

number of men during the period of twelve years would be considerably varied. I should think on an average we would have probably from 150 to 170 men all told.

414. Have you any idea of the wages of the miners?—They were paid by the ton. I think it was 4s. a ton for screened coal, and yardage in narrow places. Formerly, I think we used to get it for 3s. per ton, but as things advanced we had to advance the prices.

415. What proportion did the screened coal form? What slack was there?—About a third slack, perhaps not so much. There is not near so much slack in our's as there is in the Brunner.

416. *Mr. Brown.*] Have you any recollection of the amount of wages earned by the miners at that place?—The wages earned were always fairly good. The average was reduced a good deal by irregularities of shipping trade. It was about from 10s. to 15s. a day, according to the place of working. In addition to their wages, the miners got their coal, but they paid for their own powder and fuse. We used to pay the surface-men 10s. a day. This was between 1885 and 1886.

417. What generally caused the interruption?—Want of trade as a rule.

418. Was it actually want of demand for coal?—Not always; sometimes there was plenty of demand for coal, and other times it was slack.

419. How do you mean then?—The fact is, it was more the want of shipping facilities; so, of course, in that sense there was a want of demand.

420. Were the railway facilities sufficient?—The rolling-stock was rather short; but since then it has been considerably increased. On many occasions our operations were considerably hampered.

421. *The Chairman.*] Are you satisfied that the improvements to the harbour-works have effected a difference?—I am satisfied that great improvements have been made; at the same time, during bad or indifferent weather, or owing to the flooded state of the river, there are always some delays to shipping. It is now what I would call a better "good weather" port, but it is closed as much as ever in bad weather.

422. You are not actually engaged now in any coal-mining?—No, with the exception of a little prospecting we are doing in the Stillwater. Myself and two others are doing that. I am also interested largely in a large coal area which has been taken up by the Cobden Railway and Coal Company. We have already expended about £4,000 in rents, surveys of railway, and prospecting.

423. Are you doing anything now?—We have done a lot of prospecting in the Coal Creek and the Seven-mile Creek.

424. Are you interested in both the Coal Creek and the Point Elizabeth?—Not in the Point Elizabeth.

425. What do you call the Seven-mile Creek?—That is between our company's lease and the Coal Creek lease, and is now included in the company's area.

426. What condition is the company in now—I mean the Cobden Railway and Coal Company?—I am one of the directors of that company, and Mr. McDougal is the legal manager. Some little time ago—about twelve months—application was made by the company to construct a railway line on their own account. Permission was accordingly given us to do so. It was very necessary to bring the coal to Greymouth, as there was no other means of shipment. Application was also made to the Railway Commissioners for carrying coal over their portion of the line from the Cobden Bridge to Greymouth. They decided to fix the terminal charge at 1s. 3d. per ton. This completely upset our calculations, as we considered 6d. per ton would be sufficient. Of course the 1s. 3d. completely knocked us out of time; so we said it would be better for us to give it up altogether. We intended to make our own line and purchase rolling-stock at a risk of £50,000 or £60,000. A company was formed, and the money was there ready to go on with the work, but the decision of the Commissioners blocked us, and also the lease Mr. William Smith is interested in—viz., the Point Elizabeth.

427. Are you aware that any arrangement was made to join with the Point Elizabeth?—Yes; it was to be called the Paparoa Railway Company, but it fell through in consequence of this difficulty with the 1s. 3d.

428. And since then your company has got no concession?—Nothing definite that I am aware.

429. How do you make out that 6d. would be a fair terminal charge? What do you expect to have done for that?—It would be taken down on to the wharf, and loaded by the cranes on to the vessels. At the present time the total charge for the Brunner people is 2s. a ton: that includes haulage of the coal over the bridge, and carriage by rail down to Greymouth, and putting on board the vessel by the Commissioners. Well, considering that all the rolling-stock would be our own, and considering the capital invested, we think 6d. for simply loading and shunting would pay handsomely. We should use only a very small portion of the line, not much more than a quarter of a mile. If we spend £70,000—I think that is the estimate—to make the railway, and rolling-stock to bring it down to the present railway-station, we consider we are entitled to 1s. 6d. and 6d. to the Commissioners for terminal rates. That would be 2s. altogether, and would place us on the same footing with the Brunner—that is, 6d. would be a fair terminal charge in proportion to the total 2s. paid by the Brunner Company.

430. In other words, if they charge you 1s. 3d., to this must be added the first 1s. 6d.: that makes 2s. 9d. altogether?—Yes; and then we have to pay royalty as well.

431. You have to make the line from your works to join the railway here, and to bring it over the bridge at Cobden by strengthening it—bring a viaduct over so as to connect the traffic?—Yes; the whole thing has been designed and worked out. It is pretty expensive.

432. Have you the estimate?—The engineer has it. I think it is £12,000 for the bridge and approaches; and to connect to the bridge, make the tunnel, and purchase rolling-stock comes to from £60,000 to £70,000.

433. Have you ever contemplated making arrangements for using Point Elizabeth for discharging coal?—We have had it in view. It has been looked upon as being a most suitable place. There is, of course, the difficulty of knowing how to get it done,