

15. Have you been informed that any of the earth has been washed away?—The current is now impinging on the staiths to a certain extent, so much so that we are driving in piles to support the staiths. Unless it is checked, possibly, or even probably, the staiths would go into the river.

16. You say you are taking steps to drive in piles to make the staiths secure?—We hope to do so, having been moved to this by the reports of our engineer; but we do not know what may happen. You must recollect that the Buller is one of the largest rivers in the colony; moreover, it is a snow-fed river, and consequently is subject to very great fluctuations indeed. You do not know what damage such a river might do if it set in towards the bank.

17. Are you not aware that not a single pound weight of earth has gone away, and that it has not done any damage?—Well, it threatens to do such damage that the Harbour Board the other day approved of an expenditure of between £4,000 and £5,000 so as to render the staiths temporarily safe.

18. As to driving piles, was not the object to deepen the river in the first instance?—The piles were driven deep enough when originally put in, according to the then state of the river; but these river-works have so altered the trend of the river that it has, as I have already informed the Committee, scoured out many feet of stuff along the berths where vessels load. That has been done in a short time. I do not know how much more damage of this sort it may have done; but we are now taking steps to arrest this action of the river.

19. But is not what has to be done done for the purpose of deepening the river, and not on account of any damage done or apprehended?—Unfortunately, if that were the object, the work has been done too well, and the result has been beyond anticipation.

20. Has it taken away as much as one yard or even an inch of this ground that you have now as a reserve for your use?—I do not know that it has, but along the shore it has scoured away several feet deep; there is also another step in contemplation to prevent the possibility of any further damage to be feared; that is to lay down masses of stone so as to pave, as it were, the place where this scour is most active.

21. But the river is running in its own bed; how can it change its bed; it is not to be confined by stones?—The river will not be stopped; but if it should find its way in certain directions then damage would result. We are trying to prevent that.

22. I think, Mr. McKerrow you mislead the Committee, first, as to the extent of the encroachment, and next, as to the necessity for yard extension. We can show that the Railway Commissioners have more accommodation than they can use for the output of coal. I wish further to show the Committee that great injury will be done to the Harbour Board by depriving them of a considerable portion of their revenue; a million and a half tons of output could be placed there without interfering with the harbour at all or in the slightest degree; but I wish to ask you what is the area of accommodation which the Commissioners have at present?—We have 19 acres now.

23. How many acres would you require to use for storage of 5,000 tons a day output?—It would require some consideration to answer that question. It depends very much on the manner of loading. By extending the staiths as you now do you might do with less. But steam cranes, I hear, are likely to be introduced. With steam cranes you will require a large amount of rolling-stock and standing room for wagons so as to give quick despatch.

24. Would 25 acres give you storage enough for 5,000 tons in trucks?—I cannot say.

25. Can you say how much coal per day the water facilities would enable the Westport Harbour to put out?—I could not reply to that question; the output is limited by what can be brought down the line.

26. And not a limit by boating facilities?—It is a matter of frontage to the river: of more sidings and more staiths; it is an illimitable quantity, if the river is made accessible to all the staiths they could have.

27. Do you mean that the available space is illimitable?—Practically it is illimitable by the construction of walls and other facilities; Sir John Coode, if you will look at his plans, provides for dock, loading-places, and a variety of other facilities.

28. But I am treating of the river?—I am treating of the river also.

29. I was asking you of the available river-frontage for shipping, and you reply that it is illimitable: are you not aware that it is limited by about double the extent of space that is now available?—The river is available for shipping according to the extent of the works to be done to render it so. The river-frontage is practically illimitable: it is simply a matter of expenditure.

30. You know the spot opposite the Colliery Reserve?—It is available at Wakefield Street—we land cattle there now—and down to Gladstone Street.

31. At the present time are you not aware that there is not 2ft. of water in Wakefield Street? It would require 18ft. of water: that there is none about the shingle-bank?—The shingle-bank is to be dredged away.

32. That is not for wharfage?—The idea is this: that if this is dredged away the position would be that the whole sweep of the river would have its effect in deepening and extending the existing berthage.

33. Can you tell me what is the limit that was put by Sir John Coode when it is necessary to leave the river and seek the lagoon which is marked on his plans?—I am not aware of that. I am not aware that it would be necessary when a very large trade takes place to abandon the river. I take it that the whole of this place was brought within his knowledge by the engineers as to what was necessary to be done.

34. But the engineers are not agreed upon the subject?—Of course they are not.

35. What is the alternative?—To use the river-frontage more and more, as required.

36. Who was the engineer?—I do not care to mention names, or to pit one engineer against another.

36A. You are not able to say that you have ever had any calculations made showing the extent to which the river can be used for the purposes of the output of coal?—No, I have not.