

Wallsend lease, is being worked by the Wallsend Company?—Not at the time when I was down last: they were not working close to the river: it must have been some distance away; but I could not tell exactly, without seeing the survey, whether they were close to the river or not.

902. I want to know whether the department have given the Wallsend Company any right to take coal from under the river?—No right: there was no coal being worked under the river, as far as I know, when I was down there last, but I could not tell this without seeing a plan of the workings; there was a stone-drive under the river to connect.

903. What is the depth of shaft?—It is 650ft. below the surface.

904. *Mr. Hutchison.*] To give all the information the Committee want, would you have to get it from your office?—I could not produce the plans of workings.

905. Could we have them here suppose they were required?—No; they are not all in Wellington; they have been sent to Mr. Binns to put on the workings.

906. *Mr. O'Connor.*] Can you give us the section of the Act under which you say you cannot give them to a Parliamentary Committee?—That is not specified.

907. *Mr. Guinness.*] Will you be good enough to show us the section?—I beg your pardon; I am wrong: the section I had in my mind was the 41st section, subsection (1). I am in error about that: it relates to officers furnishing drawings, plans, tracings, &c., without the consent of the Minister.

908. *Mr. O'Connor.*] I wish to ask you now to describe for us the state of the coal-mine industry at Westport?—I have just done so.

909. Have you explained to the Committee the position of the coal-mining industry when the output of coal first commenced?—Not exactly when coal was first found in the Westport district; there was no railway or anything else of the kind there then; but after the railway was made to Waimangaroa the company had to connect with it, and to make an incline before there could be any output.

910. Were there not two companies?—Three—the Wellington, the Koronui, and the Westport Companies.

911. There were three companies at first starting?—Yes.

912. What became of them afterwards?—The Wellington Company is defunct; the coal was not marketable; it got too soft.

913. What was the quality?—It was good enough, but it was too soft for marketable purposes.

914. Was it like the coal now worked at Ngakawau?—I think the coal at Ngakawau is better than what the Wellington Company was working.

915. Are you sure of that, Mr. Gordon?—They had a fair coal at first, but the coal got so very soft they could not find a market for it. There is plenty of coal at Ngakawau, but it is so soft that it will be difficult to get a market for it unless they convert it into coke.

916. On that point: you are not aware how many coke-ovens there were?—No.

917. Do you know what has become of them?—I think they are demolished.

918. Well, the Wellington ceased working: what have you to say about the Koronui?—The Koronui Company, after spending a considerable amount of money, and constructing a tramway for nearly three miles to connect with the railway, they found that it would not pay. It was bought, I think, by Captain Williams or some one else in Wellington, and afterwards transferred to the Union Steamship Company. The Union Company surrendered the lease.

919. Stopped working?—Yes.

920. Was there any coal there when they stopped working?—Of course there was coal.

921. Is it of inferior quality?—No; but it is difficult to get it down: the cost of transit to bring it to the railway is considerable. Indeed, it would require a man's capital to be very large to be able to work that part of the field.

922. Why so, Mr. Gordon?—A railway or decent tramway would have to be constructed. The coal could never be brought by the same tramway that was constructed to the Koronui mine cheaply to market; and what is wanted is a cheap way of conveyance.

923. Is the haulage up-hill?—It is down-hill; but there are different grades all the way down. The Koronui would be over 2,000ft. over the railway-line.

924. What is the distance from the foot of the hill to where the railway is started?—Nearly three miles.

925. An ascending grade?—Yes.

926. Is there any greater difficulty in working that coal than the coal found on the other side, which is now being worked by the Westport Company?—It would work out more expensively, and that means more capital to get to work on the back-country. The Westport Company has about three-quarters of a mile of tramway.

927. Have they cut into the coal, and carried through what coal is to be got up to the Coalbrookdale?—After they get to the top of the hill the line goes through the coal measures to the Coalbrookdale.

928. What distance is it from the incline?—About two miles from the top of the incline.

929. What height?—About 1,800ft.

930. What distance is it to Coalbrookdale?—Two miles.

931. How much of that is through coal working?—At least a mile and a half.

932. One would infer from what you say that it is a source of economy that they are able to run underground that distance?—It enables them to get coal at the head and put it on the lower level. It entails a great deal of expense to get haulage.

933. Would it not be better if it were made on more equal grades?—I think it would be. What I mean to infer is this: that it is purely a question of capital to open up all these mines. A company to go and open up the Koronui Mine would require a large output to pay for the outlay. Then, while the harbour is not improved the outlay is not warranted, because they cannot get the output away.