

Westport Harbour Board, and obtained the contract at 10s. 6d. per ton. It was 7s. 6d. here at the bins. The Westport Coal Company tendered at 15s. per ton.

4. Do you know the difference in the selling-price of your steam-coal, say, in Wellington and the price of steam-coal from the other collieries in the district?—I could not go into the different prices.

5. What is your ordinary selling-price for the coal you send away?—We get 7s. per ton for the steam-coal, riddled, that we send away. We pay 3s. 4d. for hewing that coal, whereas in the collieries, say, at Denniston, they only pay 2s. per ton for hewing steam-coal.

6. What is it costing you each day for prospecting—the actual cost to you without any returns?—Outside of trucking it is costing £2 at the face. The stuff has to be hauled, and the engineer has to be paid. The £2 a day is for actual wages paid to the miners. The bushmen, engineer, drivers, and truckers have also to be paid.

7. What would all that amount to in a day?—The ground has to be close-timbered, and, taking the timber into consideration, we are paying for timber, haulage, and trucking £3 a day.

8. *Mr. Proud.*] Could not the small coal be sold for firing steam-boilers by using a forced draught?—They use it now for firing on the steamboats.

9. Could you not get sufficient trade for all your small coal?—No. We have been selling it at a loss to try and get a trade.

10. If it is of such a superior quality it would be a very good coal for firing steam-boilers, and it is used at Home by the aid of a forced draught?—Yes. Our company is composed of working-men, and they have not perhaps sufficient influence amongst the traders to push the small coal.

JOHN MILLIGAN, Miner, attended and made a Statement.

*Mr. Milligan:* I have been deputed by the Mokihinui Miners' Association to appear before the Commission to-night and lay before it some of the grievances we labour under in this district. About the time the Cardiff Mine closed down the output of coal from the various mines was in advance of the trade, and the Cardiff Company said the mine was closed down because they could not make it pay. A number of people had been induced by the operations of these mines to settle in the Mokihinui district and make homes for themselves, but the closing of the mines forced them to leave the district and go elsewhere to seek work. A few, however, have returned, and have been able to obtain a little work at the Mokihinui Mine. Some who had homes here have obtained work at Granity, but a married man working at Granity while his wife and family are located here indicates a bad state of affairs. At the time the company shut down the mine we heard that it was going to fall into the hands of the Government, and we made overtures to the Government to acquire it, but nothing came of our requests, which were perhaps in excess of what the Government was prepared to do. We would like the Government, if it be possible, to establish a State mine; and that is a burning question with the miners generally, who think that the Government ought to do something in that direction. Failing that, we think the Government should assist parties of miners to develop the Mokihinui coalfields generally. We have an illustration of what can be done in the fact that twelve men have recently reopened the Mokihinui Mine and given work to a large number of others. I wish to show the amount of work the twelve men combined have done, although I am not in a position to show how much coal they have put out, and the amount of money which has been made by the company. There are about sixty men working at the Mokihinui Mine now. The twelve shareholders put a certain amount of capital into the venture, but, so far as I have been able to ascertain, they have not received 10s. a day for their work, or equal to what those they employ receive. We think that if a party of men like those can do so much for the district they ought to receive some consideration from the Government in the way of a prospecting grant. I understand that the company cannot go any further with their operations unless they get some assistance. The proposal we had under consideration as workmen was that the Government should be asked to let the Cardiff Mine to a party of workmen as an alternative proposal to the State opening a mine of its own. If an arrangement could be come to with the Government by which we could take over the plant and get some monetary consideration, to be dealt with hereafter, we would be prepared to open the mine again and give work to the people in the district. If companies can open up mines I think the workmen with State assistance can do the same, and we think it is the Government's duty to encourage an industry such as this. If money was advanced to us the property could be held as security. There would be no doubt of success if we could once get to what is called "Cave Area," which is a continuation of the Cardiff Coalfield. It has been reported on by Sir James Hector, and the last report was by Mr. Denniston, a coal expert, and the same gentleman who reported on Denniston, Granity Creek, and Wallsend. Mr. Broome, acting on that report, commenced boring operations, and found coal in the Cave Area, according to Mr. Denniston's opinions, in sufficient quantities to warrant him in recommending his company to spend some £10,000 in opening up that hill; but it is possible by judicious management to make that expenditure very much less. I have heard Mr. Fleming, an experienced mine-manager, repeatedly say that if he had £4,000 he could go into the field. We desire that the Commission will take a note of what I have said on behalf of the miners in this district, and that it will embody in its recommendations to the Governor some suggestion in the direction I have indicated.

Mr. Woodcock attended and made a Statement.

*Mr. Woodcock:* I wish to call attention to an injustice, by 2s. 6d. being charged on coal from the Mokihinui Mine to Seddonville, a distance of a mile and a half at the most. It is the opinion here that more coal would be consumed if the haulage-rate on the railway were reduced and the