

372. *The Chairman.*] To what extent, if any, would your company reduce their freights by steamers using the wharf? Supposing the Board do not charge your company any more for port charges than at present, would there be any reduction in the freight to the people?—No doubt it would be reduced to the extent of the lighterage charge—say, 4s. per ton.

373. Provided there were no further charges levied upon the steamers?—That is so. I may point out that if the large steamers do not continue to call the Board would need to make a very large rate on the small steamers to obtain the aggregate amount they wish to raise.

374. The secretary to the Board has said in his evidence, “We will have charges which we cannot at present levy—charges for berthage, tonnage dues, supplying water to vessels.” Taking that answer as a fair indication of the intention of the Board, do you think you would be able to reduce your freight by anything?—They could not possibly make charges which would amount to 4s. or 5s. per ton. They would have to seek other means of revenue. The principal charge would be upon goods, and that would fall upon the consignees, and not upon the vessels.

375. We want to be able to see what benefit it will be to the people to construct this work. If you reduce your freight by 4s. or 5s. per ton it will be a benefit to the people?—Yes, unless wharfage dues to a like amount are levied.

376. *Mr. Ross.*] How many of your steamers visit the port of Gisborne on the average?—Two large steamers per week.

377. And the smaller ones?—Three or four a week, I should think. The “Australia” and “Suva” trade there regularly twice a week; and the “Ohau” and “Omapere” call at intervals on their way from the South to Auckland.

378. What is the average tonnage of goods carried by your steamers?—I cannot tell you. I could get the information for you.

379. I presume that you would not send your large steamers to the port?—I do not state that we would not. I think that that would probably be the result, though. They could not carry cargo against smaller steamers using the wharf; and I do not think the passenger-traffic would justify their calling there.

380. *The Chairman.*] Do you think the construction of the wharf as proposed would increase the facilities for shipping stock and wool?—Yes.

381. What depth of water more than a steamer draws is necessary to enable her to lie alongside with safety?—If it is perfectly smooth you do not want over 1ft. The vessel could lie aground.

382. Take an ordinary swell. I suppose there is always some swell there?—I should think from 2ft. to 3ft.

383. *Mr. R. Thompson.*] As your regulations are so strict, I suppose the captains of your steamers, if they saw any risk, would refuse to go alongside?—Certainly they would. The regulations to which you refer do not apply to accidents inseparable from a particular trade, such as bar harbours.

384. Do they not apply, then, to cases like that which occurred at New Plymouth the other day?—Not necessarily. We have many things to guide us in coming to conclusions.

385. *The Chairman.*] Supposing the Board were to greatly increase the port dues, is it probable you might not use the wharf?—Well, so long as we traded to the port, we should use the wharf; it would simply be a matter of calculation what freight we would charge.

386. You would use the wharf?—Certainly, if it was safe; and unless we found the lighterage was less than the wharf charges.

387. Then, again, if the lighterage was not less, you might choose to lie alongside the wharf and charge the people the extra freight?—It is our policy, if the townspeople provide the wharf, to use it.

388. If the depth of water at high tide was 18ft., would that enable your larger steamers to lie alongside?—The “Rotomahana” and “Te Anau” could perhaps go alongside at high water, and in a perfectly smooth sea. There are difficulties, however, to be considered, which I cannot give evidence upon, such as the going in and out, the room to swing, and that sort of thing. The captains would have to use their own judgment in the matter. There would be no object in going alongside to lie for half an hour or an hour at the wharf, and then go out again.

389. All your smaller steamers would use the wharf, and then, in that case, it is probable your larger steamers would not call?—That is so.

390. What we are to understand then is, that the extension of the wharf as desired by the Board, would be a convenience and benefit, looking at the matter from a shipping point of view?—Yes, it would be a benefit to the small steamers, and no doubt a benefit to the townspeople in some ways. I do not express an opinion as to its being a financial success.

391. The works as they are now are not of the slightest use to you?—No, not the slightest use.

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FRIDAY, 27TH JULY, 1888.

WILLIAM CHRISTIE SINCLAIR, Captain of the s.s. “Tarawera,” examined.

392. *The Chairman.*] What we want to know, Captain Sinclair, is whether, from your experience of the Port of Gisborne, the bar has shoaled up since the work has been carried out, or whether there is a better entrance now?—The captains of our small steamers say the bar is much worse than it was before, and that is what I expected. For nine months of the year there is a heavy roll of the sea setting in from the south-east, and this roll brings with it a continual drift of sand. This sand is washed up and taken back again with the backwater, and so a continual swirl goes on. Now, this breakwater, being so close to the mouth of the river, prevents this drift of sand from going out again as far as the moving water goes, and so the sand backs up and just keeps along the line of the pier.