

200. Are not the ends of bords Nos. 4, 5, and 6 higher than the line on which the mixture becomes explosive in those bords?—To the best of my belief. The ends of those bords 4, 5, and 6 are the highest points in the panel which I have marked in green lines upon the plan, and that panel represents the area affected, but I would like to say that I am not counting the tops of the falls, which are higher than the faces of the bords.

201. Was there any sign after the explosion of their having been any bratticing or any form of conducting pipes for taking the air into those old workings, and especially into bords 4, 5, and 6?—Within the area in bords 4, 5, and 6 which I have marked in green on plan AA, the air is certainly short-circuited. The panel which I have marked in green line upon the plan shows no doors or stoppings by which air could have been directed up the bords. Therefore if the plan is correct the whole of that air was short-circuited, and the surveyor has shown upon the plan in arrows that it is short-circuited. They are red arrows put upon the plan by the surveyor of the company showing it to be short-circuited.

202. Was there any sign of bratticing having been in those bords Nos. 4, 5, and 6?—I saw no signs of it, and I examined three times most carefully.

203. Is there any sign of staging upon which the bratticing could have been carried?—The only bratticing I saw was brand new bratticing up to the fall in No. 5 bord. It was placed there between my visits after the explosion.

204. On the course that the explosion travelled, where there had been bratticing did any part of the staging still remain?—Yes, nearly the whole of the staging, and the brattice was torn in shreds but hanging thereto in places.

205. Can you trace the brattice or the staging along the course of the explosion?—Yes, wherever I went in the new workings, but there never is any brattice maintained in the old workings.

206. When you estimated something like 350,000 cubic feet of gaseous mixture in the bords, that was after the explosion?—Six days after the explosion.

207. Are you satisfied that the amount that you then measured did not represent the amount that had been given off in those six days?—That is my firm belief.

208. It is a fact that in the air you took samples there was no afterdamp—that there had been a through current of air which had carried away the afterdamp as well as the gas?—Some current of air—whether it was a through current or a side current I could not say.

209. The door which opens into No. 6 is placed at the highest part of No. 6?—Yes.

210. And therefore if a man entered that bord by that door he would come in where the mixture was strongest?—If he entered through the door, yes, providing the door was ordinarily close fitting.

211. If a man entered at the opposite end of bord No. 6, it being lower than the entrance where the door is, the mixture would be weaker?—Yes.

212. And as he ascended towards the door, the mixture would become stronger?—Yes, provided there the accumulation reaches to the top and the door is closed.

213. Is it necessary, in your opinion, that these old workings should be protected by locked doors, or fences, or both?—If the doors are intended to keep people out they should be locked as required by special rule, and if they are intended to admit some air they should be fitted with ventilators and regulators so that each bord would have its proper air-supply. The air would then be distributed through the whole section, instead of being sent by the shortest way only. I would not trust a fence in any dangerous ground. I consider that the doors should be locked, and there should also be danger notices threatening the men with prosecution for trespass.

214. *Mr. Napier.*] Would you please tell us what are your official duties in regard to State coal-mines?—I am Consulting Engineer for the Department in regard to State coal-mines.

215. You consult with whom?—With the Under-Secretary whenever he requires advice in connection with the State collieries.

216. Supposing we confine your description of your duties to those regarding the coal-mines?—I am on the Board of Examiners for all mining officials. I am consulted regarding State coal matters.

217. I want to know what are your duties with regard to privately owned coal-mines?—I have no statutory duties at all. I do what the Under-Secretary tells me to do. If he wants me to report upon a special subject I do so. I am not authorized to communicate direct with my colleagues the Inspectors of Mines. I am not authorized to write an official letter to anybody in New Zealand or to my colleagues; all correspondence goes through my chief—the Under-Secretary for Mines. If I notice anything alarming, such as this Taupiri case, or if I have any special matter regarding the safety of the mines, &c., to report, I address my chief, the Under-Secretary. If I see anything that should be reported in connection with the inspection I write to the Under-Secretary, and draw his attention to any officer who I think is not performing his duty. Sometimes I may draft the letter, but it always goes through the Under-Secretary. If I find that a mine is using dangerous explosives, such as this Taupiri Company is using—flame-producing explosives—I communicate with my chief, and he writes to the Inspector of Mines for the district advising him what to do, which is generally repeating my request, but I have no official position as regards the Inspectors. I am consulted by my chief, and I advise him to the best of my knowledge. I also examine miners who are applicants for certificates of competency upon the safety provisions, together with my other colleagues on the Board. I edit the Mines Department annual report for Parliament. I am editor of the Government mines report upon all coal and gold mines. I prepare and collect all statistics of all mines in New Zealand, both coal and gold mines. I have to do with most of the problems in connection with mining matters, such as roads on goldfields and subsidies for mining fields. These matters are frequently referred to me.

218. Is that a fair summary of your duties?—In the main. There may be other matters of detail, but that is the general outline of my work.

219. Among your duties are you required to report as to whether the Inspectors of Mines are doing their duty?—If I am asked to report as to their duty, I would do so. If I see defects, such as I