

217. That, on the other hand, it is difficult to allege any just reason why the whole of these costs should be borne by the Board.

218. That in other centres coal-owners or coal-consignees have to take delivery of consignments from the railway-trucks as they arrive at point of destination, and if they do not effect this within a limited time they are liable for demurrage to the Railway Commissioners.

219. That, this being so, the system of storing free of cost is exceptional, and apparently limited to the West Coast; but that, in any case, there is no reason for thinking that coal-owners would themselves bear the burden of storage, in the same way in which goods of other classes are charged.

220. That it is doubtful, however, whether it is contemplated by the owners thus to increase the vested capital of their mines, and also whether such storage-accommodation, if supplied by the Board, would command an increase of revenue equivalent to the expenditure, seeing that the pressure is always for a reduction of cost.

221. That it is to be remembered in respect of the staith or bin system that different classes of coal are delivered by the Grey Valley Coal Company, which, to prevent admixture, must occupy separate bins, and that, with the opening-up of the other mines referred to, still more numerous subdivisions of storage-accommodation would be necessary; and also that there may be more or less trouble arising from competitive demand for the successive use of such divisions.

222. That it has been discussed to some extent in Mr. Martin's evidence as to who should pay the cost of this accommodation if constructed by the Board, and it has also been suggested that each coal-owner requiring such accommodation should have it provided at his own cost, on terms somewhat similar to those on which private sidings are provided by the Railway Commissioners—namely, paying first cost and having ten years' tenure rent free.

223. That, apart from the consideration of this subject given above, there is another method by which this difficulty may be overcome, and which has been suggested—namely, that the mine-owners themselves should provide storage at the pit-mouth. In this case also what has previously been represented with respect to damage from frequent handling would apply; and, further, it has been represented that storage at that point would not obviate the pressure upon the railway traffic arising from the intermittent character of the trade.

224. That, from a railway point of view, authorities are divided, and the opinion seems to have some weight that storage at the port itself would enable delivery to take place by cranes at once, whilst the traffic was being continued in the ordinary way, and that hands in the railway service could be more continuously occupied by this method, and thus fewer required. On the other hand, it seems difficult to realise that with a short railway-line such as the Greymouth-Brunner line additional trains could not be kept going to draw away the supply of coal if there was such supply stored at the mines.

225. That no doubt additional locomotive-power would be required, but, in the opinion of the Commissioners, such considerations should not weigh if there be additional traffic to warrant it.

226. That, before anything is decided in respect to this question, sufficient time should be given for properly weighing all the surrounding difficulties or advantages of any of these systems. But the Commissioners incline to the opinion that expenditure out of public funds is not at present advisable, in view of the fact that the coal industry is at present in one ownership, which has had, as already pointed out, provided for them all the advantages and benefits from a large expenditure, and that regard should be had to the documents hereinafter to be referred to, and which show the extent of interruptions to the shipping arising from the state of the river or bar.

GREYMOUTH HARBOUR BOARD.

227. That, in order to a better comprehension of the position of the Greymouth Harbour Board, its endowments and finances, the Commissioners have shown in the appendix the clauses of various Acts which bear on the subject, and to which they would refer for the text of such enactments.