65. In reply to some remarks by the Chairman, wherein he was trying to discover whether or not there might be some economy effected in the working of these two seams, you stated the seams lie in a basin?—Yes; in the Big Dip section.

66. And it tapers out like a saucer?—Yes.

67. You say you take out the top seam first: what is the thickness of the two seams?—The top seam is 5 ft. thick, and the bottom about 12 ft. thick, approximately.

68. You take out the top seam first?—Yes.

69. What is the strata between the two seams?—Where the strata is thick it is sandstone rock, but where it is thin it is only a soft shale—in fact, in a great many places, before we started to cut the pillars, it broke through, and the strata gave way between the two seams.

70. Speaking as a practical miner, do you not think that the lower seam was the seam to take out first?—No; the top seam is always taken out first.

71. You think it is advisable to take out the top seam first?—Yes.

72. You say there is no great thickness of strata between the two seams?—In the thicker portions it is sandstone, but where the two seams come nearly together (within a few feet) it is a soft shale. If you took out your bottom seam first the top seam would drop down.

73. Perhaps in the centre it would?—It breaks from the top seam to the surface. You could stick your leg down the cracks. You could not get at it.

74. How can you get at your bottom seam when you take out your top?—It is all timbered, but the crack does not extend beyond the top seam to the surface. If you take the bottom seam out first you are taking the foundation out.

75. Are you acquainted with the mines down South?—No.

76. In the Kaitangata they leave a large quantity of coal hanging overhead?—But their coal-field is entirely different. Their seams are nearly vertical. For different systems you have to have different methods.

77. In your opinion, you think the staiths have a tendency to break up the coal and to make it more friable?—Yes, in loading the screened coal especially. Take the case of the "Pukaki": She is a big boat, and loads where the staiths are the highest, and below the usual bottom she has another bottom, so that the coal has a very long way to fall.

78. Have you any experience of shipping coal in the Old Country?—No; I came out from the Midlands. The system they have on the Clyde is the crane system.

79. Is that a better method than the staiths?—Yes, there is no doubt about it. You can lower the coal right down into the hold of the vessel.

80. Have you any idea of the quantity of small coal you make at your mine?—About 40 per cent.

81. As much as that?—Yes, I think it will be very near that.

82. You utilise the slack coal by making these patent firebricks?—No; we dispose of it to steamers and merchants. We send it away.

83. Have the Brunnerton used it that way?—No; no one will as long as they can get rid of it.

84. *Mr. Duthie.*] Have you seen Mr. Foster's evidence?—No, I have not.

85. Well, the Chairman questioned him, and he answered as follows:—

The Chairman.] Then, you consider that, if the method which you consider is best adapted for working the coal was adopted, the output would be increased, that there would be a sensible depreciation in the cost of the coal, and that it is a reasonable inference that if you increase the output without increasing your working-expenses you can sell at a cheaper rate?—Yes, you can do that. We get a standard figure for hewing, and you could not lessen that.

That is, the coal would be worked in a much more advantageous manner. Has your union ever made representations on the subject?—The Coal-miners' Union has laid complaints before the Minister of Mines on the subject.

You think there is coal being wasted?—Yes.

You think coal is left in the workings which could be carried out?—Yes.

And once left in it is not worth while going back to take it out?—Yes.

And the opinion you express about the disadvantageous manner the coal is worked does not reflect on the company?—No; the only blame is attached to the Inspector.

[The Chairman here pointed out that Mr. Foster had expressed a desire the next day after giving his evidence that what he had said under this head should be made to read as applying to all West Coast coal-mines, and not to any one in particular.]

Anything that will increase the production of coal and increase the output, and anything that will cheapen it to the consumer, must be considered beneficial to all concerned?—Yes. We look at it in this way: We say that there is only so-much of this coal in New Zealand, and it is our duty to see that it is all taken out.

86. These are very positive and rather important opinions. As a practical man dealing with this question, might I ask you to make a general explanation of what you would say in answer to these points?—I have already explained to the Committee something dealing with this subject, but I wanted to come back to it. Coal lying in different places requires different methods. You cannot make one rule applicable to everything. In regard to getting out pillars, I consider we get more pillar coal out of our Westport-Denniston collieries than they do in any colliery in England. I consider there is no coalfield in the world where such a large percentage of coal is taken out as at Denniston and Westport. In working out these pillars you must always have regard to life before anything else. If we risked taking some of these pillars out we might have some very serious accidents, and it is only by careful attention and supervision we get what we do. The statement made by Mr. Foster, should it refer to our Westport Coal Company, is unfounded, so far as it refers to the actual facts. Where he speaks about the Mine Inspector, I suppose he is talking about the Big Dip section. I may say this section gave us a lot of difficulty—that is, in knowing how to extract the pillars out of it—owing to the strata in the dip portion being so shallow. To show you what we thought of the danger of it we never altered the bord-rates to the pillar-rates, so that the men would have plenty of time to take out the coal and get a good day's wages. In all our agreements, so far as the Big Dip section is concerned, the prices are the same; we never have reduced them in this section. Other portions of the mine that were working under the same conditions we got pillar coal for 1s. 8d. to 1s. 10d. per ton.