

*Mr. Mountfort* : We opened one at No. 5, and saw it on both sides.

*Mr. Gore* : It has been done since we opened it.

*Mr. Blair* : Nearly the whole of that was done on the plan by Mr. Hay, when he came down here in December; but he has since amplified that. He has put in some of these [indicating on plan]. For instance, these two were not in before.

*Mr. Lawson* : Allow me to say that this discussion points to the absolute necessity of Mr. Brindley being present. He is the man under whose direct supervision these were put in—every one of them. That is the chief point: in fact, it is Mr. Brindley's character that is at stake. There are various circumstances deduced by the evidence which Mr. Brindley may notice for himself, but which he cannot notice by merely reading over the evidence, as is proposed. I say that this is a matter of vast importance to Mr. Brindley in regard to his professional character. I cannot too strongly urge that his professional character is at stake in reference to the particular thing under examination, he having been the Inspector on the spot. It was under his supervision that this work was actually carried out.

*Mr. Skinner* did not think that the Commissioners should stop the inquiry till Mr. Brindley arrived.

*Mr. Lawson* : At all events, I submit that it is absolutely necessary that the inquiry should not deal with this particular matter until Mr. Brindley arrives. I submit that that is only fair-play to Mr. Brindley.

*Mr. Blair* : I shall clear up that matter to a very great extent in the course of my remarks.

*Mr. Lawson* : In what way?

*Mr. Blair* : By the evidence I am giving now.

*Mr. Lawson* : Of course it is for the Commissioners to decide, and I must submit; but I cannot too strongly urge that, in common fairness to Mr. Brindley, he should be present at this examination.

*Mr. Skinner* : So far as we are concerned we shall make him acquainted with the whole of the evidence.

*The Chairman* : My opinion—and I think it will be that of my brother Commissioners—is that every opportunity shall be given to Mr. Brindley of becoming acquainted with everything that has taken place during his absence.

*Mr. Lawson* : I have simply urged all through that Mr. Brindley is the party chiefly interested.

*The Chairman* : I think he will be perfectly satisfied that he is to have the whole of the evidence before him.

*Mr. Gore* (to Mr. Blair) : Have you never tried one hole inside?

*Mr. Blair* : We could not do so without tearing up the floor.

*Mr. Skinner* : I may say that we have had one or two holes opened since, and that we intend to have one or two more opened.

*Mr. Blair* : Mr. Hay will, in evidence, show that at these places the foundations will, on the average, not carry the half of the weight per lineal foot that they would have done if put in as shown on the contract drawings. Beyond submitting the plans, it is clearly unnecessary for me to go into this matter, as pits were opened out and the Commissioners saw it for themselves. I might, however, refer to one or two points. At one place, near the north end of the colonnade, the concrete was only about 18in. deep, and it was cut into by a huge boulder, and in some cases the brick wall is, as at the front, actually overhanging the foundation. This is the case specially nearly all along the back wall—one of the most important walls in the building. The quality of the concrete was also anything but what it should be. As the Commissioners saw for themselves, large stones were put in to save the cement all through it. Sometimes these stones, instead of being a foot or two apart, were actually in "nests," and I shall bring evidence to show that in some cases they were put in by the barrow-load. This was the case even in the most important part of the structure—the tower. Although the Architect was warned by Dr. Hector as to the necessity of secure foundations, I have evidence to show that barrow-loads of dirty stones were thrown into the concrete. There are only one or two places where the concrete was found anything near the mark, and these places were near the middle of the building, where no settlement has appeared: in all the pits that were opened up at this place the concrete was considerably better than it was in the portion of the building that has given way.

*Mr. Gore* : I submit that Mr. Blair should not make any statement except he can give it of his own knowledge.

*Mr. Blair* : I have made no statement unless it has been from my own knowledge.

*Mr. Skinner* : If he makes any statement he will have to bring evidence and prove it.

*Mr. Gore* : In that case I have nothing more to say.

*The Chairman* : No statement can have any weight with us unless it is substantiated. I suppose Mr. Blair intends to verify it; if he does not, we cannot of course be bound by it.

*Mr. Blair* : We are not prepared to assert that the building would have stood absolutely true had the work been carried out in accordance with the contract; but we submit that there is no doubt whatever that, had it been so carried out, the subsidence, if there had been any at all, would have been a mere fraction of what has taken place. The ground is soft, and is admittedly bad, and no attempt was apparently made to drain the foundations, and, as I have shown, instead of the foundations being increased where the ground was bad, as is always done in works of this kind when the opening-out of the ground shows that the plans should be altered—instead of so increasing the foundations, the foundations were in this case decreased to a lamentable extent. Of course by no stretch of the imagination can this alteration from the contract drawings be attributed to the Public Works Department; and in all our attempts to deal with this matter the department has assumed that the works have been carried out in accordance with the contract. If a suspicion to the contrary had crossed our minds, the means taken to remedy the defects at the earliest stages