

30. Do you know what the charges are under the deed of delegation—5s. or 5s. 6d. a ton?—Yes.

31. Are they reasonable charges?—Up to a certain point they are. It depends on the output. If we get a big output passing over the line we can carry it cheaper. If we do not we have to charge higher rates. It depends on the output.

32. How long has the line been running?—About two months—barely two months.

33. The screens and things are not completed yet?—No, not quite completed.

34. Do you know what has been going over the line on an average during the last two months?—It averages about 50 to 60 tons a day.

35. I suppose you have had several conversations with the people up Morley way with regard to extending your line or carrying their coal. Will you tell the Committee as shortly as you can of any conversations, or what your ideas are with reference to extending—what you think you would like to do, or what you think you could do with reference to meeting these people and getting the coal over your line?—They approached us, and we could not give them anything definite about the charges. We told them that it just depended on the output of the mines. We could not go right into it and tell them at once. We should need to have a scale of rates that would vary with the quantity of stuff that came out. And the demand for the coal is only limited. We could not buy the coal right out, because it would be a hard matter to get rid of it supposing we did buy it in big quantities.

36. Mr. Crawford has suggested that you said something about taking only 25 tons for the first three months and 50 tons a day after that—or something of that sort. Do you know whether that is correct?—No, I did not say that. I know nothing about that.

37. I have a letter here showing the position, and I will put in a copy of it later. Now, if the proposed Government line goes in, what effect will it have upon your company's line?—It will knock it right out. We cannot compete with a Government line: that is a certain thing.

38. *Hon. Mr. Fisher.*] Would the Government line carry any of the coal that your line is now carrying?—It would carry it all. It would take all the coal that we are getting.

*Mr. Armstead:* I have here copies of letters that have been sent to different people. They can be verified. I have not got a verification of them. It would have been very awkward to bring the company's books up with me. [Copies of letters handed in.]

*The Chairman:* You wish to put these in as evidence?

*Mr. Armstead:* Yes.

39. *Mr. Armstead.*] Is it your firm conviction, Mr. More, that if the proposed Government line goes in it will have the effect of taking the whole of the produce—coal and what not—from your line?—Yes, it certainly will. It is impossible for a private line to compete with a Government line.

40. It has been suggested that there is some flaw in the Order in Council which does not allow the Government to take advantage of the resumption of the line. Would you be prepared to allow the Government to take the line if they feel inclined?—Yes.

41. Would you be prepared to allow coalowners in the Morley Valley to link up with your line?—Yes.

42. Would you be prepared to extend your line up to the top of the hill above the Morley pit?—If we could get reasonable inducement we would, certainly.

43. You see this map here?—Yes.

44. You have an ugly curve coming into Wairio here [place indicated], up a fairly steep hill?—Yes.

45. Is that the better route into Wairio?—It is the shorter route. It is not much trouble when you have an engine on the track. If this were connected with a main line it would have to go to Woodlaw. That is not a very big proposition. It is good country all the way up there [indicated]—in fact, the easiest part of all the route.

46. You see all these coal-pits here marked red?—Yes.

47. Those have all been taken up since your line was undertaken, excepting McKenzie's and the Wairio Coal Company's?—Yes.

48. You have an interest in the Southland Coal Company—have you?—Yes.

49. It has been suggested that there is some deep-laid scheme by which the Southland Coal Company are going to wreck the coal people up there, somehow or other. Tell us exactly what the Southland Coal Company is, and what your interest in it is, and all about it?—The interest that I have in it is not very much. The way we got into it was this: The Westport Coal Company wanted to get out, and the manager of that company got the offer of the business. That is how I got into it. The turnover of the Southland Coal Company is very small—7 to 10 tons a day, I suppose. It is a very small retail business.

50. Is it in any shape or form connected with the railway company?—None whatever.

51. Have you any interest in any shape or form in the Wairio Coal Company?—None whatever.

52. Have you ever had?—No.

53. *Mr. Rodger.*] You said it was four years and a half ago that you first went up there?—About four years and a half.

54. I think it is fully five years, if I may suggest it. It was certainly before this time in 1909?—Yes.

55. You were asked whether you were intending to extend to our quarter when you first thought of this railway, and your answer was that you would if necessary. What did that "if necessary" mean?—It just depended on the inducement we got.

56. Yet you say that we offered every possible inducement to you before your railway was put in, and you did not see fit to accept it?—We could not accept it until we had seen what the railway was going to do. We wanted to get the first part of the railway in, to see how we would get on. You promised us every inducement before you went to the Old Country.