

71. I want the cost to the company—that is, of putting the coal on board the steamer at Westport?—It is about 10s. 5d.—0·82 I think it works out at.

72. What do you sell coal at Dunedin for?—I have not got the price at Dunedin.

73. Can you give us the price in Wellington?—The prices are advertised here.

74. I want it from yourself?—The price here at the ship's side is £1 5s. for the screened coal, £1 for the unscreened, and 17s. for the small.

75. So that on every ton of coal that you land in Wellington the company makes a net profit of 10s. 5d., and 5s. 3d. (for freight) makes 15s. 8d., leaving you a clear 4s. 4d. That is according to your own figures. Is that so?—No, certainly not. All our profit is included in the 7s. 8d. at the pit's mouth.

76. Out of that £1 you have something to pay for wharfage?—Yes, 1s.

77. That reduces your profit on that particular class of coal to 3s. 4d., so that for every ton of coal you sell in Wellington the company makes a net profit of 3s. 4d.—that is, if everything turns out all right—full weights, and all that sort of thing?—This statement is not correct. See my former answer.

78. I suppose you have some expenses in the Wellington management—looking after the coal, &c.?—Yes.

79. You have no idea of how much that would be?—No.

80. You said, in reply to a question by the Chairman, he being very anxious to see if there was not a possibility of getting the public to buy coal directly from the company from the ship's side, just as it came from the face, that you were surprised that a number of people did not take advantage of the price?—Yes.

81. Are you aware that in any attempt to carry out the suggestion to buy the coal directly out of the ship two difficulties would be presented? The first one is that the public have been demoralised by the idea that the coal is no good unless it is in lumps, and the second is that the dealers have to sell in small quantities. It is not every coal-consumer here that has got conveniences for taking his coal in large quantities; even though they order a ton of coal, they have not got a place to put it, and so they have to buy small quantities?—I would like to refer to a circumstance that occurred this session. I complained to my landlady of the coal in the very cold weather. I asked her where she got it, and said that it was not proper coal. She told me it was Westport. I replied it was not. I then asked her what she paid for it, and she said she paid £1 18s. a ton, and that half a ton only lasted her five days. I advised her to go down to the Westport Company's office and order the coal from the ship's side, and pay the £1 5s. a ton. The coal was brought up, and I saw the receipt. It cost her just £1 9s. a ton delivered and put into her little coal-cellar. A day or two after I asked her about the coal, and she said, "I can cook the dinner now in half the time." She was paying £1 18s. for all sorts of mixtures—rubbish.

82. Can you tell me where the inferior coal is coming from that is sold as Coalbrookdale?—I cannot say what is done. If the people want it, let them send to the ship's side. If one man cannot take in a load, two men could.

83. There is no suggestion you could make to the Committee with regard to improving or cheapening the cost to the consumer in centres, with the exception that they might go to the ship's side and get it direct?—I do not know what more could be done in the meantime.

84. *Mr. Hogg.*] You have a considerable knowledge of the way in which the coal is distributed to the consumers?—Fairly good.

85. You find there is no proper check on the quality of the coal?—You cannot tell what becomes of the coal when a coal merchant takes it into his yard. I am perfectly certain that the man in the case I mentioned was mixing up a lot of rubbish.

86. There is reason to believe that a lot of the coal that is sold is adulterated—that is, inferior mixed with the good?—I cannot say; but what I complain of is that the woman should be charged £1 18s. when she could get it for £1 9s.

87. I presume the consumer has no protection even in regard to the weight any more than he has in regard to the quality?—If he takes it from the ship's side there is the weighbridge, and the man has to bring his ticket.

88. Take the case of the average consumer who buys his coal in small quantities?—Probably he has got to trust to the coal merchants.

89. The evidence we have had proves that the cost of the coal is materially increased on account of the repeated handlings and the screenings?—It is the screenings that are the cause. When the coal is taken to the merchant's yard the extra expense is very considerable. It is not only the carting backwards and forwards, but the quantity of small coal which is left, and which means a great loss. It is the same with the company, which only gets 25 per cent. of large coal out of the whole of its output. The rest has to be sold at a less price.

90. And do you consider, for domestic purposes, there is much difference between large and small coal?—I can only give an answer to that by what I do myself at Oamaru. Whenever I want coal I tell the agent that I want a truck, and the truck comes from the ship's side into my merchant's yard.

91. Unscreened?—Yes. Just as it comes out of the ship, and we have never had a complaint made in our house. If you put a little water on it it seems to be very nearly as good as the other. I think the same remark would apply to the ships when they find fault with the coal. You have heard that the steamship companies find fault with the small coal. The men shovel on a great quantity of this small coal and the flame cannot get through it, whereas if they would use a little clay or soil, just to divide the small coal, they would get rid of all that trouble. There is a great deal in the knowledge of how to handle the coal.

92. Your opinion is that these frequent screenings imply waste, and are to a large extent unnecessary?—I think I may use the word "immensely"—add immensely to the cost.