

that crossed the creek to connect with the tunnel is washed out by the late flood; also the bridge to the Big Seam Mine is in a very bad state of repair, and may be washed out by flood at any time. After a series of most careful examinations of the workings, all the evidence collected leads to the conclusion that improvement in the quality of the coal, and economy in working this section of the coalfield, are very unfavourable.

*Hut Seam Mine.*—The Hut Seam, situated directly on the east side of Coal Creek, is entered by two dip-headings, which serve for haulage and pumping, and the other as a second outlet and return air-way. The haulage-road is driven from the cliff about 75° south-east. It has a sandstone roof, and is timbered throughout to 6 ft. in height by 10 ft. in width. The gradient is irregular, but will not exceed 1 in 5. The thickness of the seam is unknown, but from what I have seen the best part is next to the roof. The water to be pumped rises chiefly from the floor in the face of the bottom bords on the north side, and is not increased by rains. After examination of the outcrops about 100 yards north and south of the dip-heading the coal-seam shows evidence of severe downward displacement, which places the present tunnel in an impracticable position to work the Hut Seam from either side of these faults. The magnitude of these faults is further proved by the faulty and soft character of the coal, as seen in the present faces on both sides of the heading. In each of the nine bords on the north side the coal bears the same character—viz., faulty, soft, and intermixed with stone. Along the outcrop where the coal is of better quality the faces are worked furthest in advance, and are showing downward movement. On the south side of dip-heading in the 4 ft. seam which overlies the Hut Seam only one face has been set off. The roof in this face shows a downthrow fault, and the coal is utterly useless. Opinion goes that by driving the heading a further distance into the terrace that coal of a better quality may be found. The facts are against such theory, and may not be accepted as practicable. Firstly, the Hut Seam may pinch out where the roof stone has pinched out. Secondly, the facts proved—that coal of marketable value does not exist during the whole distance the dip-heading has been driven—is sufficient evidence on that point. Collecting the facts that can be gathered in the mine, my opinion is that the two faults above referred to are gradually drawing together, and would ultimately cut off the heading should it be continued.

Considering this matter to be one of great importance to this mining district, I have gone most carefully into every detail that was at my command, and weighed the subject to the best of my experience, in which the result of my notes are condensed in the following:—

*Big Seam Mine.*—Practically all available coal is worked out, unless westward to the dip. There are a few pillars in the district through which the tunnel to the upper mine is cut, but removal of these pillars would cut off all means of ingress to that mine. Further, the large amount of slack coal produced would leave a very small percentage of marketable coal to cover necessary developments.

*Upper Mine.*—The large flat that forms the section of the lease may be considered coal-bearing for a very considerable distance towards the ranges, but the soft character, together with the thin or shallow cover that overlies the coal, are the most unfavourable features. Should good coal be discovered, it would be necessary from a practical and economical point to convey the coal from the mine to the loading-station on the Government railway by a system of rope-haulage.

*Hut Seam Mine.*—I have endeavoured to be very pointed and plain in my remarks on this district. As regards the pumping of the water, I would certainly recommend to the Hon. Minister of Mines that this work be ceased at once, and all movable plant be removed from the mine to a place of safety, as the conditions are practically unfavourable for mining operations to be carried on with success.

For future mining operations, extensive development or prospecting works must be carried out in borings or sinkings, with the view to discover coal of marketable value in other sections of the coalfield.

I have, &c.,

R. TENNANT,

Inspector of Mines.

The Under-Secretary, Mines Department, Wellington.

SIR,—

Westport, 9th June, 1899.

*Re Mokihinui Colliery, via Westport:* In accordance with instructions received, I have visited this colliery in company with Mr. Tennant, the Inspector of Mines for the district; and also on a second occasion with the caretaker and Mr. Tressman, of Seddonville, the latter being one of those interested in the formation of a co-operative company to undertake coal-mining at Mokihinui. I have also seen Mr. Foster, at Denniston, as desired by the Right Hon. the Premier.

At my interview with Mr. Foster I gathered information as follows:—

(1.) That there are parties wishful to form a co-operative mining company, and lease the Mokihinui Colliery property from the Government, provided the conditions are favourable.

(2.) This co-operative company when formed would consist principally of working miners, some of whom are said to have saved money. The conduct of the undertaking would be somewhat on the lines of a co-operative store, but the company would look for a good share of the coal-supply to the Government railways and steamers. [Memo.—This is a matter which the Government would no doubt consider in its relation to the reasonable distribution of its coal orders in other parts of the colony, and especially to mines already working on Crown lands.]

(3.) That a valuation should be made of the mining plant, and a rental charged for its use—such rental being based on a system similar to that adopted under the Advances to Settlers Act, whereby principal and interest are both paid off together during an agreed term, the plant ultimately becoming the property of the lessees. [Memo.—The plant would have to be kept in satisfactory condition till totally paid for.]

(4.) The parties interested appear to be agreed that boring or other means of prospecting