

When it was decided to adopt hydraulic cranes it was necessary to reconstruct all the trucks, converting them, and making movable bodies for lifting by the crane. It therefore became necessary to withdraw a number from traffic for conversion, and to do this additional stock had to be first provided; but the total numbers were not excessive for the mines as worked by separate owners.

The amalgamation of the mines, which occurred when the present arrangements were approaching completion, has caused the supplies of trucks to be in excess of what is reasonably necessary for transport; but should other mines be developed these supplies would be available for use.

If this should occur, the coal-mine owners, if they wish to avoid the loss and inconvenience attending interruptions in working, will have to face the question of providing proper storage at the mine, which is at present in abeyance.

The impression which the report of the Commission seems to convey, that trucks are provided for storage purposes, is thus erroneous. As the officer in charge of the railways up to 1889, I may state that the Government always declined to entertain any such proposals, and has repeatedly informed coal-mine owners that provision for storage must be made by them at the mines if necessary; and the fact that from time to time trucks are allowed to stand full of coal at the port without storage-charges being levied is not inconsistent with this attitude, so long as there are no customers demanding coal-trucks. Were there other mines in active work, supplies of trucks proportionate to their output would have to be assigned to each, as was formerly done.

There was no wavering in opinion about the arrangements needed, nor in the attitude assumed by the Government up to the date of the appointment of the Railway Commissioners in the beginning of 1889; and there have been no complaints or representations on the subject of storage made to the Railway Commissioners, to my knowledge, since that date.

I have, &c.,

J. P. MAXWELL, M.I.C.E.,
Railway Commissioner.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

No. 2.

Sir JAMES HECTOR to the Hon. the MINISTER for PUBLIC WORKS.

Colonial Museum of New Zealand, Wellington, 3rd February, 1891.

The Hon. the Minister for Public Works.

UNLESS it is the wish of the Government to reopen this Commission, I scarcely see how the points raised by Mr Maxwell can be discussed by its members. It can, however, hardly matter, as I do not think Mr. Maxwell's statement adds anything to the evidence which was taken. Moreover, the Railway Commissioners practically have nothing to do with the question, as they derive no revenue from the Greymouth line, but only work it on terms for the Greymouth Harbour Board. The hopper-wagons, in which the coal is stored during the interval that elapses between its leaving the mine and being loaded into the ship, were paid for (at least, to the extent of £10,000) by the Harbour Board, and not by the Railway Commissioners, just in the same way that additional storage by staiths is now being built by the Harbour Board at Westport.

JAMES HECTOR.

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