

261. You estimate the price of coal delivered to you on board at Greymouth at 10s. per ton?—Yes.

262. And you credit yourself with 6s. 3d. for freight per ton?—For the purpose of this calculation I have quoted what I know must be the freights paid by us to the Union Company or the freights paid to us by them.

263. The wharfrage and railage to Christchurch cost 3s. 6d.?—Yes; and the railway collects the whole of it.

264. And you have a private siding?—Yes.

265. Is the 5d. per ton for labour?—Yes, labour in discharging from the trucks. We contract with men for that price. I have a contract for 5,000 tons at 6d., and it does not pay the men. It is discharging from the wagons into the Gas Company's works.

266. How much coal do you pass through your hands per month and per year?—The yard is also used as part of our plant. I have a hulk here and a yard, and we often use it for putting coal in in order to get steamers away quickly.

267. How much do you put through your yard in Christchurch?—Four to five thousand tons a year. The total for the last two months was 1,200 tons, averaging 600 tons for each month.

268. Do you not think it is a large allocation—2s. a ton yard-expenses, and especially as the yard is only used for a portion of the business?—I am only giving you the actual facts. We have to pay a rental of £65 a year for the Christchurch yard, and we pay a rental in Wellington for the yard of £100 a year.

269. First of all, you are debiting against the coal the cost, 10s. at Greymouth; you are also debiting against the coal 6s. 3d. freight, also railage and wharfrage 3s. 6d. delivered at Christchurch—this runs the coal into the siding; then you debit 5d. for discharging. Then, after this you commence and strike an average of 2s. a ton, and put it down as yard-expenses?—The 2s. for expenses includes screening, bagging, weighing and loading, and rent.

270. If there is extra work in other branches of your business you take them off the coal work?—No; we discharge all steamers by shore labour.

271. How many men do you employ in your yard?—Just now we have four permanent men for a turnover of 600 tons a month, and we employ extra men if there is a rush of work.

272. Then, there is one more item you mentioned, and that is the agency and distributing charge of 1s. 4d. per ton, still added on as against the coal?—That is also against the coal delivered through the yards. You cannot keep a staff of clerks and distribute and collect your money for less than that. You have got to sell the coal, to invoice it, and collect money, besides providing office-accommodation.

273. The rent of the office is put down in the coal-yard expenses?—The yard is separate altogether.

274. Further, you debit the coal with 2s. 6d. for screening?—That is if we sell household coal which has to be screened, but face coal has not to bear that expense.

275. And yet three or four questions ago I asked you if it was necessary to debit against the coal such a large item as 2s. yard-expenses. Have you any reply to that? Is it that it has to cover the expenses of men employed screening coal and filling coal?—You must have misunderstood me. I put down the yard-expenses in each case at 2s. One class of coal costs 2s. 6d. a ton more than the other. Household costs 12s. 6d. a ton at Greymouth, as against 10s. a ton for face-coal.

276. At what price do you sell the coal to the dealers in Christchurch?—We charge £1 2s. a ton at the ship's side at Lyttelton—from £1 to £1 2s.

277. Why do you make the difference between these two amounts?—The price is reduced in the case of large quantities or contracts.

278. The highest price you receive is £1 2s. a ton?—Yes, from the dealers.

279. What price do they deliver in Christchurch at?—They profess to deliver at our price, but they do not put our coal on the market. They prefer to put Westport, which gives them a handsome margin of profit.

280. Do they mix the coal?—I never heard of the mixing process.

281. Do you send to Dunedin?—I send some thousands of tons to Port Chalmers and Dunedin.

282. Who is the buyer?—John Mill has taken some thousands of tons.

283. You do not send to any of the dealers?—No; we cannot touch Dunedin. The distance is too great, and the local coal would kill us. John Mill takes it principally for shipping purposes.

284. Can you tell us anything about Newcastle coal? Do you sell it?—I have had to do with Newcastle coal for a great many years. I was Government contractor for a great many years.

285. What freight do they charge from Newcastle?—From 8s. 6d. to 9s. a ton.

286. That is a low rate compared with 6s. 3d. from the West Coast. Is that accounted for by the fact that vessels go to Australia with produce and find it convenient to bring back coal?—It is largely for the reason that you can employ larger vessels and bring much larger quantities in.

287. And it is back loading for the Union Company at the same time.—The Union Company will not carry Newcastle coal for the public.

288. Can you tell us the reason for that?—They have two or three special contracts, and they will not go outside them. The Union Company supply the coal themselves, and they wish to keep their steamers open to move wherever wanted, without being compelled to discharge coal at any stated port.

289. What is your opinion of the relative value of Newcastle and Westport coal? Is it as good as Blackball coal?—We put Blackball down as 5 per cent. better than Newcastle, and make the same difference for Westport. Blackball is equal to Westport for some purposes. We supply about 30,000 tons a year to ocean-going steamers.

290. Have you any idea of the amount of coal imported from Newcastle to Lyttelton?—No.