

WELLINGTON, WEDNESDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 1906.

The Commission sat in the Upper Court, Magistrate's Courthouse, Wellington, at 10.30 a.m.

COLLIN FRANCIS POST, previously sworn, was recalled and further examined. (No. 35.)

1. *The Chairman.*] Have you looked up your log-books?—Yes. I have them here. What dates do you want?

2. *Captain Blackburne.*] The dates on which the "Pitcairn Island" was loading were between the 26th February and the 18th March last. She left here on the 19th March?—On the 26th February the "Tutanekai" left Wellington. On that day it was dull and overcast, moderate wind, with heavy rain. The ship left on that day for the north. She was absent from the 25th February to the 2nd March, when she arrived again in Wellington. The log-book does not say much about the weather except that there were light airs, fine, taking in lighthouse stores. Left again on the 3rd March, and went across to the Sounds. The book does not state the weather, except "strong breeze and moderate sea." Then she went away north with the Premier, and was away north until the 13th March. She arrived back in Wellington on Wednesday, the 14th—wet and windy until noon, when it cleared up and the rain ceased. Thursday, 15th, weather fine with sky overcast. Friday, 16th, dull and overcast; there may have been a drizzling rain. Saturday, the weather was fine and clear throughout. Monday, 19th, fine and clear throughout.

3. The "Pitcairn Island" left on the 19th March?—Probably the day which was referred to was Wednesday, the 14th, "wet and windy up to noon," or one of the other days on which it was overcast.

4. There does not appear to have been much wet weather?—That is the few days we were alongside the wharf. The boat came in and went away again. There were practically three rainy days. Of course, the log-book only deals with the state of the weather between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. What the weather was like between the time the ship left the wharf and returned I could not say.

THOMAS BELL JONES SINCLAIR sworn and examined. (No. 36.)

5. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am chief engineer on the Government steamer "Tutanekai."

6. Some time during the months of February and March you were lying alongside the wharf at Wellington?—Yes, as near as I can recollect.

7. Close to where the "Pitcairn Island" was loading wool?—Yes; on the opposite side of the wharf.

8. Do you know anything of the state of the weather at that time?—I remember it was wet weather—misty weather at the time.

9. Did you observe the loading of wool going on while the weather was wet?—Yes.

10. Did you notice if any precautions were taken to protect the woolpacks from getting wet?—I remember it coming on to rain, and they took some of the wool back into the shed.

11. Do you know of any damp getting on to the wool during the period at which it was raining?—I did not take particular notice of the wool, and could not say; but I have noticed pools of water on the wharf after the rain, and the wool-bales dumped down on to the wharf where it has been wet.

12. Have you taken any notice of the effect that had on the wool?—No.

13. But you have seen wool put on to the wharf while the wharf itself was wet. Was there nothing under the wool when it was put on the wharf—anything in the nature of timber?—I saw nothing.

14. Was your attention, or anybody else's, drawn to the fact that the wharf was wet?—The boatswain and myself had a conversation about it—just a passing conversation about it.

15. What was the gist of that conversation?—As near as I can remember, "It is no wonder some of these ships take fire when they let wool get in that condition." That is as near as I can remember.

16. What did you mean by "that condition"?—It was raining at the time.

17. While loading was going on?—Yes.

18. And the wharf was wet?—Yes.

19. *Mr. Foster.*] When you say the wharf was wet, you mean there were pools of water on it. Do you mean that they brought wool out while it was raining, or was it the wool which was lying on the wharf when it came on to rain?—I am not very sure about it. I was standing on deck, and took a look at it, but I could not say anything about it.

20. You said you saw the wool on the wharf when it came on to rain, and it was taken back?—Yes.

21. Did you notice at that time any pools of water on the wharf?—As near as I can remember, the wharf has hollows in it, and after rain a little water lies there. That is about all I remember.

22. You see the point is this: If the wool was taken in when the shower came on it would not be likely to absorb much moisture—they would be practically dry. Did you notice whether it was dumped or undumped wool?—I am almost sure it was dumped.

23. And do you think dumped wool will take up moisture as readily as undumped?—I could not say.

24. As a matter of fact, you did not take much notice of the conditions?—No, I did not. Wool is not in my line at all, but it was only a passing remark.

25. Still, it must have impressed you to some extent to induce you to say "No wonder these ships take fire." There must have been a strong impression?—Yes. I do not know much about wool, but I thought it would be likely that the wet would be the cause of the heating, and seeing the way the wool was brought out that day induced the remark.