

the river or the railway. My plan embodied the connection with Westport by railway. I never countenanced the river.

16. What was your output?—We put out an average of 44,000 tons for the five years we were working, which was more than we were bound to do by the terms of our lease, and we were the one company in the country that did so. The total output up to September, 1899, was a few tons under 220,000.

17. What is the length of the railway?—From seven to eight miles.

18. Was any special siding put in for the company?—The company put in a siding from the Mokihinui Company's mine to our bins. There was a private line known as the Mokihinui Company's line, which was purchased by the Government for £12,000 odd.

19. About how many men were the company able to employ?—At the time we knocked off an average of about ninety men and boys. It was sometimes a hundred, and sometimes a little less.

20. Why did you knock off?—That is a very important question, and one which will have to be put directly to the control in Christchurch.

21. Was it after the fire began?—No; the fire did not start until January, 1900. Personally I was opposed to knocking off, but I was only acting as agent.

22. What was the cause understood to be?—The company were trying to get concessions from the Government, to enable them to raise more capital, in the direction of having the deficiency clause of the Westport-Ngakawau Extension Act repealed, so as to relieve us of the liability to pay any deficiency on interest. That has now been repealed. If it had been done at the time it would have been of material assistance to the company in the carrying-on of their operations. Another thing we asked for, and which we are still asking for in the interests of the industry, is an adjustment of the haulage-rate, to enable the Mokihinui field to be profitably worked without fear of undue competition.

23. Did the company pass a resolution simply saying that it would cease to work?—The directors passed the resolution. I must add that we were making no profit at the actual time we knocked off.

24. Had you ever paid a dividend?—No. I wish to emphasize my answer in fairness to the company: We always spent our money in developing the property, and paid no dividends, although we made a profit of nearly £5,000 one year. We spent the money in further developments and plant. Then, Mr. Broome, our manager and engineer, reported that we could not rely upon getting any certain quantity of hard coal. That is another reason that weighed with the company in suspending operations. I think, notwithstanding our disappointments with regard to getting concessions, if there had been any quantity of hard coal we should have gone on.

25. Have you any reason to doubt the correctness of Mr. Broome's statement?—It is a very delicate question, which I think I shall refrain from answering. A doubt has arisen. I believe there is evidence to show that there were three faces of hard coal; but whether my information is correct I cannot state. I am not a coal expert. My work had to do with the local agency part of the business. I was credibly informed that there were three faces where there was hard coal.

26. There was a difference of opinion on the subject?—Yes, there was a local difference of opinion.

27. What did the company do when they ceased work: did they give notice to the Government?—Yes, they gave notice some months before that they would knock off unless they got the concession. The men were also informed of the danger of our not being able to carry on, when we found that we were not working to a profit, and they set to work to help us, but they were just as helpless as we were, and were unsuccessful.

28. Was the mine closed up?—Yes.

29. Was it barricaded?—No, it was kept open; and Mr. Broome remained in charge until January, 1900. His engagement terminated in that month. He left here on the 28th January, as far as my recollection serves me.

30. Was any other man there?—Mr. Broome's brother, a clerk, was employed by the company. Peter Martin was also employed there by the company in keeping the plant in order.

31. The rolling-stock and gear were kept in order?—Yes, up to the last, so far as we were concerned, until the fire came. It was kept in perfect order, and we spared no expense in doing so.

32. On what date did the fire break out?—During the last days of January, 1900, I believe. It was on a Sunday. At the time of the fire, so far as I know, the company had only Mr. Roland Broome in charge. Mr. McKenzie, the railway Traffic Manager, sent me a note about 7 o'clock in the evening, asking me if I knew that the Cardiff Mine was on fire. That was on Sunday, 28th January. I immediately came to the office and telephoned through and found it was the case. Peter Martin answered me at the telephone, and I discovered, very much to my surprise, that there was practically no responsible person there. Mr. Roland Broome, who had come into town on the Thursday, had only returned that afternoon on being given news of the fire. Martin was one of our men employed at the mine, and Mitchell was our underground man in charge.

33. Was Mitchell there on pay?—I think not. I told Martin to go down and get him.

34. You do not know whether Martin or Mitchell was on pay?—Mitchell was not. I am not certain about Martin. I told both men to hang on there—that Messrs. Tennent and Broome would be there in about half an hour from Westport. I then learned further that the mine was on fire. I reflected as to what was the best thing to be done in the interests of the company, and I filled in that gap by going to Mr. Jamieson, agent of the Westport Coal Company, and asking him for the services of a man. I think I mentioned Mr. Murray, telling him, of course, that the mine was on fire, and that I wanted the best assistance I could get, and particularly an experienced