

begin with, because if you had gases backing up, the man in charge would have acted criminally if he had allowed the men to go in so as to endanger their lives.

101. If it had been possible for them to have got in they might have put the fire out?—If it had been possible to put the fire out there they would have done it, and the fact that they did not do it proves that it was not possible to do it.

102. Was that part of the mine worked out?—There were a few pillars left.

103. When Mr. Alison and the others condemned the use of the fan on the fire, did you agree with them?—No.

104. You think it was the correct thing to do?—Yes. If I had been in charge of the mine I should very likely have done the same myself.

105. They say, "The utilisation of a fan to create a strong draught to a mine on fire was contrary to recognised custom of dealing with fires"?—I disagree with them, because it is often necessary to carry a sufficiency of air for working purposes to the seat of some fires in the Old Country in order to seal the fire-area off. I think, from reading what Mr. Dixon had to say about it, it was justifiable and in accordance with the best Home practice.

106. You are one of the examiners for coal-mine managers' certificates?—Yes.

107. Are there any books or authorities dealing with candidates' certificates that lay that rule down?—No; but since you have asked for some authority I think I can give it to you. Mr. Dixon, in referring to this very matter—

108. Do you reckon Mr. Dixon an authority? Where did he take his certificate out—in America?—No; in New South Wales. As a matter of fact, Mr. Dixon quotes some of the best authorities in the Old Country.

109. What is the date of his report?—He made a report on the 13th July, and subsequently gave a rebuttal of certain statements made by Messrs. Shore, Alison, and Foster, which is dated 20th September.

110. Was that written since the petition was presented to the House?—The last one was, not the first. Mr. Dixon quotes authorities to show that under certain conditions it was a satisfactory course to pursue to use the fan.

111. This dam you started to pull down on the 2nd July?—Yes; it was not tight then.

112. According to your own showing it was not tight at any time?—I think it was found to be loose and made tight.

113. When did you first discover that it was not tight?—Mr. Mitchell discovered it. He was formerly underground foreman for the company.

114. When did he discover it?—I have not the date. It was before Shore's party was there.

115. You do not know when it was originally finished?—No; it was put in after my visit there at the end of February.

116. It was finished probably in March?—I think so.

117. You cannot say whether it was ever tight or not?—Not from my own knowledge.

118. And you left it leaking for months?—I do not say that.

119. You say it was not tight when Shore was there—that was June?—I say the water-dam was not tight when Alison and Shore were there. Another has been put in since then.

120. Alison and Shore say that somebody should be left in charge with power to employ extra men if there is danger from a fresh outburst on the surface?—Yes.

121. Do you reckon that is a proper report to make?—No.

122. Why not?—If they considered that no one was in charge it was right, but if they considered Mr. Tennent was in charge it was not right.

123. They say, "In conclusion, if the department carry out the above recommendations, we would urge that they appoint a thoroughly competent man, who has had experience of underground fires, to supervise the work, as the building of these dams should not be left to others than a person with this qualification." The inference to be drawn from that is that the people in charge were not fit to be intrusted with the building of dams?—I do not know what they meant.

124. You did not act on their reports?—As far as was reasonable and practicable.

125. How far are we to understand that you did?—In endeavouring to put a dam in good solid ground. To put one in at one place where they recommended would have been simply madness. We would have put one in the other place, but circumstances over which we had no control prevented us.

126. The only thing you know about this of your own knowledge was what you learned when you were down there in July: all else you know is from the reports?—From the official reports.

127. You say there was antagonism in the district towards the Inspector?—I think the correspondence proves that.

128. Will you read one of the documents?—I have the original here of the document which appeared in *Hansard*.

129. Are you basing your opinion on that that there was an antagonistic feeling in the district towards the Inspector?—It is shown so in the *Hansard* report already referred to.

130. But Mr. Martin is a practical man?—He is not a practical mining engineer.

131. You do not know Mr. Martin?—I have seen him.

132. Outside of that, did you find any one in the district antagonistic to the Inspector?—I did not make it my business to ascertain.

133. As a matter of fact, is it not the Inspector's methods that are objected to, and not the man?—I maintain that the writer of that letter is not competent to judge as to the Inspector's methods.

134. You have no other ground for basing your opinion except that correspondence?—Nothing