

473. Even in Great Britain those interested in coal ventures do not think anything pays them under 10 per cent. per annum?—There they expect from 10 to 15 per cent.

474. *Mr. Fish.*] In the Old Country?—Yes; I do not think 15 per cent. at all unreasonable for a coal-mining venture of this kind.

475. *Mr. Withy.*] You say you now pay 2s. 10d. for coal all round: does not that tend to make a larger percentage of small coal?—I do not think so; it would with some coal, but not with ours.

476. Would you prefer using your own or the Government trucks?—Which ever is the cheapest.

477. Have you no other preference?—No.

478. Do the Government not supply trucks as you want them?—At present we have just enough to keep our mines going; if one or two mines more were to start we would want more trucks. The Ngakawau proposes to start in a couple of months. When the Koranui was working there was considerable fighting about trucks. The miners were stopped frequently in consequence of disputes about trucks; they were frequently stopped a couple of hours, and very often for one or two days in the week.

479. How many hours did you say?—I have known them to be stopped three days in the week. Nothing of that kind happens at present, but when the Koranui was working it happened frequently.

480. Do you think the accommodation for shipping at the wharf is good?—There is not enough accommodation.

481. Are the means adopted for discharging into vessels the most economical?—They may be economical, but the means at present employed breaks the coal a great deal.

482. Could you not ship by means of chains?—That would break the coal almost as much as to let go at once.

483. Suppose you had two of these?—The method you suggest is a very complicated arrangement; the men who would have to work the thing do not understand it.

484. Are you acquainted with the appliances they have in the North of England?—No. I know those they have at Cardiff.

485. They are hydraulic cranes?—Yes.

486. You do not know the gravity system, by which they work in the North of England?—I have not seen it working. I know the system, but have not seen it in work.

487. With regard to the Koranui, that is not worked at all?—It is worked out nearly from the old incline. To do anything more with it we would have to lay down a new railway.

488. That would be a costly matter?—It would cost £20,000.

489. Does the company still hold the lease?—No.

490. Is it abandoned?—It is surrendered.

491. So that any one could go and take it?—Yes.

492. *Mr. Fish.*] I would like you to give a little information about the Harbour Board works—in relation to what the Government is doing now in respect to the harbour-works; also in respect to what was formerly done by the Harbour Board; also as the length of time which, in your opinion, must elapse, according to the present rate of progress, before the works will be in such a complete state as to afford the requisite facilities for taking away all the coal they can put out at present: I would first ask you, are the works in such a forward state now that you could send away as much as the mines can put out?—Certainly not; they have only 14ft. 6in. at low water at the staiths; that limits it, for if a vessel touch ground when loading that vitiates the insurance.

493. As the works progress, in your opinion, does the Board give as much facility?—I cannot say.

494. But when they are finished the facilities will be greater than they have ever been?—It will be a first-rate port when finished.

495. Do you consider the plan of the improvements satisfactory?—Yes; the plan is by a high authority—Sir John Coode.

496. At the present rate of progress, how long will it take to complete the work?—There is a good amount of work to be done to dredge the staiths and inner bar; it ought to be done in twelve months. I believe it could be done at the present rate of progress if they got a large dredge. They could with a large dredge have it sufficiently done in twelve months to admit a 2,000 tons steamer.

497. But you think they ought to place a larger dredge there?—Yes; but I think the training-walls ought to be gone on with at once, so as to improve loading-accommodation.

498. Do you know whether the Government have sufficient funds?—I do not know what funds they have.

499. But you think they could proceed much quicker than the progress made at present?—I think they could proceed quicker dredging.

500. If they were to go on with the training-walls, you think they could accelerate the time when they would be able to give their greatest facilities in proportion to their greatest output of coal?—Yes.

501. So far as you know, there is no reason why the Government should not do that at once?—None, certainly, that I know of.

502. Can you give any opinion as to the manner in which the works are being proceeded with by the present Board compared with the former Board?—I do not see any great difference. They are not working so fast under the present Board; they are not getting out the same quantity of stone. Formerly they were putting out 1,000 tons of stone; since they let the contract I do not think it exceeds 600 tons. I think they were working better when it was not let by contract.

503. *Mr. Guinness.*] Under the direct management of the Board?—Yes.