

108. Are you prepared to deny it?—No, I am not prepared. It is not within my province. I am merely local manager.

109. But, as a matter of fact, you do not carry to Nelson?—Yes.

110. You asked the Committee to believe that there was competition between you and the Anchor line?—I did not mean to say we competed, but that we did not get the whole of the loading at Westport.

111. We know there are other steamers in the trade.—I took that to be the intention of the Chairman's question.

112. To me, the evidence you have given disturbs my impression of the position of things. You told the Committee that the freights have been reduced?—Certainly.

113. I was under the impression that you had advanced rates.—That is not so.

114. You act on purely philanthropic principles. If a contract is advertised and you tender for it, does that arrangement cover it?—We do not tender at all.

115. You do not tender against each other?—Our arrangement with the Westport Coal Company is revised at intervals. It may extend over a matter of years. All ports are included in the arrangement, and the Westport Coal Company base their tenders on the freights quoted under that arrangement.

116. The arrangement in the case of tendering would be the Coal Company's?—Yes; we simply get our freights.

117. You are quite certain that at no time previously has coal been carried cheaper than at the present time?—I am speaking only from my own knowledge, but I think I may safely say that the coal has not been carried at a lower rate than 5s. 3d.

118. I heard complaint in Nelson the other day about the very high price of coal, and I thought it was probably due to the increased number of hands, engineers, &c., that the companies are now compelled to carry. You disturb my theory.—No doubt the freights are regulated a great deal by the cost of labour and wages paid, which are much higher than in Australia.

119. I was told in Nelson, when hearing the subject discussed, that the smaller class of steamer that goes into Nelson being compelled to carry an extra mate and engineer the working-expenses had been enhanced, so necessitating an advance in freight.—No doubt by the recent decision of the Arbitration Court the expenses of these small steamers have been increased.

120. Do you know anything about that?—I only know that I had a good deal to do with our particular case before the Court, and the award did have the effect of increasing the working-expenses of these small steamers.

121. The rate to Nelson is very much higher than it is to Wellington?—Yes; it is an expensive port.

122. *Mr. Hogg.*] You said the freight from Newcastle amounted to 10s. or 10s. 6d. per ton?—No. The freight varies, according to circumstances, from 8s. to 9s. I am quoting sailing-vessels, and dealing only with Wellington. Very little Newcastle coal comes to Wellington by steamers.

123. And are these vessels built specially as cargo-vessels?—The bulk of them are owned in Auckland. They load at Kaipara or elsewhere with timber for Australia, and on their return trip they load with coal for any port, and are open to be chartered by anybody.

124. Does your company use those vessels?—Yes, occasionally; there is always a certain demand for Newcastle coal, and if it is not convenient to use our own steamers we endeavour to charter the sailing-vessels.

125. Have you found in your business that the consumption of Newcastle coal is increasing or diminishing?—I cannot speak for New Zealand, but you may take Wellington. The total import of Newcastle coal for a year is 13,760 tons, as against 107,000 tons of Westport coal for household and steam purposes, exclusive of Westport-Cardiff, Blackball, and Greymouth coal.

126. Is there any competition you have to face in connection with the freight from Newcastle?—Certainly. Mr. Brown has got a vessel at the wharf, which arrived yesterday morning from Newcastle, which puts us out of the market altogether for the time being.

127. You also bring coal from Westport?—Yes.

128. In steamers as well as sailing vessels?—No; by steamers only.

129. And are these steamers expressly intended for the coal-trade?—No; they carry passengers as well. Some colliers are used, but the bulk of the household coal is brought by the passenger-steamers.

130. What is the freight from Westport to Wellington?—5s. 3d.

131. Do the rates remain pretty steady throughout the year or vary with the seasons—is it a steady rate of freight?—Yes; there is a quotation given by the company to the various coal companies, which extends over a period.

132. Do you supply the merchants or enter into contracts with the public?—No, except in the case of Newcastle coal, which we sell to the dealers at our ship's side.

133. You have no contract with the Railway Department?—No; our interest in the New Zealand coal ceases after it reaches its destination and our freight is paid.

134. What is the freight to Wanganui, Patea, and places of that kind?—That is beyond my knowledge, because we have ceased to run to Wanganui, and we have never run to Foxton or Patea. As far as I remember, the freight to Wanganui is 11s.

135. So you do not send any coal to Wanganui, Foxton, or Patea?—No.

136. Do you know of any other companies doing so?—Yes; the Anchor Line run coal to Foxton, and the Wellington Steam Packet Company and others run coal to Wanganui.