

58. That is not very expensive, is it?—No.

59. Can you raise it a bit? Supposing you bought the wharf from the Railway Department, and paid 4½ per cent., put 3d. a ton on general cargo and 6d. a ton on coal, would that make it prohibitive?—I cannot answer the question the way it is put.

60. Would 3d or 6d. a ton extra make it prohibitive for goods to come in?—No, certainly not.

61. It would not stop the trade of the port coming through the port?—No.

62. It would enable you to borrow money to buy the wharf, and you would be under no great anxiety to improve your trade. Something was mentioned about a harbour-improvement rate?—We have not struck it yet.

63. Supposing you struck it, the ships would pay it, and you would have revenue to dredge your harbour?—But not sufficient to keep it going.

64. If you put 6d. a ton extra on your goods, you would get that revenue to dredge with. It seems to me that if you tried to be self-supporting, the difficulty could be very easily got over?—We have offered to buy the wharf, but the price the Government wants is capital on the revenue, not on the wharf itself.

65. Reverse the position. Would you not take up the same position yourself?—Yes, we would, but we reckon the boot is on the other foot.

66. *Hon. Mr. Millar*] Did you receive an offer from the Marine Department of a Priestman dredge free of cost?—Yes.

67. Did you accept it?—No, because it was not suitable for us; we should have to build a punt. It is not the class of dredge we understand. We want a suction dredge. A Priestman dredge would be wasting time there.

68. Do you not know that it is being used by other Harbour Boards?—We know that a suction dredge is up to date, especially in a very sandy bottom.

69. Did you expect the Government to buy you a suction dredge?—We expect that it should be bought with our own money.

70. *The Chairman*.] Have you an engineer?—No.

71. Well, on whose advice did you refuse the dredge?—We refused it on the ground that we did not have money to pay for some punts that would be required.

72. It would entail additional expense that you could not afford?—Yes.

73. You desire the wharf to be handed over to the Board although it was built by the Department?—That is what I want to be perfectly clear upon. We reckon that we should be put on the same footing as the neighbouring ports.

74. Do you ask this because you think a precedent was established in the cases of Wanganui, Patea, and Waitara?—Yes.

75. You think you should receive the same treatment as these places?—Yes.

76. You are willing to pay what you would consider a reasonable price for the wharf?—Yes.

77. If you do not consider their offer a reasonable one, and they do not consider your offer a reasonable one, could you suggest how the difference between you could be settled?—I should be prepared to submit it to arbitration.

78. And you would be prepared then to endeavour to get a rating-area, and get the support of the ratepayers to pay a price fixed by arbitration?—I could get a certain rating-area, but it would be limited. I think so—that is, if I could go to the district and say that we had agreed upon a price. If we could agree upon the price, I am satisfied that I could get a rating-area to secure the amount.

79. You feel confident that the people would support you?—Yes, in that particular thing. I should like to ask the Minister, if we could not come to terms, and build a wharf on our own land, whether we should get facilities from the Government?

80. *Hon. Mr. Millar*] Do you think it reasonable to suggest that if you had built a wharf and gone to the expense of putting in a siding, you would do it? If you had a business, would you go and build a shop alongside for another man in the same business, and find him the money for it?—That is the reason why we should like to fix the matter up in an amicable way.

81. *Mr. Craigie*.] You think £23,000 too much for the wharf?—I do.

82. What do you think is a fair price?—Although £10,000 is over the cost, I think my Board would be prepared to pay that for it.

83. *Mr. Brown*.] Then they get 7 per cent. for their money straight away?—But the wharf is thirty years old.

*Hon. Mr. Millar*. Only part of it, and it has all been renewed and kept up to date. The wharf has got thirty years' life in it now.

EDWARD NEWMAN, M.P., examined. (No. 3.)

*Witness* I do not think it is necessary to add very much to what Mr. Hennessy and Mr. Wilson have said. Of course, I quite understand the position taken up by the Hon. Mr. Millar. He is looking after the interests of the Railway Department, and he considers it his duty to oppose anything that is against the interests of his Department. I desire to refer to the position of the Foxton Harbour Board. There can be no doubt—and any one listening to the evidence to-day must admit—that Foxton has been unfortunately situated in comparison with the sister ports. Thirty years ago Wanganui, Patea, Waitara, and Foxton were in the same position of having rivers with bars and no improvements. Harbour Boards had been formed under an Act. At a later date the Board at Foxton was dissolved; the others were not, and they were fortunate in securing considerable endowments, as well as wharfages which