

55. Assuming the customer wished to take it from the ship's side, what would be the lowest quantity he could take?—A ton.

56. And in that case it would be weighed?—It would be weighed over the weighbridge. If you want it from the ship's side you take it by your own cart.

57. What saving would you effect in that way?—Well, you would get rid of the screening, and the bagging, and the weighing. I think it is £1 6s. He would arrange with his own carter to take it. The chances are that that carter would lay it on to him. He would say, "It is a very bad place to get into; I must have a shilling extra." You could save something if it was all done that way, and made a revolution of the business. You would create a different class of trade.

58. Do you make a difference in price if you supply in small quantities—that is, two or three bags?—Yes, it is a heavier charge. As a matter of fact, a man might be a whole day with his cart and possibly only deliver a ton of coal.

59. And I presume the great bulk of the coal consumed in Wellington is delivered in small quantities?—Yes, a quarter of a ton is four bags, and all that sort of thing. In fact, I have sometimes seen in the yards a little boy or girl asking for threepennyworth and sixpennyworth.

60. *Mr. Morrison.* You said, in reply to a question from the Chairman, that the coal cost you at the wharf £1 3s.?—It is £1 2s. 6d. The other rate was made up four years ago.

61. Can you tell what the wharfage-dues in Wellington are?—1s.

62. Does the £1 2s. 6d. include wharfage-dues?—That is, landed in the drays. I charge the same as the Westport or Cardiff.

63. Are we to understand that the importers—that is, the agents for the coal-proprietors—charge the coal-dealers in Wellington £1 2s. 6d. per ton for coal just as it comes out of the ship's hold?—That is so.

64. And the wharfage-dues are 1s., which the agent pays?—Yes; and there is the weighing, which perhaps will be 3d. a ton.

65. The reason I am emphasizing that point is this: We have had in evidence that the coal delivered on board the steamer or vessel at Greymouth costs the coal-proprietors from 10s. to 11s. a ton?—But they will not sell it at that.

66. And the amount they set apart for freight is from 6s. 3d. to 7s.; 5s. 3d. to Wellington. I want to let you see the margin between the actual cost of landing the coal in Wellington and what they charge you gentlemen. 5s. 3d. and 11s. is 16s.; they charge you £1 2s. 3d. and 1s. for wharfage, and the other 4s. 3d. is the profit. That is, for every ton of coal the coal-proprietors deliver in Wellington they have the difference between 17s. 3d., which is the actual outlay and cost, and the price they charge you, of £1 2s. 6d.?—I think they would charge at Westport 14s.

67. Some of them less than that?—£1 2s. 6d. is for screened coal. It is supposed to be screened coal when it is put in at Westport. I pay 14s. 6d. f.o.b. steamer. I pay freight, insurance, and sell it at £1 2s. 6d. on the Wellington wharf.

68. If you were giving an order to the Westport Coal Company for several hundred tons at the ship's side, and taking all risks, buying the coal at the other end, they would charge you 14s.?—If they would sell it. I am speaking of the Cardiff. The Cardiff would do that, but I cannot say for the Westport Coal Company. The figures I quoted were for the Cardiff Company.

69. Well, if you gave the Westport-Cardiff Company an order for a considerable quantity they would charge you 14s. free on board at Greymouth?—Yes, just so. And the same proportion for the other coals. The small would be 7s. 6d.

70. In reply to the Chairman, you gave a series of prices with regard to the cost of the various processes the coal had to go through before it gets to the consumer. The first item, cartage to yard, 1s. 6d. per ton: do you not think that is a heavy charge? How many tons will a carter be able to take from the wharf to your yard?—These things are governed by other circumstances. If they were continually at it they could do it for less. I have to pay 2s. 6d. to my yard in Tinakori Road, and I have been paying 1s. 6d. for years to the other yards. They charge 1s. to the Gas Company, but they get a big lot there. Mr. Scott, the former manager, said they got it down to 11d., but the men said it did not pay them.

71. You are of opinion that there can be no reduction made in regard to the cartage to the yard?—I wish it could.

72. Do you not employ some of these men, who are depending on picking up a job, by the day, say, 16s. for the horse and dray?—We pay by the ton. It is a very uncertain thing. Perhaps a man will have to wait a couple of hours for his turn. We cannot govern that. The majority of the small dealers cart their own. The Westport Coal Company and myself are the only ones who employ our horses for our own work.

73. The next item is trimming at yard, 6d.: does it cost you all that? You must have a very limited space to load your coal?—When you load up the coal it spreads all over the place.

74. It seems to me to be a very large item?—If you come to look at it, when a man has to shovel 2 tons of coal he has to throw most of it up.

75. But a man throws it pretty well off his own dray?—No, he does not. The trimmer has to throw it up pretty high.

76. A man, when discharging his load, will not shovel it?—He tips his cart up in the quickest way he can. Some say, "You must get it out of the way or I will not come at all."

77. Screening, your next item, is 6d. a ton. I think that is a fair allowance myself?—He has to weigh twenty bags and lift them into the cart.

78. Bagging, and screening, and weighing, 6d. What do you pay for your weighbridge? Have you a weighbridge?—Yes; but this is on a small scale. They are put up in hundredweights. The bags are tied or sewed, and they are then landed in the cart.

79. But that does not apply to all the coal you send out?—All the bags have to be lifted into the cart. If they had a loose load people would get it from the ship.

80. Have you not a number of customers who take a loose load, and you deliver it in baskets?—Very few. I think some hotels get it that way, but I do not supply many hotels.