

307. Do you consider it desirable, under the present condition of the demand for coal at the port, that further mines should be opened up?—I do.

308. For what reason?—I say we should be able to compete against Newcastle and foreign coal coming into the place. If these mines were opened out we should require more plant of every description. We should have plenty of vessels if we had the cranes. There are sufficient facilities afforded by the harbour improvements to work four times the trade we are doing now.

309. What wages did you in former days pay, say, for hewing?—I produce, as an instance, the pay-sheet for November, 1885, in which it appears that the rate of wages paid to miners was 12s. per day. I produce another sheet, which is dated the 16th August, 1888, and I take the case of Winter and his mate Hughes: together they turned out £12 15s., for the fortnight, in which time they put out 273 skips of coal. Each skip is half a ton, one-half of it being small, consisting of dross and nuts. The men pay for fuse and powder. I take as another instance the pay-sheet of February, 1888, from which it appears that Winter, the same miner, received at the rate of 4s. a ton on screened coal. The extreme was made by Winter and company, who got out fifty-six trucks in one day, which would be equal to £1 8s. a day: that was the highest wages I ever paid for a day's work, but these men were splendid workers.

310. What would be the ordinary wages?—About £3 5s. a week. The average earnings are from 12s. to 14s. a day of eight hours' work.

311. How are the surface-men paid?—We paid at the rate of 10s. That is the usual rate throughout the coast. I put in my original pay-sheets in support of these statements. [Exhibit No. 4.] These rates show that at this time I paid 2s. per ton for unscreened coal—that is, the same for which the company now pay 2s. 10d. at the Brunner Mine.

312. Were the wages you paid to the men satisfactory to them?—Yes, I believe so.

313. Were there any strikes?—There were no strikes. There were constant grievances, which were referred to me for settlement, and not to a union. I always managed to settle them.

314. How long have you been an employer of labour?—I have employed labour since 1854, and I never knew men to receive their pay with so little thanks as coal-miners. Other men seem to feel grateful for their money, but the coal-miners always seem to look at you as if you were trying to rob them.

315. What railway freight did you pay?—I paid 2s. 6d.

316. What rent did you pay for your lease?—I paid the Westport Company 6d. a ton rent, and that covered all royalty. The 2s. covered all railway freights and wharf charges; that was all. I had to pay 2s. 6d. for everything—for my face coal, but this was only at first; it was afterwards reduced to 2s. for railway freight all round.

317. Did you ever freight coal on your own account?—Yes.

318. How much did you pay?—I paid, I think, 10s. to Lyttelton, and 9s. to Wellington.

319. By sailing ship or by steamer?—By Union Steamship Company's steamers, I think.

320. What did you do with all your slack?—I used to use it in many ways. I took some of it up to my flax-mill, some I stored in my back-yard, and so on.

321. Are you aware if there is any demand for slack for gas-making?—They would not use it here.

322. From your experience would you say that Greymouth coal is favourable for gas-making?—I believe it is.

323. Have you supplied coal to any company for gas-making?—No.

324. What is the Grey coal most adapted for?—It is better adapted for smelting-works than anything I know of, as it will make a good hard coke. As I am an iron-founder I use a good deal of it every day, and it will beat anything I have ever seen in the furnace.

325. Does slack make as good coke as the head coal?—It is coke that is made from the slack.

326. What is the market value of Greymouth coke?—They charge me £1 10s. a ton for it. It ranges from £1 5s. to £1 10s.

327. Which of the mines do you consider turns out the best coal?—The Tyneside was preferred by the blacksmiths and others to any of the other Grey River coals. It is peculiarly adapted for blacksmiths' work, being a beautiful clean coal, and it does not scale the iron. It gives out a very great heat. The Grey Valley coals are all equally good, the Wallsend, the Coal-pit Heath, and the Brunner. The Greymouth coal is the best coal I know of. I do not think there is a better coal in the Southern Hemisphere for manufacturing purposes and for coke.

328. Is it as good for household purposes?—Not quite so good, on account of its richness, not because of its inferiority.

329. Would you call it a good steam-coal?—Yes, a grand steam-coal.

330. What is your idea of the quantity of coal in the district that is still available?—In my opinion there is still abundance of coal in the Brunner district, but of course it is not so easily obtained as in the earlier years on account of the increasing depth.

331. Will you tell us about the Blackball?—There is no mine working at the Blackball.

332. What other mines may be opened in the district?—There are several—there are the Coal Creek, the Point Elizabeth, and also the Blackball.

333. Would they all use the Greymouth Harbour?—Yes, unless a harbour is made at Point Elizabeth.

334. These you have just mentioned are leases actually existing?—Yes; besides which there is a quantity of coal available for working under similar circumstances to Mount Rochfort, which is held by the Westport Company.

335. Have you any interest in the Point Elizabeth and Blackball mines?—Yes.

336. Are you looking to public expenditure to open up the mines?—To a certain extent, yes.

337. What will be required to make the Blackball available?—My estimate is £30,000 for access to port.