

these holes he puts bearers, on which is placed a plank. By this means he can inspect a high place. There is a ladder in every man's place to enable him to reach the platform. [Witness further explained his point by diagram].

206. When you referred to "old workings" were you speaking of absolutely abandoned workings, or are they only temporarily in disuse?—They are places where the company has permanently ceased to work. There is no hope in this mine to take out the pillars there unless they fill the places with rock. They might then be able to take them out under the river.

207. They cannot take them out otherwise because of the fear of the water coming in?—Yes, the overlying strata must be kept up.

208. Are they—the old workings—used for any purpose at all now?—No, they are not used for any purpose, but sometimes the management allows the rails to lie in those old workings until they are wanted. The unfortunate men who were killed were going there to remove the rails.

209. Ordinarily that portion of the mine is properly secured?—Yes, it is old workings. It is nobody's business to go in.

210. Do the men never go in at all for personal purposes?—No, there is a W.C. outside.

211. But do they always use it?—We believe so, though one of the witnesses, Young—who was an old-workings examiner—said he had seen persons going in there to ease themselves instead of going to the pan.

212. Do you think that things should be left as they are, or do you think the men should be forcibly kept out of those places? Is the present rule broken?—Well, they are intelligent men.

213. But all men are not intelligent—you know that?—A good many of them are.

214. In view of the danger of going into those workings, I ask you if you think the precautions are sufficient?—Many of the old bords are closed—stopped by brick walls; others have an iron rail or a piece of 4 in. by 4 in. timber placed across the old drive. That is the only precaution I have ever known to be taken in any mine. That is done here. That, I think, is sufficient.

215. Is this old part essential in any way for the ventilation of a mine?—So as to remove the possible danger of any accumulation of gas, the return air, after it has passed through the present workings, is allowed to go through the old workings so as to remove the gas there. If the air is confined to one course and stopped off to make it go through that course, then those old workings would become a very serious menace to the lives of the workers. The system of allowing the air to scale through the old workings is a good one.

216. *Mr. Napier.*] With regard to the deputies who were appointed to examine the old workings, as per your report, the law does not require the appointment of any inspectors for this purpose, does it?—I am not quite sure that there is a section which requires a manager to have all such places inspected.

217. I am now referring to your report, in which you say that until Mr. Fletcher came here there were no special officers appointed to continuously inspect these places?—No.

218. So that this is an extra precaution, of having two officers specially appointed for the purpose?—Yes, sir.

MR. BENNIE recalled.

219. *Mr. Dowgray.*] In reporting the conditions of the mine, to whom do you report?—To the Under-Secretary of the Mines Department.

220. From whom do you receive your instructions?—From the Under-Secretary of the Mines Department.

221. Have you ever been instructed to address any of your correspondence to the Inspecting Engineer of the Mines Department?—No.

222. Have you ever consulted the Inspecting Engineer?—As a consultation, no.

223. You stated yesterday that in the ordinary course of your inspection you usually visited the mine four times in the year?—Yes.

224. Do you think in this mine the management was carried out in accordance with the Coal-mines Act, and that the working of the mine was conducted to the best advantage of the miners and everybody concerned?—Yes, with the exception of the points to which I drew their attention.

225. How do you account for departing from your usual course of inspection by visiting this mine eight times this year between the month of May and the date of the disaster? There seems to have been something which caused you undue alarm?—Yes. In consequence of the reports of the examining deputies regarding the old workings I visited more frequently. They reported finding gas in the stone drive and in No. 7 south and No. 7 north, and also in one or two old bords, towards the little old dip. Those were my reasons for the extra visits.

226. In your opinion, then, things were not so safe during the last four years as they had been previously?—My opinion was that there was an element of danger present. My inspections were made in order to see exactly the extent of those dangers, and as to whether adequate precautions were taken.

227. Were the adequate precautions provided?—Yes, reasonable precautions were taken.

228. You stated yesterday that you thought the mine was a safe one with the exception of the explosions of the gas and the coaldust?—Yes, that is so.

229. What did you mean when you wrote a letter asking for permission practically to compel the company to install safety-lamps in the mine?—That was after the ignition of a small quantity of gas in the stone drive and the location of small quantities in the old workings. That was in accordance with my adopted system of taking all possible precautions in view of these dangers.