

entering and leaving. For instance, Mr Labortonche, Secretary for the Victorian Railways, though an utter stranger to me, sent me a note saying that as he heard I was connected with the Westport Company, I would oblige him by calling on him. I waited on him, when he told me that the railway authorities were fully satisfied our coal was the best for their locomotives, that the Newcastle was inferior, and they had great difficulty in getting what they required, pressed me to tender for their contracts, and assured me the Government would stretch the point to give us a contract for 150,000 tons. I told him frankly we could do nothing till Westport Harbour was deepened by the Government, so as to get vessels of 1,000 tons in. He still pressed me, offering to subdivide the contracts down to 20,000 tons, if we would only let them have the coal. I told him we had any amount of coal, but our difficulty was bottoms, he then offered to vary the specifications, so as to take delivery at Westport Wharf. This, I said, would suit us, but I warned him that the difficulty of getting vessels to go there would be as great for them as for us, and I was afraid nothing could be done notwithstanding this; the Victorian Government actually advertised over here in New Zealand for tenders, offering to vary the contracts from 150,000 tons to 20,000 and giving the alternative of supplying it on Westport Wharf. Of course it came to nothing, but it shows their extreme anxiety to get our coal.

At the same time, the various gas companies in and around Melbourne all urged us to supply their wants, and promised to take now any cargo of coal we liked to send over at any time. The Victorian Government also reserved this right in their contracts, and are ready now to take any shipments of coal we could send them, irrespective of existing contracts. The strong desire of manufacturers, and large consumers of coal in Melbourne and in Adelaide to get our coal, aided us very materially in getting the large capital required so readily subscribed. In the month of March last, Mr Bend, the Chairman of the Metropolitan Gas Company, Melbourne, came over to Dunedin, and called on me for the purpose of seeing if he could not make any arrangements for the supply of our coal. We talked the matter over, and he offered us a contract of 80,000 tons, at a remunerative price. We were compelled to decline it on account of not being able to get vessels drawing 16 feet of water over Westport Bar, and told him the best thing he could do would be go on to Wellington and interview the Government on the subject. This he did, and I believe Mr Hall was very much impressed with the urgency of his suit.

When in Melbourne, Captain Stevens, the General Manager of the Eastern Steam Navigation Company, told me that if we got 16 feet of water on Westport Bar, they would send their own steamers for our coal. The Chinese coal, he said, was very inferior, and ours was so much superior to Newcastle as to more than make up for the little extra distance.

Many shipmasters (such as Captain Logan) have told me that if there were 16 feet of water on Westport Bar, many of the numerous vessels which now leave here in ballast for Newcastle to load up with coal for San Francisco and elsewhere, would load up at Westport instead.

The Company have had plans and surveys made for opening up the 53-feet seam of coal at Granity Creek, at a cost of nearly £60,000 sterling, and capable of putting out 300,000 tons, and with the existing Waimangaroa works, of 500,000 tons per annum. This the Company are prepared at once to enter upon if the Government undertake to so improve the harbor as to admit of vessels drawing 16 feet 6 inches entering. Most of this would be export trade.

The Company has six steam vessels now employed in their trade. Two new steamers of 600 tons burthen each have been contracted for, and one of them is now in the water, the other is building—there are other new steamers also building specially for this trade.

The coal is unrivalled as a steam and gas coal, and for household consumption is greatly preferred whenever obtainable.

I believe the future export trade of this coal is simply limitless, and that there is no shadow of a doubt as to the magnificent returns this coal field will yet give to the colony in many ways. The only limit to the extension of this trade is the amount of money the Government see fit to expend in improving the harbour, and the very highest estimate of the cost of that will not be a fraction percentage on the returns which will come back into the coffers of the colony.

ROBERT GILLIES,
Chairman Westport Coal Company.

No. 6.

New Zealand Railways.

RETURN of Tonnage and Dues Collected at the Port of Westport during the Year ended 31st March, 1882.

IMPORTS.			EXPORTS.		
Description.	Tons.	Amount.	Description.	Tons.	Amount.
General Goods ...	4,139	£ s. d. 398 7 10	General Goods ...	608	£ s. d. 73 9 5
			Coal ...	28,278	Free.
Total	4,139	398 7 10	Total	28,886	73 9 5

Railway Department,
Head Office, Wellington, 29th June, 1882.