

17. What is the cost to the public at Lyttelton?—I really could not tell you. The notice I got to attend was so short that I was unable in the time to get all the information. I think I am right in saying that the price is reduced in every port in the Dominion.

18. *The Chairman.*] Would you supply us with a statement with regard to the price of coal between 1890 and 1900 and between 1900 and 1910 in the different places in the Dominion?—I will have that statement made up for you. [See Exhibit No. 1.]

19. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Could you have a table made up showing the increase in wages?—Yes.

20. *Mr. Hall.*] What is the price of steam coal?—That varies very much according to the sort of coal that each steamer uses.

21. *The Chairman.*] Will you state that it is the custom of the Westport Coal Company to sell to anybody ready to buy your coal?—Yes.

22. You sell to the public?—We sell to any one.

23. Is there any agreement between you and the Union Company to give the Union Company preference?—We have to give them all our carrying.

24. In regard to the supply of coal?—No, we simply supply them; but we have an agreement for carrying and for the price of selling coal. The rates of freight are fixed at the different ports, and we reserve the right to sell to outsiders, to charter, or do anything else we require. We also own our own steamers, and we give freights to various small companies. Our chief carrying business, however, is done with the Union Company. That company undertakes to provide whatever steamers we require, and to send them wherever we want them to go.

25. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] The same arrangement, I presume, exists between the Stockton and other companies?—The Blackball Company own their own steamers. We have two steamers of our own.

26. When sending in the return, could you include the price of steam coal. We want this for a specific purpose, and if you can let us have it it would be very useful?—If you will be kind enough to frame your questions and send them to me I will answer them.

27. *Mr. Macdonald.*] I come from Westport, where we hear all sorts of rumours, and I have heard it stated that if an outside company comes to the Westport Company and asks for 5,000 tons of coal for distribution in New Zealand the company is not at liberty to sell?—It depends on where the coal is to be taken. Supposing a steamer came into Westport, and we sold it a cargo of coal, it might suit the owner for a particular purpose to sell that coal at a low price in ports where we have our own agencies. That one transaction might suit that owner, but he could not do it regularly, and therefore we say, "Well, if you are going to sell this cargo and compete with us in different ports we won't give it to you." If he will quote us a lower freight for carriage than the Union Company we will consider it. We cannot keep the mines going on casual steamers. It was essential in the interests of the workmen, and also to keep the cost of production down, to keep the mine regularly going. We have had very few idle days in the year. I do not think there is a mine in Australasia in which the employment is so regular as in ours, and that is so because of our freight arrangements.

28. There does not exist free trade in coal?—It does exist, because any man who wants coal we give it to him.

29. You still reserve the right to say whether a man can get a cargo of 5,000 tons for, say, Wellington?—We reserve the right, but I have never refused to quote a price for a cargo that I know of.

30. *Mr. Veitch.*] If a vessel came along and asked for a freight of 5,000 tons, and you thought there was a danger of that cargo underselling you, would you refuse to supply that coal?—I have never done so yet.

31. Is there any arrangement between the Westport Company and any other company or companies for the purpose of regulating the selling-price of coal?—None whatever.

32. *The Chairman.*] There is no understanding between the Westport Coal Company and the Union Company by which you are to give the Union Company preference in regard to coal?—I have said we give the Union Company all our carrying over and above what we send by our own boats. It is understood that they get all the surplus, but we have the right to charter or send by other steamers to where we like. It is a free and open arrangement.

33. *Mr. Veitch.*] Does not the arrangement you have with the Union Company interfere with the business of other coal companies and restrict their operations?—The Union Company, so far as we are concerned, are at liberty to carry for or buy coal from any company they like. With regard to the general question of the cost of living as applied to the household, I may say I keep a very careful account of my own household expenditure, and I have analysed that expenditure for the last ten years. I have taken out the first five years of that period regarding the cost of food, clothing, and wages, and compared them with the following five years—that is, the five years just ended—and I find that the increase in the cost of keeping up the same household has been 8 per cent., whilst the increase in wages—that is, for domestic help—has been 33 per cent.

34. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] That covers the last ten years. Have you a record of the ten years prior to that?—I have not got it with me, but I can look it up for you. The difficulty, however, is that my household for the last ten years was uniformly the same, whilst previous to that time my family at home was larger, and accordingly the comparison would not be so useful.

35. Do you take the total cost of the upkeep of your establishment, or have you gone into the various items?—I took the bills of the grocer, baker, fishmonger, and so on.

36. *Mr. Macdonald.*] The increase in household necessities has been 8 per cent.?—Yes.

37. What has been the increase in lighting?—I do not think there has been very much difference in that respect. There has been a decrease.

38. What has been the difference in rent?—I do not know anything about that. I own my own house.

39. *The Chairman.*] Have the rates risen?—Yes.

40. Are the rates included in that estimate?—No.

41. *Mr. Veitch.*] Are you employing the same number of servants now as formerly?—Yes.