

1036. Have the railway company mentioned any figure?—Well, they have stated that the distance to Christchurch will not preclude its being economically carried to a market. It will command the Christchurch market you might say.

1037. *Mr. Moody.*] I suppose there are no places in between, along the railway-line to Christchurch, where you might find a market?—No; they would not sell it between. Springfield would be the first place they would come to of any importance.

1038. *Mr. Brown.*] I was going to ask about the staiths. If the staiths were erected here in Greymouth, I presume, that being public property, all classes of coal would be tumbled in together?—That would be the difficulty, you see.

1039. At any rate, it would not be the duty of the railway company to put up separate staiths here for the separate mines of the district or the separate coal companies?—No.

1040. In erecting staiths up at your mines, do you anticipate any block of railway carriage? Have you considered the point?—We have considered the point, but we have been promised that trucks will be provided for us by the Midland Railway Company if not by the Government.

1041. *Mr. Moody.*] I suppose special trains might be required? Have you any knowledge of interruptions in the past from trucks getting blocked?—No; not any special knowledge; only from general observation.

1042. Supposing there was a vessel in loading coal from the Blackball and the Brunner, would there not be a competition between these two companies for trucks?—I suppose it would be the duty of the Government to provide sufficient trucks for that purpose, to prevent a block.

1043. Have you any knowledge of any jamb taking place from that cause?—No.

1044. *Mr. Brown.*] Have you accommodation for the men up at the Blackball?—No; they provide their own accommodation.

1045. You have mentioned 10s. as the price paid by the contractor to the men now at work: is there any difference between the rate of wages in the bush and the rate of wages in town?—No; I think the rate of 10s. is pretty general on the Coast. All our surface-men get 10s.

1046. There is not, so far as you know, in the district, any definition between town working and bush working when wages are concerned?—Not that I am aware of.

1047. *Mr. Moody.*] What are the daily wages at Springfield?—Eight shillings down in the pit and 8s. on the surface.

1048. Are the miners there paid by contract?—They get 4s. per ton, and at that they can make something like £1 a day; these are the practical miners; there are other miners as well, but this is considered a special time now.

1049. *The Chairman.*] I suppose you are aware that there are other coalfields in this district which will probably be opened up shortly?—Yes.

1050. This will, of course, increase the competition. Is there any necessity for a corresponding increase in the quantity of railway-plant?—Yes, there is.

1051. Have you ever made an examination of the Brunner Mine?—No. I have only just gone in privately with Mr. Bishop.

1052. You have no idea of the quantity of the coal available there?—No.

1053. What is the dead-rent in connection with the Blackball lease?—For the first two years £48, the next three years £192, and £480 for the remainder.

1054. What is the extent of the lease?—Twenty-one years from January, 1886.

1055. Does the royalty increase in proportion to the dead-rent?—I think I ought to tell you that the output clauses are suspended to 1891.

1056. Does the dead-rent merge in the royalty?—Yes.

1057. What is the royalty?—Sixpence per ton.

1058. There is no increase in the royalty?—No.

1059. Have you seen any lease in which there has been an increase of royalty?—No.

1060. You have had a good deal of experience in coal leases?—Yes; I may say that there was always one clause which appeared in coal leases at Home and which I never see here. It was the five-years-to-recoup clause.

1061. Explain that, please?—There was a minimum royalty of 6d. per ton. When I say minimum royalty, that was the amount it came to at £200. It should not be less than 6d. per ton and the dead-rent should never be less than £200. We will, for instance, take £480 as the minimum royalty under the recouping clause for a period of five years, and supposing in the second year you can put out up to £300, you still have to pay the £480 in the five years.

1062. That is, you spread the royalty payment over five years, if you had one bad year?—You can either look backwards or forwards in that five years.

1063. *Mr. Moody.*] That is what we call making up shorts at Home, in regard to the certain rents?—Yes.

1064. You have not got such a clause in your lease?—No; I have never seen one in New Zealand. I suggested that to the Midland Railway Company when we wanted the extension, but they granted it to us without going into that. It would insure to the Government that the mine should be developed.

1065. It helps the miners in cases of strikes or anything of that sort?—Yes. Our landlords are the Midland Railway Company.

1066. Was it waste land?—No; the lease was from the Nelson and Westland Land Board, but the property is now included in the Midland Railway Reserve.

1067. *Mr. Brown.*] Is it the Midland Railway Company who have suspended the dead-rent?—Yes.

1068. Does the Midland Railway Company propose to form a connection between the present line and the mine?—That is not settled yet; there is some question of finance between the two, and they will have to consider it. The plans are not quite finished yet.