

69. You do not bother your heads again afterwards?—We stack it up by the funnel afterwards.

70. Do you take any responsibility about drying it?—None whatever.

71. You do that to oblige the shippers?—Yes.

72. Have you known many cases of that?—When I was in the Union Company's service on the east coast it was a frequent occurrence to get a bale of wool wet. The outside of the bale would certainly be dry by the time we reached port, and that would probably be dumped and stowed away on board ship.

73. You mean it had fallen into the tide?—Yes, fallen into the sea.

74. And then you brought it aboard and stacked it alongside the funnel to dry it?—Yes.

75. That is, the pack would get dry?—Yes.

76. Did you form any opinion as to what the wool was like inside?—No; it did not concern me.

77. Did you come to any conclusion?—No; but I often thought the wool must have been wet inside.

78. But the outside drying did not concern you?—No.

79. *Captain Blackburne.*] You simply dried it the best you could in the sun or alongside the funnel?—Yes, and they would probably be pressed if they were not opened by the buyers or wool-brokers.

80. *The Chairman.*] Did that concern you—did you look?—No, it did not concern me.

81. *Captain Blackburne.*] Can you suggest any other possible means by which the fires may originate?—I have thought often friction might do it—two hard woolpacks rubbing together for a long voyage Home.

82. *The Chairman.*] What about a long voyage: have you been on a long voyage here with it?—I have only had wool one voyage Home, in the "Rotokino."

83. Did anything take place on that occasion?—No, nothing.

84. That was a steamer?—Yes.

85. And the wool was closely packed?—Yes.

86. But there was no screwing-in of the wool?—No.

87. And should there be a little friction it would not be very close?—It was not very close, and there was room for it to work.

88. That is not so on board a ship?—No. I noticed when they came out that some bales had been rubbing against the timbers and against each other, and had worn down.

89. Had you seen any increase of heat by reason of that?—No.

90. *Captain Blackburne.*] You noticed a bale actually worn?—Yes, the edges chafed.

91. *The Chairman.*] Did you notice any sign of incandescence?—No, none whatever.

92. *Mr. Foster.*] The chafing would simply be ordinary chafing—no discoloration?—No, just ordinary chafing. I should say that under ordinary conditions it might—

93. *The Chairman.*] Can you give us any facts about it?—No.

94. Have you known anything about bales heating in the interior or not?—No, no experience in that way at all.

95. Of course, the major part of your experience has been up and down the coast—a few days at a time?—Yes.

96. After taking the wool and then landing it, have you had any complaints about the heating of the wool?—No, no complaints. We have taken it out of the bullock-wagon into the boat, and from the boat on to the wharf.

97. What is the longest period you have had wool?—Three days on the coast.

98. *Captain Blackburne.*] Your vessel is very often lying at the wharf, Captain Post? Do you notice what the ships do in the way of taking in cargo in rainy weather: do they generally close up the hatches?—I have seen them take the wool in a great quantity outside on the wharf for the ships to take in, and it frequently comes on to rain, and they have to take the wool back into the shed as fast as they can, and then, of course, they close up the hatches. A certain quantity of the wool gets wet, of course, and when the weather gets dry again they bring the wool out and dump it on the wharf again.

99. And when it is raining for two or three days?—It would be detained then; but if they had carted the wool out, it would get wet before they could get it back.

100. *The Chairman.*] Supposing you were master of that ship, and you could say whether the wool was to be taken on board or not: have you seen wool taken on board during misty weather when you would have forbidden it to be taken on board, and if your word was the *ipse dixit*, would you say it was not to be taken on board?—I cannot say I have seen it so bad as that, because I have not taken the trouble to examine as to what condition the wool was in.

101. Supposing you were on the wharf and you saw a vessel taking wool on board, have you ever been in this position: that you would say, "If I was master of that ship I would not like that wool to be taken on board under those conditions," and yet the wool has been taken on board?—No, I do not know that I ever have. I have certainly seen wool picked up and rushed into the shed again as quick as they could when a shower came on.

102. But if a man said it was not to go on board the ship, you would have it stopped?—I should consider it was only superficially wet on the outside, and that it would dry in a few hours.

103. Would you stop it?—I might.

104. Have you ever seen it in such a condition that you considered it should not have gone on board, and yet you have seen it go on board?—No, I do not know that I have. Sailors trust a lot to Providence.

The Commission adjourned until to-morrow, Wednesday, 29th August, 1900, at 10.30 a.m.