

should have to pay more for their labour?—That is a question on which I can scarcely give an opinion. It did not affect the labour market very materially.

357. Did it affect it all?—I cannot speak from knowledge. It could be easily worked out. I know if the wages-sheets were got from the office.

358. Do you not think it would have a tendency to reduce the rate of wages?—Not at all.

359. Do you not think Messrs. Brogden were to some extent compensated, by the introduction of free immigrants lowering wages, for losses they might have sustained from the promissory notes?—Not at all. If we had had the men working for us during the period they had engaged for we should not have lost anything; but there was such a demand for labour that three-fourths of them were lost to us just as we were getting our contracts.

360. Why did you not send the men you kept here several days over to Picton at once?—So they were within four days. There was no steamer available earlier.

361. The "Jessie Readman" men I speak of?—We were fully supplied at Picton with men then, and the same with regard to other places.

362. Were they all your own men employed at Picton?—No; a large proportion were others.

363. Why did you not dismiss the others and put on your own men?—We had sent sufficient immigrants over to carry on those works, and if we had sent these they would have gone as the others did.

364. Is it true all the immigrants were not first-class people—men not equal to the mark?—No; they were all first-class people. All the Immigration Agents say so.

365. *Mr. Barron.*] Were there any Scotchmen amongst these men?—I cannot say for certain. That is a difficult question to answer. I know there were a good many Englishmen amongst them. The Government returns give their nationality.

366. *Mr. Turnbull.*] What was the class of men who left you generally?—We kept a lot of men simply for the sake of saying we had carried out the engagements with them for work. The greater portion of the best men left us. The best men—that is, the artisans—left us.

367. How did these notes run up to £72 in one case?—That is for a man and his wife and children, and also outfits for them.

368. One vessel came to Dunedin with men when you were without any work for them?—Yes. We had work there, but were fully supplied with labour. There were already 600 introduced there by us.

369. What became of them?—They went up country.

370. *Captain Kenny.*] You stated, in answer to a question, that some of the men, in refusing to carry out their engagements, complained of the contract between Messrs. Brogden and themselves being broken, as they had not been kept at work?—Yes.

371. Was it part of their engagement that they should be kept fully employed for two years?—Yes.

372. Was that contract carried out on the part of Messrs. Brogden? Had all the men opportunity of full work with you?—No, I cannot say that, because, in case of a ship arriving here, the men, seeing there was no work, of course dispersed, and said that on our part the contract had been broken.

373. Was that plea ever advanced in Court by the men?—Yes.

374. Was it ever admitted by the Magistrate?—No.

*Mr. Cave:* There was no Masters and Servants Act here by which the contract could be enforced. But that would not affect the promissory notes in any case.

*Captain Kenny:* Were not the promissory notes given under the engagement to find them two years' work?

*Mr. Cave:* No; they were given for the kits and the passage-money, irrespective of that.

*Captain Kenny:* But on the understanding they should be engaged for two years.

*Mr. Cave:* The engagement for two years was not enforceable on either side other than by action for breach of contract.

375. *Captain Kenny.*] I understand you to say one of the reasons assigned by the men for not fulfilling their engagements for the repayment of the passage-money was that they had not been kept fully employed as they were promised by the firm?—Yes.

376. Can you give the Committee any idea as to the extent to which this part of the arrangement was not carried out; that is to say, were the men kept out of employment for a long period, or only for a few days on arrival?—Only for a few days on arrival, and in the case where the works were suspended.

377. I understand there were disputes between the firm and the men, sometimes ending in strikes?—Yes.

378. During that time the men were out of employment?—Yes.

379. For how long did these disputes keep them in enforced idleness?—I cannot say. In most cases the disputes were fairly adjusted between the parties. I do not think the number of hours interfered with it at all: it was as to the rates of wages. We offered the men the fair ruling rate of wages in the district where they were located, and most of them accepted what we contended was the current rate. Those who would not accept were the class of men who desired to get away to evade the responsibility of their promissory notes. The difficulty we had was in deducting the one-fifth from their wages.

380. There is another question you were asked, whether the immigration conducted by the Government did not tend to keep down the rate of wages. Your reply was No. I should like to ask you whether it did not tend to prevent the wages rising higher. If the Government had not introduced their immigrants, would not the rate of wages have been higher?—It did rise considerably, notwithstanding the introduction of the Government immigrants: wages continued to rise because of the enormous amount of work going on all over the country. Of course we suffered along with others. The introduction of the Government free immigrants did not seem to affect the market in the slightest degree. There was the same general demand for labour and not the supply to meet it. When the ships came in all the men found employment at once.