

36. What kind of country is it between yourselves and Greymouth. Is it mountainous, or is there a road that you can get along?—The road is very mountainous, but along the beach it is level enough.

37. You say these harbour works would cost about £40,000?—So far as I can approximately estimate, the cost would be about that. I may mention that, with these plans that we have invited, we have specified that the competitors should also state the cost of the works proposed in those designs.

38. What kind of harbour is the Grey; is it a good harbour?—It seems very similar to our own.

39. Is it in any great degree better than yours?—I really cannot say. Sometimes when our harbour is open, the other is closed.

40. Then, if it is a bar harbour liable to be closed, what is the greatest depth of water?—I cannot say.

41. What do you think would be the cost of a railway between the Grey and Hokitika?

*The Chairman*: Sir Robert Douglas means the surveyed line of railway.

*Witness*: I do not know.

*Sir R. Douglas*: They might prefer a railway from the Grey. I thought, in that case, it would be well for the Committee to know that the railway would cost so much in comparison with harbour works. If you can give some idea of the number of miles, and the kind of country, we might be able to make some estimate, because the least you can do a railway for is about £6,000 a mile.

42. *The Chairman*.] It is twenty-three or twenty-three and a half miles?—That is by the beach.

43. *Sir R. Douglas*.] Which way do the spurs run? Do they run down to the sea like one's fingers?—I think the spurs, so far as I know, are broad side on to the sea, to use a nautical phrase. They run in sort of terraces along the beach. I do not feel justified in offering any opinion about a railway to Greymouth, because I have not considered the matter at all.

44. What is the nature of the silt that comes down the Hokitika River? Is it sand or mud?—No; it is sand and gravel.

45. What distance does the bar extend from the harbour?—It is quite close; I do not suppose it is above half a mile.

46. What depth of bar do you get?—There must be 10 feet.

47. And how far from that point to the centre of the bar do you get five or six fathoms of water?—Very close, I should say; less than a quarter of a mile.

48. And which way is the set of the shingle?—It is to the north. We have found, I may state, by experience, that piling is a very effectual way of conserving the river, and also of keeping open the channel.

49. Have you ever heard of the American plan of driving piles down the centre of a river to keep it open on one side or the other?—Yes, I have heard of it. We have found it is perfectly practicable to keep it open by means of piles. The North Spit runs a great way down, and we propose to pile that, to make it a kind of breakwater against the N.W. wind and waves.

50. Is it high ground or low ground on the north side?—It is simply a gravel ridge, but it seems very solid. We have no doubt about the efficacy of piling from the experience we have had of the work hitherto.

51. *The Chairman*.] I believe a very considerable amount of money has been spent already in making the protective works in the river?—Yes.

52. Have you made any estimate as to the amount of money laid out up to the present time?—No, it is impossible.

53. Do you think it would be £20,000?—More than that; double that.

54. And that has been done from local revenue?—Yes.

55. There has been no assistance from the general funds of the colony to construct these works?—None of this was got from the Government.

56. That was from the funds of the harbour?—That was expended in river works—river conservation. Perhaps you will allow me to mention that this is one of the worst blockades we have had for some time past, and it so completely paralyzes trade that I am very much afraid our leading men will clear out. In fact one of them has done so since I left Hokitika. A blockade comes about every two or three months and completely stops trade, and it is very trying to men of moderate means, who have to pay for goods before they are received. I am afraid, if something is not done, the provincial district will rapidly collapse. Of course it has now become a colonial question, because now the Australian trade is about dried up, and large numbers of vessels are coming from the provinces; and we find goods can be bought as cheaply in the Province of Wellington and Dunedin as in Australia, and consequently the Australian trade is dying out. There are now eighteen or nineteen vessels from the neighbouring provinces floating about the roadstead. Of course that affects trade everywhere. If these vessels could come up their cargoes would be repeated once or twice; but, as it is, Hokitika is being completely ruined, and the other provinces are suffering a corresponding loss.

57. *Hon. Mr. Gisborne*.] What is the annual trade of the port, supposing the harbour were open? The imports are £250,000.

58. What are the exports?—The exports were a little in excess of the imports.

59. What is the number of ships that come in?—Twenty-three to twenty-four ships a month.

60. Do they pay pilotage?—Yes, but of course that goes to the Government in the meantime.

61. Would the Harbour Board be prepared to take over the harbour staff, if they got this assistance?—Of course.

62. They would relieve the colony of the charge?—Yes.

63. That is £900 a year?—We simply want a little assistance to enable us to prosecute works of public utility, and we believe there will be sufficient to do what is required.

64. You say £15,000 from the Government and £10,000 from the security, and you think the Harbour Board would be prepared to raise on the endowment?—Yes; at present we have no income from the endowment. The land is valueless at present.

65. Have the harbour plans been approved of?—No; they will not be in until the 15th of this month.