

330. This difference between the terms of the Government immigrants and yours?—Yes, exactly

331. Your firm knew the difference perfectly well at the time in England?—I cannot speak for them. The Agent-General probably communicated with them. I cannot say from recollection, but I think in the negotiations the terms were mentioned.

332. Are you aware, when Messrs. Brogden began to export emigrants from England under some verbal arrangements with the Agent-General before the agreement of June was signed, that there was a very marked difference between the terms of the Government immigrants and yours?—As I understand, the arrangement was only a temporary one. Five ships altogether had been sent before the agreement was executed. These men were sent out in the expectation that works would be ready for them. Before contracts had been entered into, these five ships had been sent out on the advice of the Agent-General that the men would be required—that they were much wanted, labour being very scarce.

333. Five ships were sent before the agreement of June, 1872, was signed?—Yes.

334. So far as you understand, the object was to provide men for works Messrs. Brogden considered they would obtain contracts for?—No; these men were sent out in anticipation of contracts through the Agent-General pressing upon our firm to send them out.

335. As to the Picton and Blenheim contract, is it true the men left you there?—The great majority of them.

336. Did you not dismiss a great number of them?—Not that I am aware of.

337. You are not aware of it?—No.

338. Do you remember at one period they all stopped work?—I cannot speak from personal knowledge. I was not present at the time. It was outside my duty

339. Cannot you recollect?—It is many years back, and there were disputes on many of the lines. I cannot recollect that one.

340. Do you remember a large number of your men being sued at Picton, when Mr. Connolly defended them?—Yes.

341. On that occasion the men stopped work, did they not?—I cannot recollect that. I remember the men being defended by Mr. Connolly

342. You do not know whether they struck or not?—No.

343. You cannot say, of your own knowledge, whether the Picton men left you, or whether they were discharged by you?—My impression is they left; I cannot say whether owing to a strike or not. I think I may safely say none of the men were ever discharged except when the works were suspended for a few days on the Wellington and Hutt line. That is the only case where any men had to be discharged.

344. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] Are you aware whether the rates of pay Messrs. Brogden were giving the men on their arrival were equal to those being paid by other contractors?—In what locality?

345. In all localities?—At the time the men arrived the rates of wages were in a fluctuating state. In Auckland, for instance, the men were working nine hours a day, as they did in some parts of the South. In Wellington it was eight hours.

346. I am quite aware of that. Did Messrs. Brogden offer the same rate of pay as was given by other employers in each of these places?—Yes; I am quite sure of that. In some cases some men got less than others: some were worth more than others, and were more competent. Taking the men all round, they got the average ruling rate of wages. When they arrived, of course there was some dispute as to the number of hours the men should work. Eventually they came down to eight hours, the same as with other employers of labour.

347. Are you aware of any complaints from your men on several occasions that they were not treated in the same way as other men in similar positions were, both as to hours and rates of pay?—The evil of it was that there was a desire on the part of many employers of labour here to alienate the men from our service. The men got dissatisfied, owing to the interference of outsiders, who told them there was plenty of work elsewhere they could get, and tried all they could to prejudice the men against us.

348. Was there any attempt on Messrs. Brogden's part with a view of giving the men better terms than other contractors offered?—The men entered into an engagement with the firm by which the minimum rate of wages was to be 5s. a day of nine hours. They could not tell what the rates of wages for men were until they arrived. Even when the negotiations were going on, Government sent Home to say the rate was 6s., whereas when the men arrived the rates of wages were 7s. and 8s. As to the men leaving us with regard to the rates of wages, that was a side-issue. It was raised to enable the men to get away. Any men going to work for the firm were given the ruling rate.

349. *Mr. Murray.*] You said work was not available when the men arrived?—Yes, in the case of some ships. The "Jessie Readman" arrived here with 150 adults or more. The works in Wellington were stopped for the reasons I have already mentioned. They had two days' work at the Evans's Bay Road provided by the Provincial Government. The men at once turned round on us and were dissatisfied, and said we had broken our contract, as there was no work for them.

350. Whose fault was it there was no work for the men?—Some of the plans of the Wellington and Hutt line were undergoing changes in the Public Works Office.

351. Through the faulty design of the Government Engineer?—Yes.

352. You attribute that to the fault of the Government Engineers?—Yes.

353. How were the men provided with sustenance?—They had to do the best they could.

354. Were they given any wages by way of allowance for that time?—No; they only got wages for the time they were working.

355. Do you think the Government introducing immigrants free was the cause of Messrs. Brogden having to pay more for their labour in the country?—That was the keystone of the whole business. It took away the last chance we had of recovering on the notes.

356. The introduction of immigrants without charge, do you think that a reason Messrs. Brogden