

14. That is, you think that having to call at Nelson and Picton adds to the cost?—Yes. Another thing, so far as the public are concerned, it is a great waste the way the coal is burnt. The Westport coal should be burnt as it comes out of the mine, without being screened.

15. A practical coal-miner who appeared before the Committee recently was of the same opinion?—My attention was first directed to it in this way: In Westport I saw people burning unscreened coal and throwing a little water on to it, and it burnt splendidly. It is a waste of coal and a waste of money the way it is done now.

16. If the coal was delivered in its unscreened state the only additional cost here would be the cost of cartage. The cost of the two screenings would be saved, and the cost of the numerous handlings, would they not?—Then the prime cost would be much less. The Cardiff are getting none out now; but 60 per cent. used to be taken out of small stuff from their coal when screened at the mine.

17. Do you think the Newcastle coal is equal or superior to the Westport?—I do not think anywhere, outside of Wales, is there better coal than Westport. There are various coals from Newcastle that are suited for various purposes. It is harder than New Zealand generally, and that is the reason why Westport breaks up more than Greymouth. I think it is largely due to its richness that it is friable. Hetton (Newcastle) coal is very suitable for gas purposes. It will rank with Westport. It is a very friable coal. For that reason it is put in with the trucks lower down.

18. The friable nature of the coal, then, may generally be taken as an indication of its excellence?—That is my experience.

19. *Mr. Morrison.*] The richer the softer?—Yes, that is so. The mines in Newcastle will not get more than 10 per cent. of slack. It seems difficult to get it unscreened, and I was unable to get some in my last shipment.

20. *The Chairman.*] As a matter of fact, if one wishes to use coal on a large scale he can make special terms and get the coal at more reasonable rates?—I have sold coal at a margin of from 1s. to 6d. a ton.

21. In large quantities?—Yes. And then took the risk of short weight. I landed a cargo at Foxton, and my whole margin was 6d., and there was 30 cwt. short; that was landed from Westport. I pay my insurance, commission, and bank exchange, and all that, and the margin is not over a shilling.

22. The point I want to make clear is this: Assuming the coal to be made considerably dearer than it need be by the numerous processes through which it passes, the people who really suffer most are the poor people?—Undoubtedly.

23. The very ones whose interests we should protect?—Well, they are wretchedly ignorant. I have many times growled at people about the waste of coal, and they said I was a fool to growl, being a coal-dealer. In the old days, when they used to carry the refuse from the outside, you would notice in passing along the streets the tins full of coal and cinders. I was told one day by a friend, who was a mine-owner, that he used to sift his cinders, and I replied that I used to do the same.

24. We have had several witnesses here who have given evidence in the same direction in connection with the disposal of coal from the ship's side, and it has been pointed out that people do not seem to appreciate that method of obtaining coal. Do you not think the explanation is that the coal has not been introduced to the public in that way?—It has been advertised for four or five years.

25. Do you think it has been brought home to the public what they could save without getting an inferior quality if they obtained their coal in the manner you suggest?—I think it is largely due to the fact that they have not sufficient accommodation. The cart is not able to get in, and the coal has generally to be carried on the back.

26. Through the lack of accommodation the coal has never been brought to the public in the manner you describe?—That is so. The coal cannot be got to the houses. The essence of cheapness is that it must have very little handling, and the people have not the accommodation to receive the coal in bulk.

27. They have not got the space about their dwellings?—No.

28. *Mr. Morrison.*] Caused by the way the houses are built in Wellington?—Yes.

29. They have no storage-accommodation?—That is so. Then, the carters are asking for increased wages and overtime, and it seems as if we will have to raise the price of coal. The arrangements at the wharf, I may say, are very good.

30. You think they could not be improved?—I do not think there is much to be said. The carts go alongside the ship and it is put in baskets, and that is as good a way as you can deliver it. In some places they have tubs which hold a ton, but it is very awkward for the carts. We tried it with the hydraulic crane in Wellington, but in emptying the tub one of my men was hurt seriously, and has been ailing since.

31. You think something could be saved by dispensing with the screening?—Yes. I would like to point out that both the Coalbrookdale and the Cardiff coals are practically pure coals. There is a decimal of 3 per cent. of ash in them, one having a little less than the other, which means that every bit of that is pure coal and can be burnt. If you stay by a fire and throw all the ashes on the top you will not have any ashes at the end of the evening.

32. You are aware of the manner in which the coal is loaded at Westport—the coal being stored in bins at the top of the staiths. The evidence we have had before the Committee has all been against that method of loading on account of the friable nature of the coal. As a practical man, do you support that contention?—I was one of the persons, three years ago, to impress upon Mr. Cadman to do away with that. There was Mr. Scott, of the Westport Coal Company; Mr. Gale, of Mokihinui; myself; and Mr. Hargreaves, of the Westport-Cardiff Coal Company; and Mr. Cadman promised then to do it. We pointed out the enormous loss. There is a drop of 42 ft. At Newcastle very little is loaded by the staiths, the coal being loaded by the cranes. With the staiths there is a difference of perhaps 20 tons an hour. Then, the Newcastle is harder coal.