

WAGES.

59. The Commissioners made repeated inquiries on the subject of the wages earned both at the Grey Valley mines and at those in the vicinity of Westport, and had submitted to them the pay-sheets at both places, together with statements of aggregate amounts, averages, and other details too voluminous to incorporate in this report. Ample details of this documentary evidence will be found in the appendix hereto, and, without troubling your Excellency with more than the general results, the Commissioners have the honour to report as follows:—

60. That throughout the West Coast district the rate of wages for daily labourers, whilst it was for a short time 8s., has since been raised again to the rate of 10s. formerly paid.

61. That there appears to be no distinction made between the wages of labourers in towns, where they have the advantage of living in their own homes, and the wages of men employed by the day in bush or country work, where the conditions of life are rougher, and operations are subject to frequent interruption from rain or other climatic influence.

62. That the Commissioners did not learn of there being many men unemployed, except from the late strike or its consequences.

63. That the Midland Railway Company, which employs on its present works a large number of men, pays the rate named.

64. That the wages for similar labour on the east coast of the colony is well known to be much below that figure, and relief-works have frequently been opened by Government and by the principal municipal corporations to afford work for unemployed men at or about 4s. 6d. or 5s. per day.

65. That the Grey Valley Company employs at its mines truckers, banksmen, stokers, drawers, &c., to the number of seventy or over, at a daily wage of 10s., besides twenty or twenty-five youths and men at 7s. to 9s., and thirty-five boys at 4s. to 6s.

66. That weighmen and enginemen, of whom there are nine or ten in the same employment, receive 11s. per day, whilst the staff of blacksmiths, fitters, and carpenters are paid 12s., and one foreman 13s. 4d.

67. That weekly wages are also paid to four overmen at £4, to two engine-wrights at £3 12s. and £4, and to two clerks at £2 10s. and £4.

68. That none of these men struck for higher wages or shorter hours, and had nothing to gain from the disputes of the miners; but, with the exception of the clerks, weighmen, and overmen being members, with the coal-hewers, of the A.M.L.A., and consequently affiliated with the Maritime Council, they appear to have sacrificed themselves first to their neighbours the hewers during the lock-out, and next to strangers in Australia during the strike ordered by the Maritime Council, on a mistaken idea of loyalty or honour, from which they and their families have suffered severely.

69. That, although not in the employment of the Grey Valley Coal Company, there are about fifty labourers on the wharf at Greymouth who are employed in connection with the shipping, and whose principal work must necessarily be in trimming the coal-cargoes.

70. That these men are paid at the rate of 2s. per hour, and they are as a rule members of the A.M.L.A., or of a local branch of that union, and that during the interruption to the traffic through the lock-out all of these were virtually thrown out of employment, and during the strike refused to handle any coal for the use of, or to be carried by, the Union Steamship Company's steamers.

71. That 170 to 180 coal-hewers were employed by the company previous to the work being interrupted, and these were paid by a tonnage-rate upon the coal they sent out.

72. That there is evidence of an occurrence and recurrence of broken time for short periods from want of available tonnage when the bar is impassable from high seas or river-floods, during which the railway-trucks are occupied with stored coal, and no further output is practicable from the mines which have no storage facilities.

73. That there is evidence also of broken time caused by the coal-hewers preparing their places underground and timbering the roof, that being part of their duty, and covered by the tonnage-rate.