

two impressions; first, that such present conditions of the property involved in the Inquiry as are not satisfactory must be alone due to the Lessor and the management, and secondly that the reclosing of the Foord pit in 1892 is to be attributed to a "lack of co-operation" between the Agent and the special manager for that pit. It will also be concluded that the actions of officials of the Mines Department are without the pale of the Inquiry, and that no duties and no responsibility to the Lessor rested upon them.

That these inferences are not borne out by the facts omitted from the Report, but herewith made evident in the subjoined correspondence it is the object of this Reply to declare.

The report
centres on
the Albion
Mines.

Perhaps it would be well to briefly summarize what this Report is about before proceeding to discuss it in detail. It may be said to centre itself about a mine that, years ago before it was leased to the present holders, had a large trade and drew about it a population that lived on supplying the workpeople. But times changed, grave accidents happened, trade turned to other fields, fires occurred and smouldered on for years in spite of efforts for their extinguishment, and like many things old it had acquired some undesirable yet unremediable conditions. The then lessees transferred their interest to the present holders, who in their turn incurred heavy expenditures in an endeavor to redevelop the property.

The property
changes
hands.

With regard to its history,—mining in the Pictou Coal Field began as far back as 1818, and a strip of the main seam was taken in the best part along the crop as far east and west as the quality of the coal warranted. A subsequent working took another strip further to the deep along the strike of the seam within the limits of saleable coal. Then a pit 900 feet deep took a further lift practically to the same limits. Fires from time to time necessitated flooding the mines with water, and free access throughout the old workings was cut off by falls of roof and crushes. In all the workings the size of the pillars was designed to sustain merely the cover, and a future systematic drawing of pillars was not contemplated (a.) This is an important consideration in the light of the Commission's suggestions. The lease originally held by the General Mining Association was in 1873 transferred to the Halifax Company. After the explosion in the Foord pit in 1880, and until the water that flooded the mine was got out and an entry made in 1890, no coal was got from the main seam, but in the meantime two lower seams, the Third and McGregor, were opened and worked.

(a) See Mines Fires Report, pages 4 and 11.