

24. Supposing you had 1,000,000 tons of coal a year, what number of vessels would be required to anchor there in case of a flood?

(*The Chairman* objected to the length of the questions put, and the time taken up.)

25. *Mr. O'Connor.*] Have you any idea of the number of vessels which would be required to be in the river in order to carry on a trade such as you say this reserve provides for?—A million tons a year, which is really about all that can be expected from the staiths, and any cranes that may be erected, equals say, 3,333 tons per day. In the event of a block, lasting for two or three days, you might have to put out 6,666 tons per day, which would mean ten ships of about the size of the collier, "Janet Nicoll," to be loaded in twenty-four hours; and I think that is about all the berthage or staiths would possibly do. If more than a million tons were wanted, a floating basin would have to be constructed, and sidings obtained on the beach.

26. Have you a plan showing that?—[Plan produced.] This plan shows the floating basin as laid down by Mr. Napier Bell; that is what I refer to, where the sidings could be obtained.

27. Then your evidence may be summed up in this way: There is storage available for one million and a quarter tons of coal?—Yes, but I do not think it is possible to put the output at more than one million, taking the berthage and loading accommodation into consideration.

28. *The Chairman.*] Supposing this frontage was taken by the Railway Commissioners, would it not be more convenient to the railway than either here [pointing] or here, and cheaper to work than at the other end?—I do not think it would be any more convenient. I should think this would be more convenient, in point of fact.

29. *Mr. Hogg.*] What is about the distance from the end of the wharf here to the Palmerston Street point? How many chains in the narrowest part?—About 220ft., nearly three chains and a half.

Mr. HALES examined.

30. *The Chairman.*] You have heard the evidence; have you anything to tell the Committee?—Nothing that is new. Mr. Wilson has explained the case very clearly and accurately.

31. Can you give the Committee any further information which Mr. Wilson may have omitted?—I think he has given in his evidence a statement of all the circumstances within my knowledge.

32. You have nothing at all to add to the evidence?—No.

33. *Hon. Mr. Rolleston.*] You have been on the ground?—Yes.

*Mr. Smith:* He agrees with Mr. Wilson in all his facts.

*Witness:* I do not think he has mentioned anything not conformable with the case.

34. *Mr. Hogg.*] I suppose you have been there in the present year?—Yes; several times.

35. And can you say from your own observance that the scour is more since the staiths have been erected?—During the first flood, after the training-wall was put in, there was a scour, but not more than was to be expected. The old portion of the staiths was made when there was a much less depth of water in the river than there is now, so that it has done only what was to be expected.

36. You think the new portion is safe?—Yes.

37. And if the old portion was put right?—It would be safe, also. There is more water along the staiths, but there is no hole. About four or five of the piles were scoured out, but the gravel has settled around them again, so that the bottom is pretty regular along the whole front.

38. *The Chairman.*] You heard Mr. Wilson state a few moments ago that it is only three chains and a half from Palmerston Street: do you think it advisable to renew these leases so that it would alienate this strip of land? Would it not be prejudicial to the shipping?—I think not; there is plenty of room for sidings without this strip of land. I think it would be more inconvenient if all these business places were removed, and the ground taken for the station-yard. The reserve is very much larger than is usually given for railway-stations in the colony.

39. Then, if the output of coal is to increase, you still think these sections could be re-leased to the occupiers, without in any way interfering or hampering the trade in the port?—I do.

40. *Mr. O'Connor.*] Have you any idea of how the coalfield would be affected by any large output, as one million and a quarter of coal?—No; I have not gone into that question.

Mr. JAMES SUISTED examined.

41. *The Chairman.*] You will kindly give the Committee any information you can?—I am Chairman of the Westport Harbour Board. After hearing the evidence of our late engineer, Mr. Wilson, and the Engineer-in-chief, I can scarcely do any more than state that what they have said is substantially correct. In the event of any more impingement the Harbour Board have the means to cope with it. They have the quarries, and the plant to convey the stone to the river-bank to prevent any washing away. I may say I have been in Westport for the last twenty-two years, since 1877. The banks were pitched with stone, and since that time no encroachment whatever has taken place on the river-banks. They were not washed away in the slightest degree and should a very heavy flood come and impinge on the banks we have the means of dealing with it at once. A heavy flood, about six weeks or two months ago, certainly caused a scour at the staiths, throwing the current against them; since then there has been a continuous flood, but instead of doing any harm it has really filled up the scour for 6ft., and the whole bottom of the river has now been scoured out, and so the staiths are relieved from the danger and pressure of the current. There is nothing like the current now that there was six weeks ago, alongside the staiths. After some alterations by Mr. Reynolds, the engineer, it is anticipated there will be no danger whatever to the staiths. I can only state that what the Harbour Board Engineer has stated is substantially correct.