

McKenzie to inspect the connection with Taupiri West. The owners wished to delay it, but the Department wanted to see it carried through at once. I also made inquiries regarding the workmen's inspection.

742. Was not that visit made for the special purpose you mention?—Yes.

743. And I think you did not visit the other portions of the mine because it was not necessary for the purpose of your report to the Minister?—I never do anything that is in my opinion unnecessary.

744. Then the visit was a special one for the purpose of inquiring into the connection with Taupiri West?—Yes, and some complaints by Mr. Fulton and others.

745. Am I not right in saying that, so far as that visit was concerned, you did not get an opportunity for judging the conditions of the mine?—You must not confine me to what I saw. There is such a thing as the plan of the mine. I can judge a great deal from that. I had a plan last year and another one recently, and studied them both. My knowledge of the mine is not confined to what I saw on my visit to which you referred. I have the monthly report of the Inspector to refer to, which I always read carefully. I am well informed, as the result of studying these reports and plans. Although it was some time since I had visited the mine, I was in a good position to know the conditions there.

746. May I put it this way: that your visits and personal inspections were so rare and so insufficient?—My visits were not frequent.

747. May I take it this way: that your personal visit would not enable you to give an opinion as to the safety of the mine?—Uninformed as I was at that time about the presence of gas and explosions, I say it would not be fair to ask me to express an opinion on the state of the mine then.

748. Did you ever visit the mine since you have been in office and make a complete or a very full inspection and examination of it?—By no means: it was not my duty.

749. Section 40 of the Coal-mines Act, 1908, subsection (48), in regard to the right of inspection by miners, empowers the workmen to exercise some supervision over the mine?—Inspection, but not supervision.

750. And there is power to bring under the notice of the authorities any defects or dangers?—Yes. They must also furnish a copy of their reports to the owner or manager.

751. And those reports are accessible to the Inspector of Mines?—Yes.

752. Who would, no doubt, if he carried out his duty, take notice of them?—Yes.

753. Did you ever bring under the notice of the owners of the mine, or the company that works the mine, the knowledge that you had and the opinion which you held in regard to the conditions in the mine?—No, I have never addressed anybody except the Under-Secretary officially.

754. Are you aware whether your opinions were transmitted to the owners of the mine or the company?—I am unaware if the Under-Secretary communicated my opinion to anybody.

755. Now, considering that you visited the mine, and that you considered the conditions there very dangerous, so much so that a holocaust was likely to take place at any moment?—My visits were made a considerable time ago. My knowledge of the dangerous condition of the mine was obtained as the result of those concealed explosions.

756. About Christmas last?—Yes, it was then obtained.

757. Then you allowed the greater portion of 1914 to elapse, and you did not even whisper to the owners of the mine, the most interested parties, that the conditions were dangerous?—It was not my duty to communicate with them, but to the Under-Secretary.

758. Because it was not your official duty you did not do it?—I keep to my own duties.

759. You did not take any chances?—There is a penalty provided under the Civil Service Regulations for divulging official information. It is my duty to report to the Under-Secretary. I address official letters to nobody else. I have no authority to communicate officially with anybody else.

760. Is that true?—The whole of the correspondence of the Mines Department goes to the Under-Secretary for Mines, as far as my work is concerned: officially I never receive a letter, and officially I never write one.

761. At all events, you visited the mine, and there were a number of things which you complained about, and which were afterwards attended to?—I did that at the request of the Minister, and reported to the Under-Secretary, and he attended to them.

762. You have told us how extremely anxious you have been for a long time past to get this Coal-mines Bill placed on the statute-book?—Yes.

763. And you have told us also that this Bill is, you believe, a verbatim copy of the English Act?—Yes; I took a considerable hand in the report upon which it is based.

764. You took a great hand in the framing of it?—No.

765. Well, in drafting the substance?—Mr. Dowgray and I did a considerable part of it.

766. Did you draft subsection (2) of section 4 of the Coal-mines Bill?—No.

767. Subsection (2) reads as follows: "The person exercising the powers of Inspecting Engineer for Mines at the coming into operation of this Act shall be deemed appointed Inspecting Engineer for Mines under this section." And subsection (3) says: "The Inspecting Engineer for Mines shall, by virtue of his office, be also the Chief Inspector of Mines, and shall have, in all parts of the Dominion, all the powers given by the principal Act to an Inspector of Mines"?—No, sir, I did not draft that. That was not a recommendation of the 1911 Commission at all, but for twenty years all the Commissions on mines which have sat, but this one, has made a similar recommendation, and they have not been given effect to.

768. Is it a fact that the English Act provides that an Inspector may be appointed?—Sir R. A. S. Redmayne is the Chief Inspector in England. They have a huge mining industry there. They have no Inspecting Engineer, but they have a Chief Inspector of Mines.

769. Am I right in stating that that subsection by statute appoints you Chief Inspector of Mines?—Yes; that appears to be so. I had no knowledge of it until I saw it in the Bill.