

experience Mr. Witheridge had, if you are able to state it to the Committee?—I may explain that the work we wanted an Inspector for did not consist wholly of this. It consisted of general work in the Auckland District—buildings, railways, roads, and, in fact, any works that might be in progress there. Mr. Witheridge was not employed specially at this one thing.

138. But at this difficult period of the work Mr. Witheridge was sent away and another man came with large experience and carried the work successfully through to an end? I do not think Mr. McGonagle had anything to do with carrying the work through. As an Inspector he would simply be there and see the work done; he neither directed nor had anything to do with the actual work going on.

139. I quite understand that; but he undertook the work at a difficult time and inspected it until the end?—Yes.

140. And saw it properly carried out?—Yes.

141. And he was brought in in place of Mr. Witheridge, who was removed? And he was the Inspector from that difficult period until the end of the work?—But he was not brought there specially in connection with the tunnel: that was a secondary consideration altogether. It was only part of the work he had to attend to in the Auckland District; and the contract was not going on at the time the change was made.

142. *Mr. Flatman.*] Then, the position held by Mr. McGonagle and by Mr. Witheridge on this particular work was in both cases of the same class?—Yes.

143. Do you consider Mr. McGonagle was more experienced in tunnel-work than Mr. Witheridge?—I do not think Mr. Witheridge had had much experience in tunnel-work; Mr. McGonagle I know had.

144. You practically admit that Mr. McGonagle was the more experienced man in tunnel-work of the two?—I believe he had been more on tunnel-work than Mr. Witheridge.

145. Was not this in your mind when you changed these men?—Not at all—never thought of, because this work was standing still. The Inspector was not sent there at all to this work. When the work commenced again he, being there in the Auckland District, was put on as Inspector. This particular work had nothing to do with the change at all.

146. You have stated to the Committee that the borings are put down for the information of the Engineers in making calculations?—Yes.

147. What information was gathered from this particular boring that was put down?—The information gathered was that there was sandstone rock at 10 ft. from the surface.

148. But the boring was not on the line?—This boring was made two years before.

149. You took no notice whatever of this boring then?—No.

150. What was the reason then of putting down the boring?—To inform the Engineer what kind of ground he had under him. This survey was only a trial survey.

151. You admit it was the correct thing to put that boring down?—I do not admit that at all.

152. You say you got sandstone 10 ft. down in this boring?—That is what the note says.

153. What was the distance between the level of where this boring was started and the lower level of the tunnel?—I could not say that without the section was developed. The country is very uneven there; you could not tell at all.

154. I do not see what information you got at all if you did not know that?—We only went to find out what was under the surface.

155. Then, if you found out what was on the top you could judge what was at the bottom?—Oh, no, we could not. We were guided altogether, in forming this advance-plan, by the appearance of the surface.

156. I understood you to say that very few borings were put down in New Zealand?—Yes, for tunnels.

157. Have shafts been sunk instead of borings being put down?—Not down to the level of the tunnel.

158. They have been sunk, then, to gain information?—Only down to the rock, to see at what depth the rock was.

159. If you found no rock you would never have stopped sinking, then?—We would not have sunk very far in that case, any way.

160. How long had the cutting that slipped—at the north end of the tunnel, I think—how long had the work of that been finished before the slip at the time of the heavy rains?—About three years, I should think.

161. In your opinion that slip was entirely due to the weight of the water?—To the accumulation of water, I suppose, as much as anything.

162. And could that water have been prevented from settling at the back of it if proper drains had been cut?—I could not say that, because I did not examine the ground at the time.

163. *Mr. Lawry.*] It has been alleged that Mr. Witheridge unduly interfered with the contractors. Is that so?—I am not aware of it. I had no intimation from the contractors or anybody else about it.

164. Did he ever interfere except on minor questions on his own responsibility?—We never got any report as to the interference of Mr. Witheridge with the contractors.

165. Is it not almost an invariable rule that an Inspector derives his instructions from his superior officer?—That is so.

166. And was there any departure from that general principle in connection with the construction of the tunnel?—I should think not.

167. Then the heads of the department—we will say you or Mr. Blow—are responsible for everything Mr. Witheridge did?—Yes, that is so, in accordance with the terms of the contract.

168. *The Chairman.*] Do you know whether the petitioners were furnished with copies of the general conditions and specification before tendering?—These were exhibited at a place where the intending contractors could see them.