

370. But, Mr. Reed, the gas when found is always reported in the deputies' books?—Is it.

371. You have seen the books: do you deny that it is?—I do not always see the books.

372. Therefore you cannot say?—I cannot say.

373. Do you consider a system of inspection is adequate which does not provide that the Inspecting Engineer shall see the deputies' books containing their daily report?—Do you mean me to see every deputy's book in New Zealand.

374. I mean a system which permits you to see those books?—I have never heard of such a thing—that the Inspecting Engineer should examine the whole of the books of the deputies in the country. You would want half a dozen Chief Inspectors of Mines or Inspecting Engineers to do all you suggest.

375. Do you consider it to be the duty of Inspectors of Mines to report to the Under-Secretary when gas is discovered?—Yes, I do; and I consider that they should report every case where fire-damp is found in a mine.

376. If it be true that for more than seven years—indeed, for nearly twenty years—these books of the deputies show that gas was found, and that those facts were not reported to the Under-Secretary, would you consider it negligence on the part of the Inspector of Mines?—No; the Inspector of Mines is not to duplicate the work of every official in the mine. You have already heard that it took two of your Inspectors a week to go round your old workings.

377. I refer to the books?—You said to check those books.

378. I say to report when gas is mentioned in those books?—I say the Inspector should report when gas is found.

379. Do you say that that has never been done?—No; I have seen it myself in Inspector Bennie's reports since Christmas.

380. Concerning the Taupiri mines?—Yes.

381. Then, the Mines Department was aware that there was gas in the Taupiri Mine?—Since Christmas, to my knowledge.

382. Then, Mr. Bennie only since Christmas became aware of those explosions and that gas was present?—Mr. Bennie became aware of them shortly after I did.

383. If he says that he was aware that gas was discovered in the mines before that, but not in dangerous quantities, would you believe him?—I would.

384. Do you think he ought to have reported it?—I do.

385. And do you say that he only reported the presence of gas since last Christmas?—To the best of my recollection. I do not remember him having reported it before.

386. You, as Inspecting Engineer, believed up till last Christmas that there was no appreciable quantity of gas in these mines?—That is true.

387. And that belief was not well-founded?—You must not say it was not well-founded, because I had been deceived by the company.

388. The facts would not justify it?—For you deceived the Government by not reporting the explosions before you were compelled to do so.

389. The facts did not justify your belief?—What facts did not justify my belief?

390. The facts in regard to the mine as to gas?—I really cannot see what you are getting at.

391. Did the actual condition prior to last Christmas of the Taupiri mines, regarding gas, justify the belief you held as to the gas in Ralph's Mine?—The actual condition was bad prior to Christmas. I did not know the amount of gas in the mine until I was informed of the explosions about Christmas.

392. *The Chairman.*] Did the amount of gas turn out as you thought?—My opinion as to the quantity of gas has been proved to be right by my subsequently measuring it.

393. *Mr. Napier.*] You have said that prior to Christmas last the condition of the mine was bad?—The actual condition was bad.

394. Was that ever reported to the Under-Secretary?—No, not until after I found out about the explosions.

395. Do you say that the slight explosions which caused those minor accidents to Kelly and others were the circumstances which justified you in believing that the condition of the mine was bad?—That together with other things, and the conditions as I have recounted them to Mr. Wilford. You had there all the conditions for a holocaust by the ignition of gas, even a small ignition.

396. Then, I understand you to agree with Professor Dixon that a very small quantity of gas is sufficient to begin an explosion?—A small quantity of gas. I knew it before I ever saw or heard of him, and my knowledge is confirmed by what he said in evidence after he experimented with my sample of coaldust.

397. Then we may take it that the existence of a small quantity of gas in a mine would oblige you to class that mine as a bad mine?—You have to consider other matters as well as gas.

398. Those are the words of Professor Dixon, and you accept them?—Yes.

399. Will you tell us what you mean by a small quantity?—The limit of the quantity in cubical contents I would not like to say. I would not fix the minimum which would be sufficient to raise dust and cause an explosion after the ignition.

400. Do you mean to say you do not know?—If I were to express a minimum it would be more or less a guess. I do not think anybody knows. It depends upon the inflammability of the dust.

401. It would be a guess in any case?—Not having tested it in this mine to see what is necessary to explode, it would be a guess.

402. Would you experiment in the mine to see how much it would take to blow it up?—You have been trying until you succeeded.

403. You say then that the mine-owners of the Taupiri Mine have been experimenting to see how much gas would be required to blow it up—the people who created the explosion in the mine have been experimenting?—Accidentally experimenting.