

358. And you do not agree with the suggestion of Mr. Dowgray that that door was hung in such a way that the pressure of the air would open it?—No, because it would be impossible for an accumulation of gas to remain in No. 6 bord.

359. You told us that you understood when you saw Mr. Reed at the Thames prior to his going to the West Coast that he had arranged to make an inspection of Ralph's Mine?—Yes.

360. How many days after that arrangement had been made did he leave for the West Coast?—The arrangement was made prior to his coming to the Thames. The Under-Secretary in his memo. to me said that Mr. Reed would come north to assist me in the prosecution if there was a fair chance of obtaining a conviction. He was to come north in connection with that and the conference regarding the loans.

361. Then the inspection by Mr. Reed and yourself had been arranged prior to Mr. Reed's coming to the Thames, and was in conjunction with the prosecution and also the proposal to lend money to the gold-mining companies?—Yes.

362. During the time that Mr. Reed was with you at the Thames did he appear to suffer from great anxiety as to the condition of Ralph's Mine?—No, sir.

363. Did he indicate to you during that visit that there was a daily or momentary danger of a holocaust?—No, sir.

364. If you had thought that there was any danger of any loss of life, and Mr. Reed had indicated his opinion to you, would you not have hastened to Huntly at once?—I should have ordered the men out of the mine at once.

365. Under the power you have under the existing law?—Yes.

366. Then if that very full power is given to you by the existing law would you consider that the present law is obsolete or useless?—I think that that section of the Act is subject to arbitration.

367. But you can order them out—the men come out on your order?—Yes, but the company can object.

368. Then the responsibility is not on you?—No.

369. You stated that early in April, 1914, the manager informed you of the intention to install a more powerful ventilating-fan?—Yes.

370. You had given him no order to do so?—No.

371. It was purely voluntary on the part of the company?—That is so.

372. If you had determined that the ventilation was insufficient you would have given them notice to put in a more powerful fan?—Or had a more equal distribution of the air.

373. In the course of your duty you inspect many other mines besides Ralph's?—Yes, all the coal-mines in the North Island.

374. I want to ask you a comparative question: have you considered the question of the safety of Ralph's Mine in comparison with the other mines which you inspect?—I considered the Extended Mine the safest mine in my district, and Ralph's next.

375. You know Ralph's shaft well, do you not?—Yes, I know it well.

376. How many years is it since you first inspected that mine?—Nine.

377. So that you have known the shaft for nine years?—Yes.

378. Do you consider that the shaft-pillars are sufficient to sustain the weight and make the shaft safe?—They have shown no signs of deterioration since I first inspected them. They are cut up considerably, but they have shown no signs of deterioration during that nine years.

379. I do not want you to say anything that is unfair or contrary to the ordinary rules of private correspondence by telling me the contents of private letters, but I want to ask you a general question with regard to your knowledge. Had you since January of the present year become possessed of the belief of Mr. Reed that there was imminent danger of a holocaust in this mine?—He has from time to time expressed the opinion that there was some little danger because of the alleged burnings by firedamp, but he never once gave me the impression that he thought that there would be such a disaster or anything approaching the disaster that has occurred. I formed the opinion from his expressions that there might be some others burned as Kelly was burned.

380. By ignitions?—Yes.

381. I mean, could you judge when he came to confer with you—it was confidential?—Unofficial.

382. Did you ever see the Inspecting Engineer officially?—Yes, when he came to report at the Thames on the loan applications.

383. May I put it in this way: that since December, 1913, Mr. Reed did not officially confer with you regarding Ralph's Mine?—No, he did not.

384. Did Mr. Reed ever suggest to you the desirability of making a test of the coaldust in Ralph's Mine?—No.

385. At the Thames, when you met Mr. Reed prior to his visit to the West Coast, did you make him understand that you were going to prosecute the company?—I handed him a copy of the statement of the case and Mr. Miller's opinion.

386. Did you say anything to lead him to suppose that there was not going to be a prosecution?—He understood perfectly clearly what were the contents of the letter.

387. *Mr. Newton.*] Mr. Reed in his evidence said that when he wrote to you in December last, I think, asking you to ascertain and get information regarding the burnings from gas, that you replied that the union would give you no information: is that correct?—From memory, I think it is so.

388. From memory can you say whether you did apply?—Yes.

389. By letter?—No, I came to Huntly and interviewed the manager, and met several of the officials in the ordinary way and made inquiries from them.