

gress slower than it otherwise would have been, but everything is expected to be in readiness for Monday morning, the 2nd July.

The success or otherwise of the scheme depends greatly on the present condition of the roadways. If falls have occurred of sufficient extent to prevent the fan driving the black-damp back (they will also be damming up water), then there is no alternative but to erect another dam at 1, and let the water rise to the same level as before, allowing the fire to burn at the outcrop. To attempt anything beyond this is simply to throw money away uselessly. The question of reopening the mine would necessarily have to be left in abeyance until this small area had burnt itself out, or become choked by black-damp and falls. As I have already pointed out, the black-damp would (under these conditions) only allow of actual fire close to the outcrop at the cliffs where fresh air is to be got.

I propose remaining a few days longer to see what results are attained.

J. HAYES, Inspecting Engineer, Mines.

P.S.—I have made an examination of the workings in the Bridge section. These appear to be standing very well, but the area is so cut up with faults, &c., and the coal so crushed (as explained in my report in October last) that, under existing conditions, no real commercial value can be attached to this part of the property.

As to the area of coal supposed to exist between the North Block and the Hector Block, the numerous faults met with in driving the main road (and shown on plan) indicate the existence of broken ground. The prospects of profitably mining coal here are, in consequence, very problematical. To my mind, the very fact of this area—so near the main thoroughfare of the mine—not having been worked to a greater extent before the development of more remote parts of the property shows that the management did not place much real value on it.

For practical commercial purposes, my opinion is that the future value of the colliery lies in the possibilities of the Cave area, which should be prospected on the lines suggested in my October report. I also think that the flats between Seddonville and Mokihinui should be tested by boreholes. There is also the question of what lies beyond Mokihinui Mine. Mr. R. B. Denniston considers there is a good area there. A thorough geological survey of that part of the district is desirable. Owing to the broken and patchy character of these West Coast coalfields, all possible information should be obtained without waiting till the present available fields are unable to supply demands.

J. HAYES.

The Under-Secretary for Mines, Wellington.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

THURSDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 1900.

J. HAYES in attendance, and examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your name, please?—John Hayes.
2. And your official position?—Inspecting Engineer to the Mines Department.
3. You have heard this petition read?—Yes.
4. And you are acquainted with the matter referred to therein?—Fairly well.
5. You have been over the mine where the fire is?—Yes. I may say that I have not seen the petition at all. I have simply heard it read, and if you wish I will take the clauses seriatim and deal with them. With reference to the first clause in the petition, "That a large area of valuable coal, the property of the colony, is, through the continuance of the present fire, threatened with destruction": This plan which I have here is copied from a tracing which Mr. Broome supplied to the department at the time the company ceased operations, and if this tracing is to be relied upon—and I should think it is—it at once puts aside the question of a "large area of coal." The large area of unworked coal in that connection does not exist. I may say that what is known as the old portion of the mine, or the Hector block of the old portion, is the portion in which the fire is burning. Fires in collieries are not at all uncommon things, as I happen to know from twenty-five to twenty-seven years' experience. The active fire at the present time is, in my opinion, simply confined to the small amount of outcrop coal left near where the coal has been extracted, and there is nothing of a commercial value in it—*i.e.*, where the active fire is really burning. That is my candid opinion.
6. Not much coal of a commercial value?—No. This coloured portion on the plan represents coal absolutely got; but outcropped coal is along this line [indicating the line on plan], and it outcrops into a chasm. The chasm is a huge gap in the coal-seam. Then, on the opposite side of the creek is what is known as the Bridge section. The coal there was the only coal which the company had to work at when they ceased operations about a year ago. That coal is not only very much broken up by faults, but these are samples which I took from the mine [produced]. I have not opened this packet since I took the pieces of coal, but members can see for themselves the nature and quality of the coal.
7. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] That is taken from the Bridge section?—Yes. I got these samples nearly a year ago.
8. Have you had it on exhibition?—No; it has been in the office, and the packets have never been opened.