

2828. Can you inform the Commissioners who first originated the idea of reducing the royalty or haulage charges?—It came from the men.

2829. Do you remember the occasion?—Certainly. It came from the men to me by a deputation of themselves. They came and asked if I would accompany them to Wellington and take a part with a deputation in interviewing the Government on the subject. I do not say that the owners of the mines have not tried on previous occasions to get a reduction of royalty or haulage charges, but I say on this occasion it emanated from the men.

2830. *Mr. Brown.*] Who were those men?—Messrs. Lomas, Newton, and Andrew, I think, formed the deputation.

2831. *The Chairman.*] That was to you?—Yes.

2832. Do you remember the argument they used for throwing the burden of the loss on the Government?—The only argument was that the railway was earning 45 per cent. profit, and had no right to be paying 45 per cent. profit, and that they could very well afford to take it off the haulage. I would refer to my letters to Mr. Andrew on the subject on the 7th August and the 20th.

2833. Then you never heard any further reasons urged for throwing the loss upon the royalty excepting those you have named?—They thought that the miners' wages ought not to be reduced, and, seeing that the company was paying so much, the Government should take it off the haulage.

2834. That does not affect the royalty question?—They did not urge any reasons about the royalty that I am aware.

2835. But you remember the reduction of the royalty was talked of?—It was mentioned.

2836. As a permanent reduction, or merely temporary, to enable the mines to be carried on while something was being done?—I believe, as far as it affected the royalty, they mentioned it as a temporary measure.

2837. In your opinion, as manager of the mine, do you think it a desirable thing that the royalty should be interfered with—the present royalty?—I think the present royalty is reasonable. I do not see any just reason for asking that the present royalty should be reduced.

2838. Do you think the concession of the whole or any part of the royalty would be a material advantage, so far as to determine whether the mines were or were not to be carried on?—Certainly not. I do not think the suspension of the royalty would determine the carrying-on or otherwise of the mines. A suspension of the royalty for the time being would be a benefit while the mines were in the difficult position they are in now.

2839. That is to say, to remedy to some extent the loss caused by the action of the men?—To tide over the difficulty.

2840. *Mr. Brown.*] Do you regard the railway rates as reasonable?—Well, I considered the rates somewhat high, but, looking at recent railway returns from England and other places, and taking everything into consideration, I think they are not excessive. I used to think the railway haulage somewhat high, but I think it is not so excessive as it appeared at first sight.

2841. Is the work undertaken by the railway more than in other places, apart from the rate charged?—Yes; the work undertaken is more than is customary, I think.

2842. Is it usual for railways to undertake storage in trucks?—No, it is not usual.

2843. I am speaking now of Home matters?—No, it is not usual to provide storage.

2844. Then the railways do more work here than in your experience they do elsewhere?—Yes.

2845. As regards the rate itself, does it cover the seven-mile section of the railway at a fair price?—The rate itself for railway haulage would be excessive, I think.

2846. Have you any knowledge of the rates of haulage in other districts of New Zealand?—I do not know what it is.

2847. There is a tariff?—Yes.

2848. Is it above or below that?—I think it is in keeping with the tariff.

2849. But with more work to be done?—I think they are within their tariff.

2850. You mean that it is lower than the tariff?—Yes; I think from my inquiry into the matter some time ago that they are within the tariff.

2851. The tariff applicable to other places where less work is done? Within what they would be allowed to charge?—For haulage only, yes.

2852. *The Chairman.*] I wish to ask you concerning the last stoppage that took place in the mine. There were two letters dated the 30th August, one from you to Mr. Andrew and one from Mr. Andrew to you: which of these letters was first delivered?—My letter to Mr. Andrew.

2853. *Mr. Brown.*] Was Mr. Andrew's letter to you received on that date?—I think it was received on that day.

2854. Do you remember if that was a Saturday?—It would be a Saturday. My reason for writing the letter was because by the seamen being called out steamers were not likely to come to hand to enable the work at the mine to be resumed as we had arranged.

2855. *The Chairman.*] You have been already asked the question, but I want it more distinctly. Do you consider the condition contained in Mr. Andrew's letter that the coal was not to be supplied to the Union Company's steamers was part of the arrangement under which the men resumed work?—It was not part of the arrangement.

2856. What was the date they resumed work?—On the 1st September.

2857. That was the date they were to resume work, but they did not really resume work?—No.

2858. It was suddenly thought of in consequence of the Maritime Council having called out the Union Company's seamen?—That was the fact.

2859. *Mr. Brown.*] Was this letter of the 28th August the final acceptance of the terms arranged upon which they were to return to work?—That is the letter. Yes.