

11. It has altered the whole position of affairs ?—Yes.

12. *Mr. Robertson.*] You say that at that time you believed the line was going to be extended. For what purpose was it to be extended ?—We knew of the good pit Mosses had and were working. They were working that, and there was no other working.

13. *Hon. Mr. Fisher.*] Were you not keen on it from a settlement point of view ?—Certainly : we all looked upon it as going to be beneficial to us, because we were hemmed in owing to the way in which our roads were destroyed by coal traffic.

14. *Mr. Robertson.*] You knew of the coal-deposits back there ?—We knew they were there, but they had not been proved at the time.

WEDNESDAY, 5TH AUGUST, 1914.

THOMAS MORE, Sawmiller, Riverton, examined. (No. 17.)

1. *Mr. Armstead.*] You are a member of the firm of More and Sons, sawmillers, of Riverton ?—Yes.

2. You have mills back in Longwood ?—Yes.

3. You have put in a tramway from the Longwood Station to those mills ?—Yes.

4. How far ?—Twelve miles.

5. And you are carrying out the produce of all the other mills that are in that district ?—Yes.

6. How long ago is it since you first became acquainted with the Wairio district with reference to putting a tramway in there ?—About four years and a half, I think.

7. What proposition was put to you then with reference to putting a tramway in from Wairio ?—The haulage of the coal out from McKenzie's pit. We went and had a look at it ; we traversed the district all over, and had a good look round to see if we thought it a payable thing. We thought it was all right, and we went into it. After we had a good survey of the district and the different routes we thought the way we picked was the best, and we started.

8. Was it your intention to go into McKenzie's alone ?—No ; we intended to go right on if it was necessary.

9. Did you, before you commenced your railway, survey your route further on—did you make a flying survey of it further on ?—Yes ; we looked at the country right on, where the other coal was.

10. Up the Morley Valley ?—Yes.

11. How does the coal lie in that district ? How does your railway go into it ? And what makes you say that it is a better route up that valley to tap that coal ?—The coal lies, as it were, down to the railway. If the railway were on the top of the hill you would have to haul the coal up to the top ; whereas by the other route you get the natural fall down to the railway.

12. How far have you constructed the line ?—About five miles.

13. Do you know anything at all about the Order in Council or the deed of delegation ?—No, nothing whatever. We left that to our solicitor.

14. You saw Mr. Rodger and Mr. McGregor before this line was put in ?—Yes.

15. Were Mr. Rodger and Mr. McGregor favourable to the line going in in that way ?—Yes.

16. Were representations made to you then as to going on further ?—Yes. They promised to help us—or Mr. Rodger did—if the line went on. We expected all through the piece that we would get his assistance. It was largely because of the promises we had from Mr. Rodger that the line was started. It was not only the coal that we were going to bring out—it was the produce and everything.

17. Supposing you extend your line from where it is at present, do you think you can get to the top of the hill overlooking the Morley Valley or down into the Morley Valley ?—Yes. Mr. Rodger, Mr. McGregor, and I went over the route, and we were satisfied that it could go there.

18. And you are still satisfied it can go there ?—Yes.

19. If sufficient inducement offers are you prepared to put it there ?—Yes.

20. If it goes there will your railway then tap the whole district that the proposed Government railway would tap ?—Yes, exactly the same district : it will go to exactly the same point.

21. If you had been going into McKenzie's pit and the Wairio pit alone would you have stopped your railway at its present terminus ?—No ; we could have got it nearer the pits.

22. Have you any coal up in that district, or has the company ?—Yes, that which they have taken up recently.

23. When ?—About a month ago—three weeks or a month ago it was granted to them.

*Hon. Mr. Fisher :* How much ?

*Mr. Armstead :* 100 acres.

24. *Mr. Armstead.*] That adjoins the present Wairio Coal Company ?—It adjoins Ferguson's.

25. Otherwise you have no interest whatever in any coal leases or rights ?—No.

26. Have you advanced any money in any shape or form to assist any of the coalowners ?—No, none whatever.

27. Nor has any of your brothers ?—No, not that I know of.

28. The railway company purchases McKenzie's coal ?—Yes.

29. Will you please tell these gentlemen how the company came to purchase it, and what they give for it, and all about it ?—McKenzie is only a small working miner, and now he has got £500 on his books, I think, from the mining he has done, and he cannot get his money in. He said it was no good to him to work in that way, and he asked us to take his coal. We wanted to know what he asked for it. He told us, and we gave him that. He seemed satisfied. That was the reason why we took his coal : otherwise we did not want it. We put the line in purely and simply as a carrying concern. We did not want to purchase coal.