

12. Generally, have your firm done all it thought it could do for recovery of these debts?—It has.

13. If you had done more, you think it would have been throwing away good money after bad?—I have no doubt at all but it would.

14. Have you been deterred from prosecuting these claims to the utmost by any consideration of kindness?—None whatever. We have dealt with it as a business matter all through.

15. Can you state any general term of the defence set up against payment of the notes?—In some cases the defence was that the notes were illegal. In others, as in the case of Invercargill, they were thrown out because the magistrate held that there was no person to represent the firm.

16. Different judgments were given in the different cases?—Yes; different judgments were given in different localities.

17. In any case was there any refusal to pay on the alleged ground that value had not been received by the immigrant?—They invariably alleged that they had been brought out under false pretences, more especially as immigrants were brought out for £7 by the Government, whereas they were charged £15. That was a great cause of complaint.

18. Was that set up as a special ground of their refusal to pay?—Yes, in nearly every instance. They represented that Brogden had charged them more than they could have come out for under the Government, and that they would not pay Brogden a single shilling more. They most distinctly evaded payment on that account.

19. Those that have paid you, have they been forced to do so?—Some have paid voluntarily, and others have been forced to pay.

20. How do you account for that difference; is it merely attributable to a difference of their moral character?—In most instances those who paid voluntarily are those who had not come into contact with the men who were out here before them.

21. You set forth in the petition that 219 men still remain in your employment. Do you experience any difficulty in regard to these men?—None whatever. They are, however, becoming weekly less in number.

22. *The Chairman.*] I wish to ask you whether you are not aware that Mr. James Brogden made his firm in London aware that he considered it disadvantageous to enter into a contract for immigration on such terms as were under consideration between them and the Agent-General?—Yes; I believe he did.

23. Therefore it follows that the firm in London entered into the contract with its eyes open?—No; the Agent-General led them to believe that there would be no difficulty in collecting the money; and he authorized them to make a charge of £15, so as to cover any loss.

24. You were present yourself with Mr. James Brogden at several long interviews that took place with the Resident Minister for the Middle Island when the earlier contracts for railway works were being discussed and the terms considered?—Yes.

25. Do you not remember that the consideration of the difficulties that the firm would certainly have to encounter in obtaining a sufficient supply of labour at reasonable rates formed a very important element in the terms granted by the Government to the firm. I wish you clearly to understand me: I mean that the probable rates of labour were urged on the part of the firm as a reason for considerably more liberality being granted by the Government?—That was one reason why we were anxious to bring out men upon the same terms as they were brought out by the Government. Otherwise we would have employed labour from a much cheaper market. We were desirous of bringing out men that would be useful, not only to ourselves, but likewise to the Colony. Had it been otherwise, we would have got men from another quarter altogether.

26. The bearing of my question is this: All these considerations with regard to the cost and the difficulty of obtaining a supply of labour, including the cost the firm would be put to in getting labour from Great Britain or elsewhere, were fully urged by you in the conduct of these negotiations, and put forward as a demand on the part of the firm, and admitted as a fair and reasonable claim for more liberal terms than would otherwise have been asked?—Yes; they were.

27. *Hon. Mr. Richardson.*] Are the promissory notes for the passage-money and the outfit all put together?—We take these notes from the head of a family, all the members of the family being included in the one note; and also a note from the single men for their amounts. The one promissory note includes passage money and everything else.

28. Did you take legal advice about the legality of these notes?—Yes, and the advice we got was that they were not very sure. There would be some difficulty in proving the signatures. In view of that, we wanted to get a short Bill passed to make them valid as debts here.

29. Then you took advice out here?—We did.

30. And what do you mean was the nature of that advice; was it to the effect that the notes were valid or not?—It was not very definite. We were advised that it would be better to get the men to re-sign the notes when they came out here.

31. Under your agreement with the men, how were you to be refunded the amounts you had advanced?—The agreement was that we were to stop so much money per week.

32. Do you consider that it is advantageous to the country, your having introduced 1,700 men into it as labourers?—Yes, unquestionably it is, at our cost.

33. Put the question of cost aside; is it your opinion that they have affected the labour market?—Yes; to this extent that it has provided the settlers with a good many agricultural labourers. In one case some 92 men arrived at Invercargill, and two months afterwards, when I visited the place, I found only one man employed upon our works; all the others had been absorbed by the public of Invercargill. In Invercargill, although a distinct promise was made that our men would not be taken away from us, on the morning of the arrival there of our immigrants in the "Zealandia" I found that some 30 had been engaged by the inhabitants before 12 o'clock noon.

34. Yes, but surely that was a question of wages, was it not?—No, it was an endeavour on their part to get quit of their promissory notes.

35. Did you trace these men that got away from you in Invercargill?—We traced a few of them; we have some cases against them—some six or eight cases pending against them.