

304. You in no sense act as a supervisor of the work of the Inspectors of Mines ?—Not officially, no. I have no instruction to act as a supervisor. I have no orders to control these gentlemen, nor even to consult with them.

305. Have you any power of supervising the work of the Inspectors of Mines ?—I have no official power.

306. And have you any private power ?—We all should have the personal equation.

307. Do you exercise the personal equation by going down a mine ?—I do not interfere with the Inspector in performing his statutory duties.

308. Have you any power, official or private, to supervise the work of the Inspectors of Mines ?—No, I have not. I may take it upon myself to investigate and form an opinion.

309. But that is valueless to the public because you do not report it ?—I report it when desirable to my chief.

310. You form your opinions as to their ability ?—I keep my opinion to myself.

311. Do you report it to the Under-Secretary ?—Do you think I would write sneakingly ?

312. That is not an official opinion ?—Absolutely not.

313. Then, so far as the supervision by you of the work of the Inspectors of Mines is concerned, your services are of no value to the public ?—The supervision—that is rather vague. If I am requested to report upon a matter I do so. If I find a defect I report it if it is something I consider worthy of reporting. That is my duty.

314. I want to know whether, so far as your official duties are concerned, any value is obtained in the way of supervising the work of inspection ?—I have no authority to supervise the Inspectors of Mines, but I think the Inspecting Engineer may when the new Bill is passed into law.

315. Therefore, it is correct to say that the work of the Inspectors of Mines have not been supervised ?—I say that they are under the direction and control of the Under-Secretary for Mines.

316. Except by the Under-Secretary ?—He may consult me, and I give him my assistance.

317. I want to know what is the nature of the supervision of the work of the Inspectors ?—They are controlled by nobody but the Under-Secretary for Mines.

318. Does the Under-Secretary visit the Mines ?—No, not often.

319. Is the Under-Secretary a technical mining engineer ?—No.

320. He is the civil administrator of the Department ?—Yes ; the permanent head.

321. How often have you been asked to report to the Under-Secretary during the last three years as to the condition of the Taupiri Mine ?—I have not been asked once during the last three years, but I have written voluntarily eight letters since I knew of the previous explosions. I have also reported the company for escaping, in my opinion, the payment of royalty.

322. Then you are also a debt-collector ?—I was asked by the Government to find out the companies which were evading payment of royalty on coal, and I believed that the Taupiri Company had been working Crown land without payment of royalty. They were, in my opinion, behindhand in certain payments. I was asked to make that investigation, and I did.

323. Do you suggest that they were defrauding the Crown ?—Not defrauding the Crown, but they were a bit backward in their payments.

324. You had to hurry on the payment of the accounts ?—I was asked to look into the matter, and did so.

325. Did you tell the Commission that among your other duties was to advise the Under-Secretary in regard to problems on mining matters ?—General problems—from water-races to applications for subsidies and grants. I am also on the Board of Examiners and several other Boards for the examination of mine officials, engine-drivers, schools of mines, &c.

326. They are not problems ?—Sometimes they are problems to me.

327. May we take it that the security of human life is certainly the most important problem ?—Yes.

328. You have to deal with that problem so far as the New Zealand Mines Department is concerned ?—Absolutely no. I volunteered this information about this mine gratuitously. I discovered it accidentally.

329. Your information was given thoroughly voluntarily ?—Yes.

330. What do you mean by gratuitously ?—My chief did not ask me to write those letters regarding the danger at Ralph's Mine. I did it without his request.

331. Did you consider it was part of your duty ?—I did.

332. Then you were performing your official duties ?—Well, being an official of the Department, when I received this information I communicated with my chief on the subject.

333. Did you consider it was the right and proper thing to do ?—I would not have done it unless I had.

334. May we consider this, then, that so far as the safety of human life is concerned, you would always consider it your duty to look after it ?—Yes, I have done so. If I see the danger I will go out of my way to draw my chief's attention to it.

335. If you have not inspected this mine for three years, and not often during the previous four years, you knew nothing about it ?—I have been down when they were driving the crosscut to Taupiri West shaft.

336. Prior to three years ago ?—Yes. The Inspector of Mines prosecuted the company for insecure pillars, as the company would not do as the Inspector asked. The company broke the law, and got off by the skin of its teeth, I think.

337. The case was dismissed ?—Yes ; but the company rectified matters afterwards by connecting up with the Taupiri West shaft. I came up and saw that it did so.