

37. Can you say what storage is available to the Railway Commissioners without disturbing any of these people along the line of street?—South of Bentham Street—it is not much occupied there—there would be room, but it would be inconvenient for standing-room because of the distance from the staiths.

38. Would that difficulty not apply if sidings were stretched along?—If you had a greater and broader series of sidings nearer the staiths it would be better.

39. But is it not a fact that, according to Mr. Peterkin's opinion, you have facilities for three or four times the output of coals in your hands?—I do not wish to say a word against Mr. Peterkin, but I think he is rather sanguine in that estimate.

40. Have you made any calculation?—No; we have made no calculation—we have made an estimate. In a general way, we say that the future requirements will be such that 19 acres will be insufficient.

41. You arrive at that without any calculation?—I think I might say that within the last fourteen years the output of coal from New Zealand mines has increased fourfold; one-third of all the coal raised in New Zealand is shipped at Westport; some 670,000 tons were raised in New Zealand in 1892; of that, over 200,000 tons come from one mine—Coalbrookdale; now the Mokihinui is coming into action, beginning with 500 tons a week; then there is the Ngakawau, Granity Creek, and others. When all these coal-mines are in full action there will be a great increase of accommodation required.

42. Have you now in your railway-yard twice the accommodation necessary for the coal output in New Zealand?—No; I think not.

43. How do you arrive at that calculation?—It is no calculation; it is simply a matter of perception. At the present time we have not too much room. If, in the course of time we should have to provide requirements for a million and a half tons, there is no computation necessary. It is simply a matter of intuition which tell us that we will require more accommodation than we have now.

44. You say there is 750,000 tons?—I said nothing approaching to it: you said we had accommodation for twice the whole of the present output of coal in New Zealand. I said that would be a million and a half tons.

45. Do you know of any damage being done at any portion of the Colliery Reserve within the last ten years?—Within the last few months considerable damage has been done at the staiths.

46. To the bank of the river?—It is threatening the banks of the river, so that we are going to the expense of several thousand pounds to prevent further damage.

47. I ask you again, whether one yard of earth has gone away within the last ten years?—I do not think that any appreciable portion has gone; but, as I have said, the river is scouring out deep under the bank. It has done away with some of the holding of the front piles. If it is allowed to go further the bank itself will topple into, or the staiths themselves would possibly topple into, the river.

48. That is the ground on which you are refusing to sanction a twenty-one years' lease?—Yes, that is the ground. We do not know what may occur.

49. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] The Harbour Board are authorised to spend £4,000?—Yes.

50. Then they appreciate the danger, and concur with the engineer's report?—Yes.

51. *Mr. Duncan.*] What is the nature of the ground that you are piling?—It is river-deposit.

WEDNESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 1893.

Mr. J. A. WILSON examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Wilson?—Resident Engineer in Wellington to the Public Works Department. I am here to give evidence on the Nelson and Westland Coal-fields Administration Act 1877 Amendment Bill.

2. Will you give any information you have to give in support of this Bill?—I know something of Westport. Since 1877 I have been pretty closely connected with it; I was engineer to the Harbour Board for two years. With regard to the siding accommodation and storage facilities, the position, so far as I know, is this: There is at present about 3,000 tons of storage accommodation at Westport, divided between the coal staiths and the railway wagons. Of this about 1,700 tons will be found in the coal staiths, and the balance, 1,300 tons, in the railway wagons. The output of late is at the rate of about 300,000 tons per annum with these facilities. There is a siding accommodation which could be made available from Nelson Street to the beach, and on the sea side of Palmerston Street it would hold another 320 wagons; and there is also further accommodation which could be utilised in the Colliery Reserve from Wakefield Street to Bentham Street, and on the sea side of the railway-line, which could be made to hold 800 wagons. That would give, reckoning for traffic purposes, equal to 1,470 wagons; in this way: there are at present about 200 wagons in the hands of the Railway Department, and the staiths, which hold about 1,700 tons, can be reckoned at 150 wagons. It is not right to leave the staiths out of consideration, and they cannot be reckoned as wagons; but, say, 150, or equal in storage to 50 per cent. of that of the staiths; that gives, with the 320 wagons and the 800 wagons at the lower and upper ends of the town, respectively, 1,470 wagons, which, used in the same way as the 350 which they have available at present (counting the staiths at 150), should be equal to dealing with an output of over a million and a quarter per annum. About one million tons per annum is as much as can reasonably be expected to be put out by means of the river. If a larger output was wanted, it would have to be done by constructing a floating basin. There is, so far as I know, no danger of the foreshore of the Colliery Reserve being affected by the scour of the river; in point of fact it will not do to allow it. It is absolutely essential to keep the