

175. Do you know how much widening has been done at the Bealey end during the last five years?—I think the Bealey end has been left owing to shortage of men; they have concentrated them at the other end.

176. If they drove the heading through, would they not get rid of the expense of pumping air and water?—The heading is very small to drive through that distance.

177. They can make it any size they like, can they not?—Then why not drive the whole tunnel?

178. Would it not save them a good deal of money if they got rid of the pumping and forcing air into the tunnel?—My opinion is that you could not wait to drive a five-mile heading.

179. Do you know whether, when they are driving the heading at the Bealey end, they have to stop all other work there—concreting and widening?—I was not aware of it. I do not know much about it.

180. If that is the case, do you not think it would be better for them to drive the heading right through and let the other work stand?—I am not prepared to believe that they have to stop all other work while they drive the heading.

181. If I tell you that that is the statement that Mr. McLean put before the Committee, will you believe it?—I will if you say so. But I do not see the necessity for their doing so.

182. You referred to the tunnel on the Manawatu Gorge line, and said that that was let about 1890?—It would be before 1890—while the contract system prevailed.

183. It was under construction, was it, in 1890?—I think about that time.

184. Did you say that the cost of material and labour was much less than now?—Cement would not be any cheaper then. I said that labour was cheaper then.

185. Do you know the rates of wages that were paid by Palliser and Jones on that contract?—No; I was not there.

186. Then, how do you know that labour was cheaper?—Because it was cheaper all over the country.

187. Was cement cheaper or dearer then than it is now?—It would be about the same. If you bought whole cargoes at that time you could get it at a reasonable price.

188. Do you think the cost of shingle for the Manawatu Gorge tunnels was less or more than at Arthur's Pass?—I really do not know what they used for the Manawatu Tunnel—whether it was clay, slate, or gravel from the river.

189. Suppose they used gravel from the river?—It should not have been any dearer than at the Bealey.

190. Do you know how they had to get it up?—I suppose they used a winding-engine.

191. You know the conditions at the Bealey and at Otira?—Yes.

192. The gravel is practically alongside?—Yes.

193. Do you know whether the rate of wages for miners on the West Coast has gone up since 1908, the year the tunnel was started?—Yes, it has gone up.

194. Can you tell us how much?—Men are a shilling or so dearer now than they were.

195. You are satisfied on that point, are you?—Well, we have had to pay more.

196. This is a return of wages that was handed in by Mr. McLean [document handed to witness]: you see the wages that are paid?—Yes.

197. The ordinary rate for most of the men employed in this tunnel was 10s. 6d. a day?—Yes, in the tunnel.

198. And outside?—10s.

199. Do you think those are any higher than the rates that were paid for similar work on the Coast in 1908?—There are two rates set down here, and there is 1s. 6d. difference.

200. The bulk of the men working on this job received 10s. and 10s. 6d., according to that statement?—That is when the contract started. The 10s. men are getting 11s. now, apparently.

201. Do you know whether the men working in the mines at Reefton were getting 11s. in 1908?—I do not.

202. Then, how do you know that wages have gone up?—I know that our men wanted another 1s. a day on the Coast—those on railway-work.

203. Did you give it to them?—They practically got it, I believe.

204. When?—About the time the other wages went up.

205. When was that?—A year ago, perhaps.

206. Is not the rate that you pay your wagesmen on railway-works on the Coast now 10s.?—I could not say.

207. Then how do you say it has gone up? Can you give us any expression of opinion as to whether the Government would be likely to carry this work out as cheaply as a contractor?—It would all depend on how the Government intended to carry it out.

208. In the same way, say, as you do other tunnels?—If the Government let the work in small contracts they could get along very well—so-much a yard for excavating, and so-much a yard for concreting, and so on.

209. That is the basis on which you carry on your co-operative tunnel contracts now, is it not?—That is the principle you would have to work on if we were to carry this work out.

210. Do you think the Department could do it in that way as cheaply as a contractor?—Not with a tunnel of this length. I think such a tunnel requires special management. You can work a small tunnel in that way, because you can isolate the men.

211. But do you not think it possible for the Department to get special managers just the same as a contractor?—I believe you could let a section of bricking-up at so-much a yard to one party, and concreting to another party, and so on. But it would be a very big job, and I do not want to have to undertake it. I would far rather you let a contract and have the contractor do the worrying.