

The UNDER-SECRETARY for MINES to MESSRS. CHAPMAN and STRODE.

GENTLEMEN—

Wellington, 12th March, 1884.

I am directed by the Minister of Mines to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th ultimo upon the subject of an inquiry into the circumstances of the stoppage of the Shag Point Coal Mine, and, in reply, to inform you that, after having carefully considered the matter, it does not appear to Mr. Rolleston that any action which can now be taken will afford a remedy or reinstate the mine in its former position, the time when inquiry might have been applied for, such as that contemplated by the Regulation of Mines Act, having passed.

Under all the circumstances, therefore, and seeing that the Inspector of Mines has not exceeded the powers conferred upon him in terms of the license held by the company, or such as would ordinarily be exercised by him under the provisions of the Regulation of Mines Act, the Government is now unable to comply with the request for a Commission of inquiry not provided for by the Act.

I have, &c.,

OLIVER WAKEFIELD,

Under-Secretary for Mines.

Messrs. Chapman and Strode, Dunedin.

Messrs. CHAPMAN and STRODE to the Hon. the MINISTER of MINES.

SIR,—

Dunedin, 20th March, 1884.

We have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 12th instant, in which you inform us that our request for a Commission of inquiry cannot be granted, "it not being provided for by the Act."

We cannot help expressing our surprise and regret that so serious a calamity to both public and private interests should be so lightly passed over, and so technical a reason given for not allowing an inquiry to take place.

We do not expect that any action which can now be taken will afford a remedy or reinstate the mine, but we respectfully submit that, when private individuals have expended large sums of money in opening up an industry of public importance, as has been done by the Shag Point Colliery Company, they have a right to expect some consideration at the hands of the Government, and to expect that an inquiry at least should be instituted into the acts of their officer under whose direction and decision they were compelled to act.

We submit, moreover, that, should it be proved that the disaster to the mine has been caused by the Inspector's directions having been followed, the Government may fairly be expected to compensate the proprietors to some extent for their loss.

We may add, further, that the proprietors are most anxious to avoid any litigation, and would submit to their loss should it be shown that Mr. Binns was right in the course he directed them to take; but, if the Government thinks it right to refuse their most reasonable request for an inquiry into the action of their officer, they must take such steps to enforce their claims as they may be advised. They trust, however, that the Minister will admit the justice of their claim to have an inquiry instituted, and will therefore reconsider the determination conveyed in your letter.

We are, &c.,

CHAPMAN and STRODE.

The Hon. the Minister of Mines, Wellington.

The UNDER-SECRETARY for MINES to MESSRS. CHAPMAN and STRODE.

GENTLEMEN,—

Mines Department, Wellington, 25th March, 1884.

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 20th instant, in further reference to the subject of an inquiry into the circumstances connected with the stoppage of the works at the Shag Point Coal Mine, and, in reply, to inform you that Mr. Rolleston does not see any reason to alter his previous decision.

I have, &c.,

H. J. H. ELLIOTT,

Under-Secretary.

Messrs. Chapman and Strode, Dunedin.