

342. To occasion a dust-explosion in a mine I think Professor Dixon said it was necessary to have an intense flame: do you agree with that?—Yes, it is quite necessary, according to our teachings.

343. Then if that is so, would the ignition of a small quantity of exuding gas by a workman, such as I have described, cause a dust-explosion?—I do not think so.

344. There is no concussion?—No.

345. And if the two things are necessary and must be present to create the explosion, the absence of the concussion would prevent the explosion?—Yes, I think so, because the concussion is required to raise the cloud of dust.

346. Professor Dixon told us that there must be a concussion to raise the dust, and then an intense flame to ignite it. Would you consider that the ignition of very minute quantities of gas in the ordinary way, such as I have described, would be calculated to cause a holocaust in a mine?—No.

347. *Mr. Macassey.*] In regard to section 58 of the Coal-mines Act, which gives the Inspector power to close an exceptionally dangerous mine, if a responsible Inspector considered a mine to be dangerous to human life and called the men out would you refuse to obey the order, or would you take the men out and then wait until the appeal against the Inspector's order was decided?—I would obey the order first.

348. Under section 58 of the existing Act and Special Rule 14 the Inspector has full power to effectually control dangerous mines?—Yes.

349. *Mr. Wilford.*] I understood you to say, Mr. Fletcher, that you do not add to your previous evidence to the effect that you went into bords 4, 5, and 6 when you were last up there?—I was in bords 4, 5, and 6, but not right in the far end of them.

350. But in those parts of the bords shown on plan marked "AA"?—No, I cannot swear I was up in that part of the mine, except that I came through the bord opposite the point marked "B."

351. I want to ask you two important questions: you know under the Act you are required to keep that door locked?—Yes, I do know.

352. You know that you did not?—I know that I did not.

353. You know that some of the witnesses have sworn that Martin entered by that unlocked door?—Yes, some of them say that.

354. There was no lock on the door, was there?—I could not say.

355. What explosives were used in this mine up to the time of the disaster?—Curtis and Harvey's ordinary blasting-powder.

356. Is that the only explosive you used?—Excepting gelignite, which is used in stone drives.

357. Before the explosion what class of light did you use?—Naked lights.

358. Were they all of the same kind, acetylene, or others?—Oil-lamps and acetylene-lamps; colza is the oil used.

359. And that is the only description of light you used?—Yes, excepting the safety-lamps used by the examining deputies.

360. I mean for working purposes?—Naked lights—acetylene and colza-oil head-lamps.

361. What were the means of escape in the mine in case of accident?—There are three shafts. The two downcasts are pretty well a mile apart. The Taupiri West was an escape. The upcast has ladders in it. If the three openings into the mine were blocked no one could get out.

362. That is a contingency very unlikely to occur?—I think so.

363. Under ordinary circumstances would you consider this sufficient for escape purposes in case of an explosion in the mine?—It is a complex problem, which required to be answered with some thought. There are dozens of mines in the Old Country with only two shafts.

364. *Mr. Tunks.*] Supposing that Martin had been instructed to go through No. 5 to meet the other men coming up from the little dip, was there any other way except through that door which he could take, apart from the little dip?—Around No. 7 north.

365. But assuming that he had gone past No. 6, is there any other way that he could have gone without coming right back?—He could have gone right round.

366. Which was the shortest way through?—Through the door of No. 5.

367. *Mr. Dougray.*] You said that there was a vast difference between an ignition and an explosion of gas. An ignition is still an explosion?—Yes, I suppose it is; although, in the course of reading reports of accidents in such papers as the *Colliery Guardian*, I have noticed that they do not call ignitions of gas "explosions."

368. Have you ever seen an ignition of gas in a mine?—No, never. I have seen gas, but not an ignition of gas.

369. You said most of your old workings acted as returns, except that part sealed off?—Yes, we scale all the return air through there.

370. But they are practically returns for the whole mine?—Yes, practically so, except where they converge at certain points. You can see it in certain places on the plan.

371. So that the old workings are practically returns?—Yes.

372. And under the Act they should be examined once a week?—Yes.

373. In connection with the Huntly mines being idle, I notice the *New Zealand Herald* of this morning says, "It may be noted that no work beyond repairing and clearing up is proceeding in Ralph's Mine." Had there been any men using monobel or blasting-powder in the Extended or any of the mines this week prior to to-day?—Yes, I think there was one shot fired over in Taupiri West.

374. Have there been any colliers working there?—Yes; one party of men got coal for the boilers.