

51. As the Government carry for Mr. Handyside now, and as the Government would be building this line, why should they take it off one line and put it on the other?—I have not considered the matter from Mr. Handyside's point of view, but there is this: the new line would certainly save Mr. Handyside having to carry his coal up a hill. The Government would not run both lines.

52. Would this proposed line carry a single ton of coal that is being taken over More's line at the present time?—It could. I could not say whether it would, but it could. It depends upon the people mining the coal apart from the railway. There is no reason why it should not, and the chances are that all they would have to do is what they have been doing during the last ten years—take it up to the road, and put it on the Government line from there.

53. You said you considered More's line would serve all the mines and that you could not have a line for every mine?—It goes into the district and is close handy. Ultimately it will go round the side of the hill.

54. But when?—As soon as they can get something out of it for their past outlay.

55. But what are the people at the back to do in the meantime?—Wait a little longer, the same as others have done for the last ten years. They have a line five miles further on. They have only to run a light line a mile and a quarter further.

56. The Mores want to wait till they have made enough out of the business to extend the line?—They are prepared to accede to the request made by these people as soon as they can see their way clear.

57. You say the Mores have no interest in a pound of coal?—I said that the Mores have had no interest whatever in a pound of coal up there until quite recently. They put in an application for a small coal area lately. There was not enough coal being taken out and the coal people higher up failed to supply it. It was then they put in an application for a coal area so as to get some to run over the line.

58. How are these people at the back whose mines are a mile and a quarter from your line to put the coal on to your line?—If I had the coal it would not take me long to put it on to the line.

59. How are they to do it?—With a light railway-line.

60. You suggest they should build a railway?—They should connect with a light line.

61. The only difference between you is as to where the line should be. You would not have any objection to their building a railway of their own?—No, certainly not. Let every one build a railway wherever he wants to.

62. Your only objection is that the Government should give assistance to them?—Yes. I say the Government should not give assistance in that way to the prejudice of others.

63. You do not mind the railway being there?—No.

64. You think it is going to be a payable proposition?—I think the Government ought to do with this proposed railway as we did.

65. Did you ask the Government to help you?—No.

66. Your whole objection when boiled down comes to this: you object to the Government assisting. You do not mind them having the railway?—The whole point is that they should put their line in in the same way as we had to put ours in.

67. Although you did not ask for assistance?—Yes. Some mention was made about some letters, but I find that I have not got a letter from Mr. Rodger.

68. What bearing has the letter? You say that Mr. Rodger was in favour of the Wairio Railway being constructed?—Yes. Mr. Rodger and Mr. McGregor were very keen on the railway going that way, and now that they find there is a chance of getting the Government railway they have turned round on this enterprise after assisting it.

69. Have you been asked to extend your line?—I could not say for certain. I dare say we have. I had no notice of the Committee meeting to consider this matter till yesterday afternoon, and I have therefore had no opportunity of preparing myself.

70. To extend your line to get to the mines would be one and a half miles?—One and a quarter to one and a half miles.

71. What does it cost per mile to construct your line?—About £3,000. There are no cuttings or embankments on the first portion, and it would be £3,000 at the outside.

72. You said that your company did not propose to extend the line till they made enough money to be able to afford to do it?—No, I did not say that, but they have laid out all the money they can lay their fingers on, and they have to get some return before they can attempt to go further.

73. They cannot advance £4,000 additional?—No, not at the present time, until they see some hope of getting a return from the other.

74. How long will that take?—I do not think it will take long. From what I have heard from More and Sons they are prepared practically to go on with the matter at once. They have already taken a flying survey of the proposed line. They went over it some years ago with Mr. Rodger, and they decided they were easily able to get up to the top. All Mr. McGregor's letters show that there was an intention to go on. [Letters produced and put in.]

75. *Mr. Escott.*] Do you suggest that you have not had sufficient time to prepare your case?—I do not say that, but I did not know of this meeting coming on till half-past 4 on Tuesday afternoon, and I was then in Invercargill. I had not seen the petition and have not heard any of the evidence.

76. If you have not had sufficient time to prepare your case you can make application to the Committee to get the time?—I am certainly in the hands of the Committee. They know what has been said. I should like to have had the opportunity of running through the evidence that has been given in favour of the petition.

77. *Mr. Rodger.*] Mr. Armstead has been asked to put in some letters, and I desire to say that this letter I have here is the only one in which I have made any offer to Messrs. More and Sons. The letter is dated 13th October, 1910. [Letter read.] That is the only offer I made in writing to Messrs. More and Sons, and I got no reply. The railway has not been carried beyond McKenzie's.