

The Wairio Railway and Coal Company (Limited).

SCHEDULE OF REBATES to be allowed off the authorized rate of 5s. 6d. per ton on loose coal in truck lots carried over the railway in each year. These rebates, which can only be given if we get the use of Government trucks at usual rates, to be given to all consignors of coal alike, and to be based on the total haulage of loose coal for all parties. If we do not get the use of Government trucks at usual rates these rebates to be reduced by 6d. per ton in each lease.

If Total Coal hauled in Year amounts to				Rebate to be refunded at End of Year.		Practically making Haulage Rate per Ton	
Tons.				s.	d.	s.	d.
30,000	..	..	..	0	6	5	0
37,500	..	..	..	1	0	4	6
45,000	..	..	..	1	9	3	9
52,500	..	..	..	2	3	3	3
60,000	..	..	..	2	6	3	0
67,500	..	..	..	2	9	2	9
75,000	..	..	..	3	0	2	6
82,500	..	..	..	3	3	2	3
90,000 and over	..	..	..	3	6	2	0

ALEXANDER WYLLIE RODGER addressed the Committee. (No. 21.)

Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—I will deal first with the evidence that has been brought before you by Mr. More and Mr. Armstead. Before going on I want to make one or two points regarding what Mr. Armstead has been saying this morning. Lime has not been mentioned before, and I just want to say that the lime reserve to which he has made reference is only a small thing of 20 acres. I have had lime from it analysed, and it is not suitable for agricultural purposes. But there are unlimited quantities of lime beyond Birchwood homestead—there are millions of tons of it, and it is very high-grade lime indeed. I have been using it myself on Birchwood for the last eight years, and it has given most favourable results. It is simply crushed, not burnt at all. I think that any one who sees Birchwood to-day and who knew it eight or ten years ago will admit that the lime has worked wonders on that land. Mr. Armstead said that this railway would not tap Mr. Ritchie's country. This country has not been referred to at all, and I must admit that it escaped my notice that Mr. Ritchie has a coal-bearing field there contiguous to the Nightcaps coal area. Now, this railway will go within a quarter of a mile of the old workings on Mr. Ritchie's property, and it will be most beneficial to the Nightcaps people, inasmuch as when Nightcaps becomes worked out—and there are rumours that that is very near at hand—they can simply go into Mr. Ritchie's property and work it out; and there are known to be very large deposits of the same class of coal as Nightcaps in that vicinity. Mr. Armstead has also made reference to the fact that the coal lessees in our district are entitled to charge 10s. a ton, and there is no guarantee that the consumers will benefit by this railway going in and the lower rates that will be chargeable. I wish to state that there are already six different interests there. They will all be coming into competition in the same market, and that competition itself ought to warrant the best possible being done in the interests of the consumers, so far as cost is concerned. Mr. Armstead in the early part of his evidence admitted the need for this extension that we pray for, or the facilities that we want in our district. He also admitted that it would be a payable proposition. And I wish to point out that during the whole of our evidence not one of our statements has been refuted by the evidence of Mr. Armstead and Mr. More or by the cross-examination. A great deal has been said by Mr. Armstead and Mr. More in regard to the offers that we were supposed to put before these gentlemen in order to induce them to come into our district in the early stages. We admit that entirely, and I submit that it is in our favour, inasmuch as their refusal to accept these offers is conclusive evidence that it was not their intention to come into Ohai at that time. The absence of any provision in the Order in Council for the extension of that railway is further evidence that it was not their intention to come in until it suited them to do so. The statement that Mr. Armstead has brought forward yesterday and to-day is a new one to me, and I think it will also be to you—that a time-limit was in their minds when they did not provide for that extension. I beg to say that neither the Public Works Department nor any public body would have asked them to put a time-limit upon any possible extension. If there had been any doubt as to that the public body (the Wallace County Council) could have been made the authority in that respect. It could have been left to their discretion to do what was necessary in that direction. It has been repeatedly stated in the evidence that this railway was put in with the idea of becoming a carrying proposition pure and simple. Why, then, was there no provision made for the carriage of loose coal, which was going to be the mainstay of that railway? The coal was the idea all through—to get that coal was the idea—yet there was no provision made for its haulage in bulk. If it was going to be a public benefit and for carrying purposes only, why was it that they did not provide at their terminus for access to the railway by the farmers through their wagons or their drays? There is no such provision at their terminus, and there never has been any idea of it, if you will look at the map. The high rates for produce which have been fixed in the Order in Council are absolutely prohibitive