

57. Does that exercise any controlling influence over the operations of your Company?—None whatever.

58. *Mr. Hutchison.*] This agreement is in writing?—Yes.

59. You have not a copy with you?—No; I have not a copy. It is in the nature of a general understanding. It is varied from time to time.

60. The rates, you say, are variable?—Yes; I might almost say this is a matter of daily arrangement. It is a sort of agreement, the particulars of which could not be all laid down in writing, so liable would they be to alteration.

61. But they bind themselves to provide any number of steamers, and you bind yourselves to give them all the coals you want carried?—Yes.

62. But you must not employ any other company?—No.

63. There is a penalty if you do?—There is no penalty. It is a matter of good feeling between us.

64. There must be a penalty, even if it should be an unliquidated one?—An agreement, no doubt, implies something of the kind; but in this case none is indicated.

65. *Mr. Fish.*] Can you give the Committee any information as to any complaint of one company selling to another for their own requirements, or so as to affect the rates of freight by carrying to certain ports by arrangement—to outside ports—sometimes to Australia?—No.

66. How about harbour dues: do you have to pay port dues to the Government at Westport or Greymouth?—No; we are not shippers.

67. As to the rate of freight paid to the Union Company: is it a rate that is likely to be oppressive in the direction of raising the price of coals to the consumer?—To a certain extent it is a sliding-scale: it goes down with our prices.

68. As the price decreases the freight goes down *pro rata*?—Yes; it is an arrangement between us; it is varied from time to time. When we had our own steamers we could not carry for a less rate than we give the Union Steamship Company.

69. Then, you say the public do not suffer as a consequence of that arrangement?—So far as I can see they do not. If the public suffered we would suffer.

70. Can it limit the output of coal from the mines by enabling them to bring any quantity of coals from Newcastle for their own purposes?—No; oh, no; it gives them no control whatever over the output of coal, because they must carry all that we require them to carry.

71. Then, it does not limit the output in any shape or form: that is what you say as to this arrangement with the Union Steamship Company?—No; on the contrary, we strain every nerve to increase the output, and just now we are doing it at a loss.

72. *Mr. Hutchison.*] Have you agents for the sale of coal in the various towns and principal cities?—Yes.

73. Have you an agent in Wellington?—Yes.

74. Entirely free from the control of the Union Company?—Yes.

75. At Dunedin?—Yes; I manage that myself.

76. At Wanganui?—No.

77. You have no agent there. Does your coal go there?—Yes; we sell to any one there. For Wanganui we sell to the Anchor Company.

78. Do you not know that the Anchor Company is bound up with the Union Company?—No, I do not.

79. You are not aware that all the coals sold there are sold by arrangement with the Union Company?—No, I do not know.

80. Perhaps you could tell us the price in some of the chief places of New Zealand at which your coal is sold for cash per ton?—Yes. Just now, in Dunedin it is 14s. a ton, at Oamaru it is 16s. a ton, at Lyttelton it is 18s. 6d. a ton—that is Westport coal. My remarks now refer entirely to the Westport Company, and not to the Greymouth Company.

81. Who manages the Greymouth Coal Company, you or Kennedy?—There is a board of directors of the Grey Valley Company held in Dunedin. I act as their Secretary. I am merely the Secretary to the Board.

82. You have not exhausted the prices obtained in the various places: take Wellington, for instance?—In Wellington, I think, it is £1 3s.; at Napier it is £1 3s.

83. In Auckland?—We do very little with Auckland.

84. What is the price there?—It is difficult to do any trade with Auckland; there they have the native coals—the Bay of Islands and the Taupiri coal.

85. You are now referring to the Coalbrookdale?—Yes; these prices which I have given are the same as those of Newcastle.

86. *Mr. Fish.*] Are they lower than those at which you are in the habit of selling?—Very much; they are lower than we could continue to sell at.

87. What is the cause?—It is owing, just now, to the number of vessels that come over here to load with grain.

88. If a duty were imposed on imported coal, would that alter the condition of the local mines?—Undoubtedly it would.

89. Can you give any other reason as to why the Newcastle coal is sold so cheap?—I cannot.

90. Do the Union Company's vessels, and other vessels trading to this colony for grain, bring coal with them from other places at a nominal price?—Outside vessels do. The Union Company have not brought more this season than usual. Some of their vessels have come over empty.

91. Do you know whether it is a fact that outside vessels coming here with coal from Newcastle give a corresponding reduction in freights from here in consequence?—I think they charge the ordinary rates of freight. That is a matter of opinion; it is a matter that I am not well acquainted with. I am not acquainted very well with the export trade.