

338. What is the extent of the mine?—Three square miles.
 339. Point Elizabeth has not got access to Greymouth yet?—No.
 340. What will that require?—A railway of about five or six miles.
 341. And what distance for the Coal Creek?—About four or five miles, I think.
 342. The Blackball lease is now on land owned by the Midland Railway?—Yes; and it is on account of that that I feel almost hopeless in the matter.
 343. Are any of the other leases you have mentioned in the same position?—No; the Coal Creek is on the Nelson coal reserve.
 344. What is the thickness of your seam at the Blackball?—It is about 20ft. to 21ft.
 345. Is it a clean seam?—No. There is 11ft. to 13ft. of good coal, then there is a stone band of about a foot in thickness, and then about 6ft. or 7ft. of good coal again on the top of that.

Mr. WILLIAM SIMPSON SMITH sworn and examined.

346. *The Chairman.*] Are you a resident in Greymouth?—No; I reside in Amberley, Canterbury.

347. What is your connection with coal-mining here?—I am interested, in company with Mr. F. Hamilton, of Nelson, and others, in three leases at Point Elizabeth.

348. You have written to the Commissioners desiring to make a statement?—Yes. We are the lessees at Point Elizabeth, and we have surveyed a line of railway from there to Greymouth, and have applied to the Government for authority to construct it, and then we applied to the Railway Commissioners to know what the terminal rates would be. They fixed them at 1s. 3d., we having to construct the line and find the plant and rolling-stock and work it. We are to use all that portion of the line and sidings on this side of the river.

349. That is to say, you will have to pay 1s. 3d. for what are really wharf charges?—Yes; as compared with the Brunner Mines, that leaves the charge for use of the railway between Greymouth and Brunner at equal to 9d., as the Brunner pays 2s. altogether.

350. Are you aware how that 1s. 3d. was arrived at? Has there been any correspondence on the subject?—Yes; there have been interviews and correspondence.

351. What do you consider fair?—We consider that 6d. would be fair, as that would place us in the same position as the Brunner Mine. We would have even paid 9d., although we consider that too much, considering our expense in the construction of the line.

352. What is the length of the line?—From Johnston Street to our lease is 7 miles 10 chains.

353. In that railway you would require a bridge over the Grey River: how do you propose to effect that?—The Government have offered to give us the use of the Cobden Bridge.

354. What department?—The Public Works.

355. On what terms?—That the company alter the bridge so as to carry a railway over the present bridge.

356. Is there any rent to be charged?—No.

357. Do you know if it is possible that the 1s. 3d. may cover some charge for the use of the bridge?—No; I do not think there is anything of the sort.

358. What length of Government line would you require to use?—Just from the end of the bridge down to the wharf, about half a mile.

359. Then, the services you will require from the Government will be the use of the line from the bridge to the shipping, also the sidings?—Yes.

360. And will they run the line for you?—Yes; they take charge when we put it on their sidings.

361. Is the line not to be conveyed to the Railway Commissioners and run on the ordinary railway system?—No; it is to be run as a coal line, under the District Railways Act.

362. Are you to provide your own rolling-stock, including locomotives?—Yes.

363. What provision has been made or contemplated for sheds or other necessary conveniences in Greymouth? Are you to trust to the Railway Commissioners to provide the accommodation?—The Government propose to give us some siding space near the quarries, but we shall have to make our own alterations.

364. Do you think the rent of 1s. 3d. will be meant to cover any of that?—No; because it is under the Public Works Department. Our company has to provide shed-sites in Greymouth.

365. Have you asked for an explanation of the items of the 1s. 3d.?—Yes; but they have made no reply; they did not particularise the charges. They say they make so much on the Brunner line, and they consider that, as this would be a rival line, it would draw so much of the traffic away from them, and they would require to make the same profit afterwards as they are doing now.

366. Have they expressed that in correspondence?—No; in interviews. I formed one of a deputation which waited upon the Railway Commissioners, in Wellington, on this subject, and I then heard their views.

367. What capital does the company propose to expend in preliminary works?—£5,000. It will cost, in railway and rolling-stock, over £60,000.

368. What seams do you propose to work?—It is proposed to work two seams. The principal seam is a very clean coal, close to the beach and easily accessible. Then, we have seams of bituminous coal, one about 16ft. 9in. good coal, also a seam 8ft. 6in. I believe that coal extends over the whole of the property. There are two leases of 1,280 acres each, and 220 acres extra for access to the property.

369. Will it be shaft-sinking or level-driving?—We shall commence by taking the coal to the rise. There are three seams altogether on the property.

370. Has there been a company formed?—Yes, we have formed a company in Melbourne, but we have not conveyed the property or anything of that sort yet. We have to make sure of a railway to deliver coals at 2s. 3d., including terminal rates, before the company will take it off our hands.