

381. What does it cost to get the coal from the Brunnerton mines to Christchurch?—It fluctuates a good deal.

382. What is the cause of its fluctuating?—In summer-time there are more ships seeking employment, and there is not the same demand for them. In winter-time there is a greater consumption of coal and less ships to do the work. £1 1s. would be a fair rate from here to Christchurch; 2s. Brunnerton to Greymouth; 4s. 6d. Lyttelton to Christchurch; 6d. other charges, marine insurance and waste; and 14s. here to Lyttelton: total, £1 1s.

383. Then do you think the freights would fall very much if you were to take a quantity of coal by train?—No; it would not affect them at all, because the ships are not confined to the carrying of coal to Lyttelton. The freights are affected more by the grain trade, by the demand for ships elsewhere—the employment that ships find all over the colony and in Australia.

384. *Mr. Wilson.*] Are you aware that Newcastle coal is selling for £1 1s. in Lyttelton?—Yes; I have said so in my written note.

385. You could not expect to compete at that price?—Yes, we could. They sell at Lyttelton for £1 1s. Then it is 4s. 6d. to Christchurch. That brings it up to £1 5s 6d. If the railway carries our coal at 15s., and our price at Brunnerton is 10s., doesn't that meet it? And for the purpose of competition we could sell at 8s. at Brunnerton.

386. On what basis of calculation?—I think the tariff rate is set down at 15s.

387. *The Chairman.*] Do you know anything of the relative values between the Brunnerton coal and the lignite to be got at Springfield? Have you taken into consideration that there will be competition with the mine, and that of course the Springfield coal can be sold much cheaper than the Brunnerton coal?—I have taken that into view, because we already compete with that directly. We get £2 for our coal in Christchurch, while Springfield coal is sold at £1. We have been many years in competition with Springfield.

388. Applying that to railway purposes here, you anticipate the railway may possibly carry coal for burning on other parts of the line. Do you think it might not be better to use an inferior and cheaper coal than to carry other coal from an extreme end of the line?—They pay £1 6s. now for our coal, as against 14s. for coal on the East Coast. They accepted tenders at that price, showing that they accept our coal at £1 6s. and £1 8s. as against the other coal, which they get for 10s. and 14s.

389. Do you know what relative proportion they use?—That indicates, I think, the proportion. They use probably double the amount of the other coal.

390. *Mr. Bell.*] What is the lowest price at which these coals have been obtained for burning on the locomotives?—I think 10s.

391. Do you think these cheap coals on the East Coast have driven Newcastle coal out of use on the locomotives?—I know the Government have in many cases accepted the local article in preference not only to Newcastle but to ours and Westport. But the policy of the Government for the last two years has been not to use any imported coal, and they would either accept our tenders or the local coal. In no case have they accepted Newcastle for the last two years, although they might get them at something less.

392. Then you think that if they had your coals at an advance on the East Coast coal they would take your coal?—I think that if they got our coal at 8s. a ton (they could get small coal at 6s.) they would use that coal almost throughout the Middle Island, certainly down as far as Oamaru, in preference to using the lignite or brown coals.

393. I suppose the Government must reckon in the cost the coaling distance they have to carry it?—They would not charge themselves full tariff rates. If they charged us 15s. they would probably charge themselves 10s.

394. You don't suppose you could supply the Springfield part of the line, do you?—Not just in the vicinity of Springfield; but when they have to add their own freight on the coal, we could supply Timaru and Ashburton, Christchurch, or North Canterbury.

395. Is your coal as durable as Newcastle under exposure?—I believe it is. I have seen our coal out for a twelvemonth in Wellington, and they have then taken it into the gasworks.

396. Is your coal subject to going to pieces in the weather?—No; it only breaks when any heavy friction comes upon it, but not by mere exposure.

397. Have you any evidence to offer as to the extent of coal here?—We have it at Brunnerton, and it crops out for a distance of seven miles down to the sea, and extends to a considerable distance up country. It may be under Greymouth for anything we know.

398. *Mr. Wilson.*] Can you tell us what the exports to Lyttelton were out of this 60,000 tons?—About 5,000 tons. Perhaps there is more now. The gasworks use 5,000 tons. There may now be 8,000 tons.

399. Where does the bulk of it go?—Dunedin takes 10,000 tons; Auckland, 4,500 tons.

400. *Mr. Bell.*] How does Auckland take so much when it is surrounded with mines?—They only draw it for gas purposes through the Manukau. Napier takes coal; Wellington, 4,000 tons; and about 3,000 tons go to Melbourne.

401. *The Chairman.*] Have you ever been obliged to refuse cargoes on account of your inability to get coal away?—Yes; we often have orders which we cannot supply for want of ships, especially in winter-time.

402. Then the output would have been larger if you could have got it away?—We could have doubled it two or three years ago if we could have got it away.

403. How does the Wallasey Company expect to get their output away?—They are building steam colliers for the trade, and the Manager says they intend to try to send their coal to Australia and Adelaide.

404. Is 300,000 tons per annum an over-estimate?—No; I put it down at double that. If we have a demand for our coal, we can bring the output to 1,500 tons a day.

405. *Mr. Bell.*] How many would that give employment to?—Five hundred men at coal-cutting