

434. *Mr. Moody.*] Have you sea-frontage to your property?—We have not exactly sea-frontage, but we have next to it.

435. There would be no difficulty in getting the land to go through to that point?—No.

436. *The Chairman.*] Do you know what a jetty would cost?—We have under consideration Leuthwaite's patent system of breakwater. I believe some negotiations have been made with the Government for a right to construct it, but so far nothing definite has been done that I am aware of.

437. How long was your lease for?—I think it is sixty-six years.

438. Of how many acres?—About 4,640 acres.

439. Is there any addition to that royalty rent to be made in the future?—I think after twenty-one years the royalty is to be increased to 1s. From my experience of the difficulties of coal-mining here, after twenty-one years the royalty should be reduced instead of increased.

440. What is the dead-rent?—For the first two years, £200 per annum; the next five years, £500; the next seven years, £750; the next seven years, £1,000; and the remainder of the term—that is, forty-five years—at £2,000 per annum.

441. Does this merge into the royalty after the royalties are greater?—Yes.

442. Are you aware to whom these royalties go under the terms of the lease—do they go, like the Brunnerton royalties, to the Harbour Board?—Yes, they do, because it is all on the same reserve.

443. Can you say whether, in the event of these new places being opened out, the shipping appliances are sufficient to supply the new places and the present ones as well?—If they were to develop they would require additional plant for shipping: that is, the railway would require more loading-accommodation, such as cranes, &c. Almost at any time coal staiths would give more facilities for regulating the working of the mines—even now, or in the future, or in the past.

444. Then, if vessels had been in front of the cranes they would have been enabled to get their load?—Yes. Very often there have been vessels lying there unable to load. There has been very great difficulty, particularly so when there has been any opposition. Now that they have got their 150 or 200 trucks it does not occur to the same extent, and through the amalgamation of the whole business, a stop having been put to the competition. This was one of the difficulties we had to contend against. Out of the 150 wagons, I have known the Brunner Company, which had then the largest business, occupying 137 of them; and, if their ships did not turn up, we had to go on loading with only eight to twelve wagons a 500-ton boat. This kind of thing occurred frequently, and this, in common with other things, necessitated our selling out of the Coal-pit Heath Mine.

445. Do you think the amalgamation of these mines has had a beneficial effect or otherwise on the trade of the port? I include also the agreement with the Union Steamship Company?—Speaking from experience, I should say it has not had a good effect.

446. Has it decreased the trade?—Yes; I think so, and it has created a very unsatisfactory feeling in the mining community, particularly about the Brunner.

447. You have had long experience amongst the miners: are you aware of the circumstances of the present disagreement, from your own personal knowledge?—Yes; I know pretty well the gist of the present dispute. It was occasioned by the fact that the owners found that they were losing considerable sums of money—as a matter of fact, the demands which the miners were continually making were consuming all their profits—and that their returns showed a considerable loss. They therefore decided to ask the men to accept a reduction.

448. Was there not trouble about March last, after which there was a rearrangement in the coal-hewing wages?—Yes; the men for a time were paid 2s. 10d. on the gross unscreened coal.

449. Were the men reasonable in demanding this increase? Do you think 2s. 10d. was too much or too little?—I think for pillar working it is too much. The owners then proposed to make a reduction of 20 per cent.

450. Could the men have earned fair wages with this reduction?—I do not know about 20 per cent. actual reduction, but they could have stood 10 per cent. at least.

451. *Mr. Moody.*] As a practical man, what do you consider a fair wage?—I should say, at any rate, 2s. 4d. to 2s. 3d. would be—even at 2s. per ton they could make fair wages for working pillar coal; and for the coal which is not pillar working, where the faces are in solid coal, it is possible that the company could have afforded to give 2s. 10d. for solid coal, because there would not be so much dross or slack made as there would be in pillar workings.

452. *The Chairman.*] Do you think the method of paying upon the gross coal is as likely to secure the output of good coal as payment on the net-weight system?—No; I do not think so. I think they would be too much inclined to send out anything, and not use sufficient care. So long as they get a truck full some men do not care so long as they get the weight.

453. You are acquainted with the population of Brunnerton?—Yes.

454. Are they generally in good circumstances?—They are not badly off, though there are a number of them that owe considerable sums of money.

455. How is that brought about? Are there too many there for the work there is to do?—Yes; there are now.

456. Is that the only reason? Would storage and coal-staiths afford any relief, do you think?—Well, that would keep a lesser number of hands at Brunnerton; and it would keep those hands going better, and that would be better for everybody. There appears to be one objection to the coal-staiths, however, and I understand Mr. Kennedy does not favour them, for this reason: that is, the coal would be much more liable to be broken in falling through the staiths. There is nothing like the cranes for loading coal. They are very good.*

457. Do you say that one of the causes of the debts owing by the miners is the irregularity of

* This answer only applies to the Brunner seam. The Blackball, Coal Creek, Seven-mile, and Point Elizabeth seams are mostly much harder, and would stand more handling.—J.T.