

per ton for conveyance upon the Government railway from Brunnerton to Greymouth. This charge includes weighing and delivering to the ship at Greymouth Wharf on coal for export.

Greymouth-Hokitika Section.—Goods of Class Q will be charged as Class P, except otherwise specified.

Westport Section.—Coals and coal dross consigned to Westport will be charged 1s. 10d. per ton for distances not over eight miles, and for each additional mile or part of a mile $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per ton will be charged; minimum quantity, 5 tons per truck. This charge includes weighing and discharging from the coal-staiths on coal for export. Coals and coal dross consigned from Waimangaroa Branch line to Waimangaroa, Fairdown, or Sergeant's Hill will be charged 2s. 3d. per ton. Coals and coal dross consigned from Conn's Creek to Wellington Mine will be charged 1s. per ton. Goods booked through between stations on the Government railway (Waimangaroa Junction excepted) and stations on the Waimangaroa Branch line will be charged upon the branch, in addition to the classified or local rates on the Government railway as follows: Between the Junction and Conn's Creek—timber, 3d. per 100 superficial feet; coals and minerals, in 5 ton loads, 1d. per ton; other goods, 1s. 3d. per ton. Minimum charge, 3d. Between the Junction and the Wellington Mine—timber, 2d. per 100 superficial feet; coals and minerals, in 5 ton loads, 2d. per ton; other goods, 9d. per ton. Minimum charge, 3d.

Nelson Section.—Goods of Class P will be charged as Class N.

Pictou Section.—Goods of Class P will be charged as Class N, except otherwise specified. Native coals, ex ship, Pictou to Grovetown or Blenheim, will be charged 5s. per ton, including wharfage; owners to load and unload.

98. In what respect do the rates charged at Westport compare with other parts of the colony?—It is especially favourable there. There is a local rate for the Westport section and a local rate for Greymouth, on account of the volume of business.

99. They are cheaper than obtaining elsewhere?—Yes, for instance, the classified rate from Brunner to Greymouth is 2s. 6d., whereas the local rate is 1s. 10d.; and from Ngahere to Greymouth the Blackball Company pay a rate of 2s. 6d., the Government proportion being 1s. 8d. and the Midland Company 10d., a total of 2s. 6d. This is really a competition rate with the Brunner Mine. The Midland Company reduced their rate so as to enable the Blackball Company to compete on fairly equal terms with the Brunner.

100. As a fact the Westport-Waimangaroa pays the highest percentage in the colony?—Yes, it pays the highest percentage—£13 3s. 6d. per cent.—for the year ending 31st March, 1899. With regard to the Westport rates, there is a rebate of 25 per cent. in favour of coal shipped to ports outside the colony, to San Francisco and other places, so as to try and encourage foreign business. The same rate applies to Greymouth and other parts of the colony.

101. You do not, then, support the contention that Newcastle coal, by reason of it not being so broken, is preferable for steaming purposes to Westport coal. I mean the best Newcastle coal. You deny the accuracy of that statement?—Certainly. We do excellent work with unscreened coal on New Zealand railways, where the grades are not too severe.

102. For the steepest grades you use Westport coal?—Yes.

103. *Mr. Duthie.* You mention that the screening did not make so much difference for some purposes, but that the household required screening?—So far as giving my own personal experience, I think the Wellington people should use unscreened coal, and it would largely assist the mines if they did so. The slack of Westport coal and the round coal makes an excellent fire, and it will not burn away so rapidly. I burn slack mixed with coke. The coke is produced from Westport coal, and the slack comes from Westport.

104. Do you think there is any benefit arising from the screening?—Well, people like to have a nice, bright, quick fire, and a more cheerful fire is obtained by use of screened coal. If you want to study economy you must burn unscreened coal.

105. A previous witness stated that the coal would not be broken up so much if the coal was carried unscreened, and screened at the port of arrival. I presume that is so?—In shipping it would not be broken up to the same extent.

106. And the same thing would occur at the staiths. The coal would not be broken up so much as if it was shipped screened?—There is provision for loading the screened coal by cranes at Westport. All the coal is loaded in that way at Greymouth.

107. What I wish to get at is the real practical value of this screening, or of the alteration of the system of loading at Westport from the staiths to the cranes, because that is practically what we are driving at: that is, to see whether there is really a return for the extra capital sought to be expended?—I think it is essential that all screened coal should be shipped by cranes.

108. You say it is better not to screen it and it will carry better, that is deferring the screening till it arrives at the destination?—Yes.

109. *The Chairman.* I think Mr. Ronayne means that by shipping by the cranes the need for rescreening should be obviated?—I do not know that it will be that altogether, because the coal is of a very friable nature. The coal is lowered down to the bottom of the hold in good condition, but through trimming and loading into baskets a certain amount of breakage and slack is produced. Shipment of screened coal is imperative in the case of coal for foreign export.

110. We have it that it costs 2s. to screen coal here—that is allowing for the loss of weight. Some 40,000 tons of coal are exported from Westport, half of which is household. I was trying to get at what is the money-value of the injury done by the staiths, so as to show what is to be saved?—They charge 2s. to screen it here.

111. Yes, allowing for slack. It pans out to about £1,000 of benefit. Now, is the expenditure asked for for trucks and cranes going to be recouped?—It will all depend upon the magnitude of the screened-coal business. It is just a question of turnover.

112. You cannot assist one in that direction?—No.

113. *Rt. Hon. R. J. Seddon.* Have you considered the stage-system for carrying coal—notwithstanding the distance the coal-mine is from the port, carrying it at the same rate?—There was a proposal to group the rates on the Westport section some time ago, and it practically meant that no return would be received from the capital-cost of a portion of the line, say, from Granity to Mokihinui. There was a proposal to make the Granity to Westport the maximum rate.

114. What is the tonnage of the coal coming into the colony?—I cannot tell.