

we are unable to say that any mine is absolutely safe in this respect, or that its owners can properly be absolved from taking reasonable precautions against a possible explosion from this cause. But even if we had been able to come to a different conclusion, we should still have to call attention to the serious danger which results from the action of coaldust in carrying on and extending an explosion which may have originally been set up by the ignition of firedamp"?—That quotation is, I believe, correct. I was a member of the Commission which wrote it.

266. You accept that as really part of the finding of the Commission on the evidence: you adhere to that?—Yes.

267. Now, I think you used these words in giving your evidence before the Coroner's inquest proceedings: "I think very few managers would have recognized that dust existed in this mine in dangerous quantity, and unless they had been interested in the dust question, and made experiments on it, I do not think they would have been aware of the dangerous character of lignite-coal dust": do you still subscribe to that?—Yes.

268. You remember admitting to the Commissioners that every blown-out shot in this mine might have caused a disaster if the dust was present in sufficient quantity? I think you admitted that to me also?—I meant, of course, every blown-out shot in a place that was dry and dusty. If that was the question I should say "Yes" to it now, as I did then.

269. Is it not a reasonable practice for examiners, particularly in view of the dangerous properties of all coaldust, and particularly when mixed with carburetted hydrogen below detection-point, to assume that there is gas in dangerous proportions in the mine? What I mean is, should they not rather assume that there is gas there (and therefore test very keenly for it) instead of assuming that it is not there?—They certainly should start off with the belief that there possibly is gas there.

270. And they should practically assume in their examination that gas will be found? Is not that the line upon which the examiners should go?—I cannot understand that question. A man should, of course, look for it, and if it is there he should find it and report it, without assuming anything at all.

271. You, of course, are giving your evidence with regard to this with a clear memory as to the whole of the circumstances. Now I want to know whether it is not a fact that that sample was received by Dr. MacLaurin four days after you sent in your report to the Minister?—I do not know in the least when he received it.

272. Had not you written your report to the Minister before that sample was in Dr. MacLaurin's hands?—I do not know. I have no means of judging. You can easily tell—my report was dated the 15th September.

273. Now, if that sample was taken on the 18th September, then you had written your report to the Minister four days before you examined that sample?—I did not test the sample until the 28th September.

274. What samples had you examined when you wrote your report?—I had not examined any samples.

275. When you wrote that report you had tested no samples?—I had examined no samples.

276. Your report to the Minister was in reply to the Minister's letter, containing certain questions?—Before I examined these samples.

277. Then your report to the Minister was written without your having examined any samples from the mine whatever?—Without my having tested samples from the mine; but I had seen the dust in the mine.

278. You are quite positive on that point?—Absolutely certain.

279. Then the interview which appeared in the *Herald* and the report to the Minister were both given without any samples from the mine?—Without having tested any samples.

280. Where are the questions the Minister asked you?—They were verbal questions he asked me.

281. Is there no record of them?—No record of all of them—he wrote me a letter.

282. Have you got it?—It exists.

283. May I see it?—Yes, if it is here at Huntly; I do not know whether it is here or at Auckland, but I will see.

284. *The Chairman.*] Does this bottle contain some coal you made a test from?—That is part of the same sample which I tested.

285. It is taken from a lump of Taupiri coal?—Yes.

286. Was that a fair test of the dust that lies in the mine which you say is highly inflammable? Would the coaldust in the mine be equally inflammable with that powdered coal?—Probably not so inflammable, but in making tests we have always employed freshly ground coal, so that each coal might be tested under the same conditions. If we took the dust in the mine for testing purposes there might be more foreign matter in one sample than in another, and therefore the comparison might not be a fair one.

287. Did you make any test of the dust as it lies in the mine?—No, I only examined it to see whether there was fine dust present.

288. You could not say whether that dust in the mine is as highly inflammable as the sample of powdered coal which you examined?—Probably not. I think it gradually alters by the action of the air.

289. *Mr. Dowgray.*] In connection with that disaster you quoted, you said that watering was carried out in that mine?—Yes, some watering was done.

290. You said it came out that the explosion had occurred by firedamp and it had travelled along the intake airways?—The finding was that the outburst occurred in an intake airway and the gas was carried inwards.