

12th June, 1900.

CARDIFF FIRE.—Smoke stronger from No. 1 incline on Hector Block. No change over Bridge approach. Water-supply increased with Saturday's rainfall, but failing to-day owing to continued dry weather.

13th June, 1900.

THERE is no change on Cardiff fire. Pipe-line water-supply very low.

SIR,—

Inspector of Mines' Office, Westport, 9th June, 1900.

I have the honour to inform you that I appointed Alexander Mitchel, Seddonville, on the 23rd ultimo, on behalf of the State, to act as caretaker at the Westport Cardiff Coal-mine. Mitchel is a sober, reliable person, and thoroughly acquainted with every detail connected with the mine-workings and property, having filled the position of mine-deputy for several years, and was underviewer for nearly twelve months previous to the mine being shut down. Wages, £2 10s. per week.

I have, &c.,

R. TENNENT, Inspector of Mines.

SIR,—

Inspector of Mines' Office, Westport, 11th June, 1900.

I have to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of extract from report and plan of operations recommended by Messrs. Shore, Alison, and Foster, in reference to extinguishing the fire in the Cardiff Mine.

As your responsible servant, allow me to inform you that the proposed pipe-line water scheme is impracticable, dangerous to life, and clearly defines their ignorance of the whole position. In fact, any information that was given either by Mr. Mitchel, the late underviewer, or myself, appears to have been taken as misleading. If this scheme has to be carried into effect I would agree with the Commissioners that a responsible person be placed in charge, as the work appears, to my mind, not a matter of time but a question of how long the Treasury will stand the drain. These are facts which will be proved if the scheme is carried into practice. Pardon me in expressing the facts stated, as not being done in order to conflict your mind in any way, but as a point of duty.

Whilst the honourable Minister was in Seddonville a deputation of residents waited on him in relation to the Cardiff fire, and during the meeting one of the deputation repeated the substance of the report furnished by the Commissioners, and pointed out on the colliery plan the whole line of procedure to be carried out.

Bridge Section.—This section of workings was not inspected by the gentlemen named above to ascertain whether the coal was faulty or whether it was a coal- or quartz-mine.

Hector Block.—In May of 1897, previous to my appointment as Inspector of Mines, I visited Cardiff, and was kindly asked by Mr. Broome, mining-manager, to accompany him through the mine. At that date No. 2 incline workings were pillared back from the cliff a considerable distance, and the whole section was built with "pigsties," or wooden chocks, to locate a "creep" which then existed. Since that time considerable numbers of pillars have been extracted, both on No. 1 and No. 2 inclines, and when last visited in October of 1899, in company of Mr. John Hayes, Inspecting Engineer, and Mr. Broome, mining-manager, the roadways leading to the pillared ground were all clear and in good order.

The unworked block located between the north and Hector sections of workings is practically valueless. I have made it my business to examine the surroundings of this section most carefully, and the indications are, as represented on plan, a complete network of faults. The late manager was not the person to pass a section of marketable coal after developments were fully completed for its extraction. With regard to the many openings that are driven through the outcrops, I do not hold myself responsible, because this work was all driven previous to my charge.

Furnace Shaft.—It is proposed to clear out this shaft, but there is no plan of procedure laid down, while it is admitted that the mine is soaked in a dense body of carbonic acid or black-damp from stopping marked A. If this line of procedure is considered to be effective, why is it not recommended now, because, so long as combustion continues in the mine the work must become of a more difficult nature? Since the subsidence was discovered in north section of workings I am in favour of trying this experiment, but it will be a very difficult job, and as far as I can see from knowledge of past experience, I could not vouch for its success.

Mark N. on Plan.—On Monday, 5th February, when I entered the mine the main drive was filled with fierce flame about the point indicated N., and at point marked B. a dense volume of heated smoke rolled continuously down the shaft drift marked O., direct from the seat of fire discovered by Mr. J. Dixon, of Granity. This heated column returned into the main roadway; consequently it was impossible under any conditions to attempt blocking off the mine-workings at either of these points. Had an attempt been made to block off the fire on or about B. locality every man engaged in the work would have perished from the effects of flame and smoke that were forced through the tunnel by the "backlash" of an extensive fall that occurred the first night that operations were commenced. After this fall occurred our means of ventilation was cut off and the building of A. stopping was a most difficult task. Assuming it was possible to build a dam at or about mark N. on plan, water could only be raised to the height of the first pillar above main roadway, as a direct line of open communication exists from point O. to mine-entrance. Hence the absurdity of this proposal.

Point B.—As the plan, shows the drive is very wide owing to a deviation being made when driving the main tunnel. During the time the men were preparing the seat for A. stopping I made periodical visits to B. point on behalf of the workmen's safety, and at this point the rock had commenced to fall. Now, since the subsidence in North Block is discovered there is only one