
17. Was it a general order from Witheridge that these sills should be taken out?—Yes.
18. Witheridge was the inspector of the work?—Yes.
19. Had they been taken out before bricking up to this point?—To my knowledge, not one of the sills was built in the tunnel during the time I was there.
20. So that the sills had all been taken out, as far as you know, up to this point?—Yes; as far as I know.
21. Did Witheridge, in your opinion, unduly interfere with the carrying-out of the work?—Well, if you refer to insisting on the sills being taken out, I should say he did.
22. Did you, during the bricking-up, or at any other times when you knew that there was great weight on the supports, hear Witheridge say that there was no weight on them, and ridicule us for thinking so?—Yes; many times.