

Witness: I also suggest that the Public Works Department should buy gelignite and sell it to settlers at cost price for clearing purposes in far-back places where it is not possible to take the hauler. Then we are having a difficulty about the butter-fat in the factories. I advocate that a method might be adopted whereby the Board of Trade could put a standard price on butter-fat. It could appoint a man to take tests in the factories in the district, five in number. It would do away with a lot of the dissatisfaction that exists at present.

RUSSELL WEEKES, Railway Employee, examined.

I wish to speak about ozokerite asphalt. I had a prospectus explaining the material given into my hand prior to the war. The compiler gave it to me to see if I could utilize it, as he had gone into the matter in Melbourne and could not use it for want of capital. I am not an expert in the matter, and cannot go into the details, but I will leave the prospectus with you to look into and see if it is possible to do anything with the proposal. Reference is also made to the distillation of coal for procuring paraffin-wax, &c. I have samples of the asphalts [produced]. I also wish to refer to the eggettes. We have in this district a great deal of coal, but unfortunately it is of a very friable nature. The Government—on the railways, anyhow—use only the screened coal. When approached on the subject of using the unscreened they say it is of such a friable nature when it reaches them that they are unable to utilize it. In 1913 the State briquette-works were dismantled as unsuccessful. The sole reason, I believe, was that the pitch used as a binder was too highly priced. It was costing 3s. 6d. per ton. The compiler of the prospectus, when talking to me, said he could produce it cheaper. The cost of the mixer, he said, would run about 2s. per ton. I am talking of prices prior to the war. [Samples of eggettes produced.] I think the difficulty of our friable coal might be solved if the cheap mixer were introduced and the product utilized for the railways, instead of having to send for 80,000 tons a month from Australia. At Waimongaroa, right on the railway-line, is a mine of crushed coal. It has been known as the Wellington Mine. It would, I believe, bind with less of the binder than any coal of which I have any knowledge.

D. MACKENZIE, Pattern-maker, examined.

My object is to show the suitability of Westport as a site for steel and iron works. We have bituminous coal which has been proved by the New Plymouth Ironsand Works to be a most suitable coal for coke for smelting-works. In the Parapara iron-ores, according to the Dominion Analyst, there is a percentage of iron of 55. Some people favour the idea that the coal should be taken to the iron at New Plymouth or at Parapara, but I submit to the Committee that the iron should be taken to the coal-deposits. Westport is, in my opinion, the most suitable place in New Zealand for iron and smelting works. We have the port, we have the coal suitable for the smelting of iron-ores, the distance is only a hundred miles from Parapara, and you are always sure of a cargo of coal back, which makes the thing a commercially paying concern. We know how successful have been the Broken Hill works. In four years they were able to supply material to Australia. New Zealand has never developed its iron-ore industry. It has tackled the ironsand, but iron-ore would be commercially cheaper than the ironsand. Unfortunately, the Taranaki ironworks have been closed up for the want of coke, showing clearly that to make the thing a commercial success it is best to take the iron to where the coal is. I think the Government should subsidize the industry, because it takes more money to start the steel and iron industry than to start any other work you could mention. When the Broken Hill works started the promoters were prepared to spend three millions. I hope the Committee will impress on the Government that it should go into the undertaking in a proper manner and see that it is carried out. In the Australian works they have to carry their iron-ore twelve hundred miles, and they make a success of it, and surely we could make a success of ours with only a hundred miles to carry the material.

To Mr. Veitch: The Westport Company's coke gave greater satisfaction at the New Plymouth ironworks than the Greymouth coal.

To Mr. Sidey: I do not suggest that the industry should be a State enterprise, though the State should subsidize it. The works in Australia would never have been started if it had been left to the Government to start them. The New Zealand Government ought to obtain the services of an expert to advise it, either from America or Australia.

MURCHISON.

FRIDAY, 7TH FEBRUARY, 1919.

JOSEPH BROWN, Chairman, Murchison County Council, examined.

Dairying is in progress in this district. The butter-factory has an output of 120 tons, and each year the output is growing. The district is scattered, the county being a hundred miles across. More grazing is being done than anything else. A little mining goes on—all alluvial, such as it is. It was not a big goldfield, but it was a good poor-man's diggings. The work was done mostly on beaches; there were no reefs, and six dredges on the river all ceased working. We get top price for our butter. The settlement of estates acquired by the Government is successful; there is no land-aggregation in the district. The land varies in value from £10 to £40 per acre. The district is not suitable for the culture of fruit. It is 600 ft. above sea-level. The grass keeps green all the year, and sometimes we have no frost all through the winter. We