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NEW ZEALAND.

INSPECTION OF WAIKATO COAL-MINES

(REPORT ON), BY MR. N. D. COCHRANE, INSPECTOR OF MINES.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives, by Leave.

Mr. N. D. COCHRANE, Inspector of Mines, to H. J. H. ELIOTT, Esq., Under-Secretary for
Mines.

SIR,—

Wellington, 15th July, 1891.

In compliance with instructions, I inspected the coal-mines in the Waikato district, and have the honour to report as follows:—

Taipiri Extended Coal-mine (6th and 7th July).—This mine employs forty-three men, and the workings are adjacent to Lake Hakanoa. The main heading is about 1 chain distant from the edge of the lake, and is not working at present. In all the workings 3ft. or 4ft. of coal is left on as a roof, and holes are drilled upwards to provide that this thickness is maintained, even although the seam itself should lessen in thickness. The cords are driven 14ft. wide, and the pillars are 27ft. Coal is left on as a floor in all but one or two places, and the fireclay, where seen, was sound. In all these, roof, sides, and pavement, the coal stands remarkably well. There is no doubt that workings such as these with a large body of water at a higher level, are of a more than ordinarily dangerous nature, but every precaution appears to be taken that is at present required. The special causes of danger for the future appear to me to be the possible yielding of the floor when there comes to be a large area in pillars, if the coal should be taken out down to the fireclay, or the striking of a fissure connected with the lake. In regard to a second outlet, machinery and head-gear have been erected at a point fixed for a second shaft, and sinking will be started whenever the cylinders arrive. In this connection I called on Mr. Scherff, the secretary of the company, in Auckland, who informed me that they were due this month. I notified him that it would be necessary either to have the connection made by the end of September or to reduce the number of men to what the law would then allow. At the time of my visit to the mine the air was good, and the Act in general well observed. The plan was shown to be properly posted by the survey book, but will in future be dated.

Waikato Coal-mine (7th July).—At this mine the deputy, Mr. Wallace, was in charge, the manager having met with a slight accident (above ground). The plan was in pencil—this is to be seen to. The air was rather dull to the east of the top of the main jig, but screens are to be put in, which will rectify this.

Taipiri Reserve Coal-mine (8th July).—This mine was idle on the date of my inspection. Many of the workings are under Lake Kinihia, but Mr. Harrison, the manager, appears to be taking every care for the safety of the mine. A coal roof is left on, which stands well, and, as the dip is towards the lake, additional cover is gained as the workings progress beneath it. This is a direct gain, but it will require correspondingly larger pillars if any considerable depth is attained to bear the greater aggregate weight. In one place the cover was only 60ft., I am informed, but this is stopped, and no further work will be done there. The plan was properly posted, general rules hung up, and special rules, under date 1st instant, exhibited. A good current of air was circulating.

Ralph's Taipiri Mine (8th July).—Only two men are here employed, in pillar work, near the outcrop. I cautioned Mr. Ralph as to the possibility of a run if the roof should happen to thin at any place, and requested him to secure the top of the shaft, which forms a second outlet.

Miranda Coal-mine (9th July).—This is a very thick seam adjoining swamp-land. Five men in all are employed. A plan was kept but not dated. No report-book. These are to be seen to by Mr. Snow, the manager. I also requested him to provide bars at landings in the mid and upper levels, the thickness of the seam admitting of three landing-places. A good current of air was coming along intake, much, however, being lost in the old workings before reaching the working-faces.

I have, &c.,

The Under-Secretary for Mines.

N. D. COCHRANE, Inspector of Mines.

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