

2195. About this former system : did it damage the coal much?—Yes ; with the old kinds of wagons and the shoots the coal was damaged.

2196. When were the new hopper-wagons introduced?—since the shoots were done away with?—No, they were in use while we had the stage ; they saved a great deal of breakage even with the shoots.

2197. Under the present system what is the amount of the breakage?—I should say it is nothing except in the case of the first truck-load that is put in.

2198. There is no breakage except, perhaps, in the case of the first truck, which is dropped into the bottom of the vessel?—Yes.

2199. *Mr. Moody.*] You stated, I believe, that, if stores at the port would avoid loss of time at the mines, stores at the mine would not do so : will you state why stores at the mine would not answer the purpose?—The storage at the mine would not benefit the railway.

2200. But it would benefit the mines. As I understand it, the storage is to avoid loss of time at the mine?—I think I stated that if the storage were provided at the port it would keep both the mine and railway working continuously. To provide it at the mine only would be to provide work for the mine, and the railway would be idle a portion of the time ; and then when the vessels came in the railway would have double work to do on some days and nothing to do on other days. But by having the storage at the port the work would be going on continuously all the time. All the trucks would be coming down loaded with coal, and the men who would be employed in loading the vessels would then, when the vessels were not in, be loading this coal into the storage bins.

2201. *Mr. Brown.*] Can you say what average number of vessels take this average of 3,000 tons per week?—It varies.

2202. It naturally will vary. You have no idea of the average?—I could not tell you ; the Harbourmaster might.

2203. *The Chairman.*] We could get it from the shipping returns?—Yes. There is one steamer that came here that has done 1,500 tons. Then, there are the “Ochau” and the “Taupo,” which take 900 tons.

2204. *Mr. Brown.*] Your difficulty as to the railway is that the trucks would not run up and back again in time. They would not be filled at the mine quickly ; there would be so many vessels here to load?—They would not fill them as fast as they were emptied.

2205. If they had storage at the mine, would they not fill them quickly enough?—They would then ; but that is one of our troubles. When we have steamers in and the bins full of coal, and the mine at work, the coal accumulates very fast, and we have to run special trains. They fill too quickly for us in those days. We are compelled to have an extra set of men to keep the sidings clear when we are working like that. But say the trucks are full, and the bins full, and there are no steamers in, we have not ordinary work for all those men.

2206. Would you require to fill up your trucks here if the storage was at the mine?—It depends upon whether they would store screened coals in bins.

2207. *The Chairman.*] Even if they stored the coal at the mine, it would have to be brought down when the steamer was here to receive it ; not at other times?—Yes ; not at other times.

2208. The off-time of the miners would be occupied in filling the bins ; but the off-time of the railway employes would not be occupied—there would be nothing for them to do?—There would be nothing for them to do.

2209. *Mr. Brown.*] It is not a double line?—It is a single line.

2210. There are sidings on the way?—We have one at Kaiata.

2211. *Mr. Moody.*] Even if those stores were erected here, you propose that they should contain nothing but unscreened coal, so that they could put some out of the mine unscreened ; and they could fill as fast as you could empty here?—I am recommending it to be at the port. I am not considering the railway ; but I am considering what would suit both.

2212. *Mr. Brown.*] In ordinary weather, when the bar is not bound, and there is no fresh, are there always steamers in? Have there been in the past?—Not always.

2213. Sometimes your works are idle?—Yes.

2214. *Mr. Moody.*] Has that been more frequently the case since the amalgamation than previously?—I do not think so.

2215. Is there less competition now for carrying the coal from the place than there was before the amalgamation?—There are not three mines competing with one another.

2216. I mean, in the shipping?—I did not know that there was any competition in the shipping.

2217. Is there no other company but the Union and the Anchor that come in here now?—That is all.

2218. *The Chairman.*] Have you considered who should pay the cost of the erection of the shoots and the storage here, and the cost of working the plant necessary to empty the stores?—I have reckoned that the mine-owners or the coal company would do it.

2219. What, in proportion to the whole, do you think it would cost?—I think the bin could be constructed and the appliances provided for filling, emptying, and so on, for about £2 per ton capacity of coal store.

2220. £3,000 for 1,500 tons?—Yes.

2221. *Mr. Brown.*] Do you know of any other place where railways provide storage?—No ; not to my knowledge.

2222. As far as you know, railways are confined to carrying and delivering?—That is it.

2223. And the storage elsewhere, as far as you know, is employed by the owners of the goods?—Yes.

2224. *The Chairman.*] Not at Westport?—Westport is similar to here.

2225. Westport has storage staiths?—It was never intended in the design that they should be used for stores. It was found that they could, by making some additions, store small quantities of