8A. *Mr. Smith.*] It is very frail?—Yes; of course, much of it is much softer than that. It would not stand shipment. That is how it was the company gave up operations, I understand.

9. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] But there is no fire in the part of the mine which this came from?—No. I simply produce this sample of coal to show the class of stuff which the company was working when operations were suspended. Nearer the main entrance, at what is known as the North block, there is a small patch of faulted coal, a considerable part of which appears to have been worked out.

10. Which do you call the main entrance?—By the main entrance to the mine I mean the one next Seddonville. That is really the entrance into the whole mine system. There is a block there known as the North block, which appears to be considerably faulted, and I should say that something more than one-half of the area of coal has been worked out. Then, between the main haulage-road and the Hector block there are a few acres of coal which Mr. Broome described to me and on his plan as a soft-coal area—this unsaleable stuff. I think that had it been otherwise he would have worked it, and not left it there. So the question of the present fire, to my mind, does not affect any considerable extent of marketable coal which remains in the mine. Now, with regard to paragraph 2, as to the first discovery of the fire. I understand the first intimation Mr. Tennent, the Inspector, had of it was one Sunday, about noon. He immediately got a trolly and trollied out to Seddonville, and was joined by Mr. Dixon, mining engineer to the Westport Coal Company, at Granity, who was requested by the company to go over there and see what could be done. At this time the property was in the hands of the company. Mr. Dixon was, I believe, requested to go by Mr. Bayfield, the company's agent.

11. Would you be surprised to learn that that is denied?—It is what I understand; to the best of my belief it is so.

12. You said the mine was in the hands of the company?—Yes. The company, I believe, had a caretaker, Mr. Broome's brother, employed at the time.

13. In the mine or the office?—At the colliery. Mr. Broome, the manager, had left, and his brother was acting as caretaker. How long the fire had been burning before Mr. Tennent got word I do not know; but, according to the information I received from him and others, as soon as he heard he went out, took a railway trolly, and trollied out to the colliery. I really do not know what is meant by the petitioners in this clause 2 of the petition—with reference to the extinguishment of the fire. Then, coming to clause 3—"That, instead of this, evidence can be brought to prove that the means taken to subdue the fire had the opposite effect—viz., to make it burn with greater force." I find that the member for the district read in the House a statement to the same effect. The statement reads: "That the action which has hitherto been taken under the direction of Mr. Tennent, the Inspector of Mines, has tended to make the fire rage with greater force. A dam having been constructed in the main tunnel with a view to flood the mine, and so help to extinguish the fire, was let go, and the outside air being admitted give the fire greater freedom to burn." Now, this is what I want to speak about. That statement was written on the 11th June. As a matter of fact, the dam was not removed until the 2nd July. Now, how the persons making that statement can make out that the action taken caused the fire to burn with greater force three weeks before it was done is more than I can make out.

14. Was the dam watertight then?—Unfortunately, it was not. That letter, which was read in the House, states that the letting-go of the dam had had the effect of making the fire burn with greater force. It is a funny thing that the letter should have been written before the dam was taken down at all, or before an opening was made in it.

15. But you say the dam was not absolutely watertight?—No, not absolutely.

16. Then, it was practically useless?—I could not say that, because it was keeping out the air. The writers of the letter say that the action taken tended to make the fire burn with greater fierceness. As a matter of fact, no action was taken at all to take out that dam; but when the dam was broached, and we managed to get across it, we found that on the opposite side of the dam heavy falls from the inside and water had brought down a tremendous amount of *débris*, which had raised the water roof high, and therefore it was absolutely impossible for air to get in to make the fire burn with greater fierceness. The thing was an absolute impossibility. [Witness here made a statement of a technical nature, illustrating his remarks by references to plans of the mine.]

17. *Hon. Mr. McGowan.*] In your opinion, Mr. Hayes, have the measures which have been taken to put out the fire been in compliance with both the scientific and practical means of putting out such fires in coal-mines?—Yes, as far as I have seen, they have. The first time I saw the mine after the fire broke out it was impossible for any one to get in. The air was stopped off at the entrance and opposite the Bridge section, and nothing more could very well be done at the time.

18. Were the results of your examination such as to lead you to conclude that there was no immediate danger of the destruction of any large area of valuable coal?—Yes, that is so.

19. Is it the usual thing in cases where a fire breaks out in a coal-mine or in a portion of a coal-mine that has been worked—is it the usual thing to endeavour to shut off the portions of the mine unworked and allow the fire to burn itself out?—That is the general rule where a fire is of any extent all—to cut off the ingress and egress of air.

20. So far as you could see had the Inspector taken proper measures to save any portion of the mine where valuable coal was supposed to exist?—I should say that he had, because he and Mr. Dixon endeavoured not only to locate the seat of the fire, but to get in stoppings as near to it as they could; the smoke and gases, however, were so dense as to drive them back.

21. And after you visited the place and virtually, as his superior officer, took charge of the operations, you consider that you adopted every scientific and practical method for preserving the coal and extinguishing the fire?—Yes. That, of course, if I understand you aright, was at the time