

That, at all events, refers to those returns Mr. Weston has put in, so I submit that a great deal more has been said about the conditions of the river than is really justified by the facts. Then, take Mr. Kellow's statement of the trade, and the Commission will see that the quantity of hemp and tow has considerably increased, particularly the hemp.

*The Chairman :* This return of the vessels trading to Foxton from April, 1909, to 1916, does show a drop, because for the nine months in 1909 there were 186 vessels of 21,000 tons, and in 1915, 185 vessels for the twelve months.

*Mr. Myers :* Yes; but there is no substantial drop. The tonnage is 22,000.

*The Chairman :* 21,000 is the registered tonnage for nine months in 1909, and 22,938 for twelve months in 1915.

*Mr. Myers :* Look at 1913, which is higher, and 1912. It varies.

*The Chairman :* 1909 is higher, but it drops in 1915.

*Mr. Myers :* Yes, it goes up and down, but it is not appreciable.

*The Chairman :* It is not appreciable, but, at any rate, the tendency is down.

*Mr. Myers :* No, your Honour, not altogether.

*The Chairman :* Take 1910, where you have the twelve months.

*Mr. Myers :* Well, take 1911: there is a drop, while in 1912 there is an increase; 1913, a slight drop; 1914, a drop; and 1915, an increase.

*The Chairman :* But not an increase up to 1910.

*Mr. Myers :* No.

*Mr. Williams :* I think there is a slight drop.

*Mr. Myers :* One explanation is to be found in connection with the coal-boats, and I will refer to that directly. The Railway Department has not been getting its coal.

*The Chairman :* There were seventy-five fewer vessels in 1915 than in 1910.

*Mr. Myers :* Yes; but there is a difference in imports of about 10,000 tons of coal in 1910 and 1915, which accounts for quite a number of vessels.

*The Chairman :* But the list I was referring to eliminates coal, because it deals with it after the coal had ceased.

*Mr. Myers :* No, your Honour. My friend has admitted that the general cargo has doubled, and the hemp has gone up very considerably.

*The Chairman :* No doubt the export of hemp is new.

*Mr. Weston :* That is a big freight.

*Mr. Myers :* I do not know the character, but take the trade of the port and see the increase. And, I say, could there have been that increase—could the ships, especially, if there had been a few less ships coming, have been doing all this work and carrying all these increased loads if the conditions had been such as those suggested? It shows, your Honour, the kind of argument that is used when Mr. Goldingham in his evidence before the Commission [see page 36, question 28] says that owing to the irregularity he had to open a depot at Foxton to keep goods there. Mr. Kellow says in effect, "For Heaven's sake improve the river conditions at Foxton, because then these merchants will open depots at Foxton." Mr. Goldingham says that it would be an advantage to improve the shipping, because he would not then require a depot at Foxton; and Mr. Kellow says, "Improve the river so as to give us the advantage." Then Mr. Goldingham is asked whether his importations have increased, and he says Yes; and he says his business has increased, and the imports have increased both by sea and by rail; but when we come to look at his railage returns there is not that increase; so that the increase must all have been by sea, notwithstanding all this irregularity that they have talked about. So that the Commission will see that, wherever there is any test which can be applied, the result of the test is against the Foxton Harbour Board on the question of the river conditions and not in its favour. Mr. Drew was asked whether the shipments were regular [see page 83, question 133]: "You have had a lot of inwards cargo through Foxton pretty regularly?—Yes, fairly regularly." And when the tramway returns for 1916 are looked at there appears to be fair regularity, though I admit that nothing very much can be taken from that, because there is other cargo carried on the tramway quite apart from goods which come in through Foxton. Very well; how, in the face of all this testimony, can the wild statements that have been made regarding the river be accepted? How can it be said that the river conditions have deteriorated? Now, take the question of coal. Irresponsible statements have been made that the trouble has arisen because the owners of the colliers will not send their vessels into port. Mr. Hennessy makes a statement in this connection [see page 21], and Mr. Kellow makes a similar statement [see page 23, question 28]; but there is no person connected with the actual management of any of those colliers who has been called to give evidence; and when the Railway Department gives its evidence it is found that the reduction in the quantity of coal imported into Foxton has absolutely nothing to do with the river conditions.

*Mr. Weston :* I think you have not examined the figures.

*Mr. Myers :* My friend may be able to show the contrary, but all I can say is that the facts show, and the evidence of Mr. McVilly shows, that the purchase of the Manawatu Railway and the opening of the Main Trunk Railway have completely altered the conditions with regard to the requirements of coal from Foxton northwards. Mr. Crabb, who was one of the witnesses called in regard to the coal question, says [see page 38, question 41], that he could never get in the four years he has been in business more than 180 tons in any one shipment; but Mr. Crabb's difficulty has arisen plainly, when the real reason is sought for, not because of the river conditions, but because the Railway Department's coal is not going into Foxton. He explained to us in his evidence that the more screened coal the Railway Department gets, the more small coal there is for Mr. Crabb. Consequently, if the railway screened coal does not go into Foxton, Mr. Crabb has more trouble in getting shipments of small coal. So all this difficulty we have heard of in regard to the question of importing coal into Foxton is explained, and affords no argument, it is submitted, in favour of the alleged deterioration of the river conditions. Now, I put