

196. And if that is taking place then these gases are being pursued by the return air all the time?—If there is any gas in any place where there is a fall diffusion must take place and remove it.

197. Do you consider the mine a dusty mine?—No, far from it.

198. The coal naturally contains a certain amount of water?—Yes, from 12 to 14 per cent. of moisture.

199. Is that the result of a test?—Yes, the result of analytical tests made by the Government Analyst.

200. Is that a factor in determining whether the mine is dry and dusty?—Yes, I think that has a lot to do with it. It plays an important part in helping the dust to be naturally damp.

201. *The Chairman.*] When the coal is in the form of dust none of that moisture is left?—I have not had any of it examined.

202. *Mr. Tunks.*] Prior to the experiments made by Professor Dixon, had any examination been made of the dust?—No.

203. The explosive nature of this dust had never been brought under your notice at any time?—No.

204. In consequence of Mr. Bennie's letter to you, did you give any instructions about shot-firing?—Yes, I did. I instructed the deputy in charge of each section that he must supervise the firing of his own shots.

205. I think those men have all been killed?—Yes. Personal and definite instructions were issued. I got them all together and told them. In addition, I appointed two shot-firers and gave them written authority. The following is the authority which I gave John Gilbert, dated the 22nd July, 1914: "I hereby authorize you to fire all shots in any machine bords throughout Ralph's Mine." Blenkinsopp was also given a similar authority.

206. I think you had been off the whole week prior to the explosion?—Yes, unfortunately.

207. I think you were actually in bed at the time?—Yes, and I had been all the week.

208. Had you any knowledge at all of the work that was going to be done in the mine on the Saturday morning?—No, I had no knowledge of it.

209. Then, of course, you cannot say what instructions were given to Martin, or where he was going, or where any of the others were going, or anything about it?—No, I cannot say.

210. Perhaps you can tell me this: has it been a rule in the mine to examine any old workings if work was going to be done in them?—Yes.

211. I do not mean by the old-workings deputy?—Yes, it has been the rule.

212. Can you say whether Whorskey has ever done that?—Yes, in one particular place. That second heating—we considered that as a working-place, and it was examined by the deputy, but not particularized.

213. It was not particularly referred to in his report?—No, but I know it was examined, because I have seen his dates on it myself.

214. So that he actually examined it, and included it in his general statement, but without particularizing the place?—I am quite sure and positive of that.

215. Did you go through it with him?—Yes, one morning when he was on his rounds.

216. I may take it as a fact, then, that the absence of anything under Rule 25 in Whorskey's report meant that he had nothing to report under that rule?—That is so.

217. He does not report to you that he has nothing to report under Rule 25?—No.

218. You were asked some questions about this heating: were any of these sections where heating took place anywhere near No. 5?—No, a long way from it.

219. Could they have had any possible connection?—No, because all the air was brought to the air-shaft.

220. So that under no circumstances could it have had any effect?—No.

221. Now, Kelly was off for fourteen days?—Yes.

222. Do you know whether he was about during that time?—Yes, he was about during the first week—the fifth or sixth day after his accident.

223. So that though he was away from work his injuries were not very serious?—No; that is a matter of past experience.

224. In regard to this door which was blown out, had that anything to do with the ventilation of that part of the mine—the one leading to No. 5?—No, it would not affect the ventilation whether it was there or not.

225. *Mr. Dowgray.*] In connection with the moisture in the dust, was not the dust which was tested taken from fresh coal?—Yes, I presume it would be.

226. Is it not a fact that lignite coal when it has been exposed for any period at all becomes dry and the moisture is passed off altogether?—I believe that would occur if it were out in the sun and the open atmosphere, but I do not know that it would be likely underground.

227. How do you account for the crumbling conditions of the pillars in your mine? Our attention was drawn to the sides of certain pillars, and the manager accompanying us told us that that was accountable by reason of their being exposed to the air. The place became dry and the moisture was absorbed?—The only time or times that I know of when there is alteration in the sides of the pillars is when we change the ventilation and put in fresh air direct into some of the returns.

228. There is not the slightest doubt that the coal on the sides, after being exposed for some time, even only to the atmosphere of the mine, has a tendency to dry and crumble?—I would not say positively one way or the other until I had had an analysis made of it, because the temperature very rarely varies.

229. But that, to my mind, would not have much effect on the fresh-cut coal which had not been exposed to the outside atmosphere?—No, that is so, perhaps.