

there would be material on hand worth about £8,000; and the stoppage and recommencement of the work at a future date would at least increase the cost by £2,000 or £2,500 additional—made up in dismantling and storing the portions of plant which would be destroyed unless carefully stored away, and, secondly, in re-erecting same and relaying whole railway-line in, say, three or four years' time, and getting and training men for this special work.

Mr. JOHN BOURKE further examined.

235. *The Chairman.*] You were to give us, Mr. Bourke, the items making up this £2,000 which you expect to gain from the extension of the works?—Yes. I may say that yesterday the tonnage of the port was, by the Committee, stated at, or, rather, guessed at, 16,000 tons. I wired to the Collector of Customs at Gisborne to obtain the correct information. I said to him, "Please answer the following questions: First, the total tonnage of steamers trading to the port in one year; second, the total tonnage of sailing-vessels." His reply was, "Tonnage of steamers, 154,617 tons; sailing-vessels, 8,262 tons: imports and exports together, 20,000 tons for 1887."

236. Is that the tonnage upon which you will be able to charge berthage-dues?—I understand so. Yes.

*Witness:* There was a statement made yesterday by one gentleman of the Committee that there was a limit to the wharfage-rate. I think under the Harbours Act that is not so. I have gone carefully through the Act since yesterday, and I have taken advice upon the question this morning. There is no limit to the wharfage: you can, in fact, charge £1 per ton if you choose.

237. *Mr. Ross.*] Section 216 of the Harbours Act of 1878 says, "Every Board may from time to time make by-laws providing that harbour-improvement rates not exceeding in any case 2s. per ton, by weight or by measurement, as shall be expressed in such by-law, shall be levied upon all goods and merchandise discharged at or shipped from the port." Your rate is a harbour-improvement rate, is it not? Your wharfage is included in that. Have you any authority to levy wharfage at all?—We have levied wharfage under the Harbours Act of 1878.

238. Section 171 of the Act says, "The harbour fund shall consist of the moneys arising from the following sources: (1) Harbour-dues and pilotage-rates and all other dues which the Board may be empowered to levy or receive; (2) harbour-improvement rates; (3) rents and profits of land vested in the Board; (4) proceeds and profits of land set aside as endowments; (5) all other moneys which may be received by or become the property of the Board, under the authority of this or a special Act." You have no authority that I can see to charge wharfage at all?—I may say the advice I took was from Mr. Wilson, Secretary of the Marine Department; and he distinctly stated there was no limit to wharfage.

239. There is no wharfage mentioned?—There are no harbour-improvement rates, Mr. Wilson says, charged in any port in the colony.

240. That is nonsense; and I do not allow Mr. Wilson to be an authority at all for making that statement. The Otago Harbour Board is a body that levies a harbour-improvement rate?—Mr. Wilson was not sure as to that Board.

241. *The Chairman.*] How much do you charge for wharfage?—2s. 6d. per ton.

*Mr. Ross:* That is 6d. more than you have a right to charge.

*Mr. Graham:* In other ports, I know, both harbour-improvement and wharfage rates are charged. I know for a fact that at Napier there is a separate wharfage-rate charged.

*Mr. Ross:* At Wellington and Napier and other places the wharfage-rates charged are for the use of the piers and cranes, and storage. It is a very trifling sum they charge.

*Witness:* I will give you an instance of the wharfage-rates charged by the Wellington Harbour Board: for bricks and slates, in and out, the charge is 3s.

*Mr. Ross:* That is illegal, then, in my opinion, because it is over 2s.

*Witness* handed in a copy of the by-laws of the Gisborne Harbour Board.

*Mr. Graham:* These by-laws were sanctioned by the Governor, and it is not likely they would have been passed with that charge in them if it had been illegal.

*Mr. Ross:* If this was allowed by the Government it is in contravention of the Act, and it would still be illegal.

*Mr. Graham:* I would suggest that we take the opinion of a lawyer on the question.

242. *The Chairman.*] We are going rather from what we wanted to get from Mr. Bourke. He says about £2,000 will be received as extra moneys resulting from the extension of the pier. How do you expect to get that increase, Mr. Bourke?—By increasing the wharfages on goods that come on the wharf, and upon the tonnage of vessels. As I say, the people are now paying 6s. per ton for lighterage, and they would very readily pay a higher amount for wharfage to save that 6s. per ton.

243. I understand you to say that in order to get this £2,000 you will have to charge an amount for wharfage equal to that which you now charge as dues. Is that what you meant to convey?—I meant to convey there would be an additional wharfage amongst other things.

244. Is that all the solution you can give?—And the charge on the tonnage of vessels.

245. How much would that give?—About £1,500.

246. What is that charge? How do you make up the £1,500?—Under the port charges at the present time we charge only 3d., 1d., and 4d. per ton. Under the Harbours Act of 1886 we have a right to charge 1s. 3d. per ton.

247. That is only on the goods, is it not?—No: on the registered tonnage of the vessels.

*The Chairman:* Why, that would be prohibitory. No ship would come to your port.

248. *Mr. Graham.*] Do you mean the Committee to understand that the full rate would have to be charged to make this up?—No; I do not think that—not the full rate; only a portion of it. The port charges in Wellington are—for every vessel plying within the port only, or employed in coasting only, 3d. per ton quarterly in advance; for every vessel not plying within the port only, or