

Mr. F. F. Munro, the present Chairman of the Harbour Board, appeared and represented the Harbour Board.

Mr. W. G. McDonald, of Westport, solicitor, appeared on behalf of Mr. Colvin, M.P., an ex-member of the Board, Mr. Greenland, Secretary of the Board, and with Mr. Cottrell, solicitor, for another client, Messrs. Bowater and Bryan, Limited.

Mr. A. A. Wilson at a later stage appeared on behalf of Messrs. Scanlon, Griffiths, and Powell, ex-members of the Board.

Mr. Moloney, solicitor, also appeared on behalf of Mr. O'Callaghan, one of the quarry foremen.

We duly heard the evidence of all witnesses tendered to us, and examined all such books, plans, and other documents as we deemed might afford us information on the matters under inquiry, including Harbour Board files, and Land Board files from Nelson.

We made inspections of the river and of the various harbour-works, and closed our inquiry at Westport on the 26th day of September.

We reopened our inquiry in Wellington on the 3rd day of October, 1913, after public notice of our intention so to do.

We sat to hear the evidence of all such persons as desired to be heard or give evidence before us, and examined officers and some files of the Marine Department, the Audit Department, the Railway Department, and the Treasury.

On the 6th day of October we duly cited the Westport Harbour Board as a party pursuant to section 11 of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1908, to show cause why the costs of and incidental to the said inquiry should not be borne and paid by the said Board, on the ground that the said Commission of Inquiry had been set up at the request of the said Board.

Having given to all persons affected by the subject-matters of the said Commission of Inquiry sufficient opportunity to be heard, and having made such investigation and inquiry as we deemed sufficient to enable us to report to Your Excellency, we have now the honour to report as follows :—

In the course of our inquiry we found the following facts to have been proved :—

1. That the Westport Harbour Board was originally created and constituted by and under the Westport Harbour Board Act, 1884.

2. The purpose and object for the creation of the said Board was to form and maintain a harbour on the Buller River at Westport, on a scheme propounded by Sir John Coode in 1880. The said scheme provided, *inter alia*, for—The construction of a breakwater on the western side of the river-mouth, estimated to cost £266,400, including a bridge across the river ; and of another breakwater on the eastern side estimated to cost £172,376 ; and certain dredging estimated to cost £50,000, excluding the cost of the dredging plant ; the total estimated cost being £488,776.

The object of the construction of the breakwaters to project beyond the existing coast-line was to compel the river and tidal currents to run over a definite and fixed track of proper proportions, in place of being dissipated by spreading, and thereby to scour a channel. It was desired to secure a depth of 12 ft. at low water spring tides (15 ft. low water neaps) in the entrance, or 23 ft. 4 in. at high water spring tides (20 ft. 6 in. high water neaps), so that vessels drawing up to 14 ft. would be able to navigate the entrance with safety during on-shore gales with a possible scend of 6 ft.

Sir John Coode advised that the breakwaters should be coated on the outer faces with random blocks of concrete weighing 22 tons each, and pointed out that such a form of construction would lead to an economy of material in the hearting of the breakwater. He proposed that for the outer 1,000 ft. the eastern breakwater should be at first carried up to half-tide level so that flood-waters might the more readily escape, leaving the matter of raising the mole to full height to be determined from experience ; and that the western breakwater should project seaward 400 ft. beyond the eastern breakwater.

Sir John Coode recommended internal works which he did not include in his estimate, such as half-tide training-banks of rubble so placed as to secure at low water a width of 500 ft. in the channel. He also proposed to supplement the natural scour of the effluent by dredging the permanent bed of the channel to particular gradients extending for one and three-quarter miles above Wakefield Street in order to increase the tidal compartment. This work has not been carried out.

It is evident that Sir John Coode formed his design with a view to its possible extension to meet the growth of trade and of the vessels expected to use the port, and for that reason did not include in his estimate the internal works, leaving them to be executed if necessary as the result of further experience in the development of