

Union Steamship Company of New Zealand (Limited),
Westport, 4th June, 1891.

SIR,—

Your memorandum of to-day's date duly to hand.

The first point you raise with regard to sheath-piling the extension of the staiths is an important one, and I should think that only an engineer's opinion would be of value. I can state, however, that before the sheath-piling of the present staiths was carried out the stones rolling out from the bank were a constant source of danger to shipping, necessitating large steamers completing loading only on a rising tide, and requiring frequent shifting to avoid resting on the stones at low water. Seeing that the extension of the staiths is principally to accommodate steamers of heavy draught, every precaution should be taken to keep the bottom clear.

With regard to extra berthage, it is evident that more is urgently required. The extension of the staiths will not give a corresponding length of berthage, as one steamer would often take up more than half the wharf in loading coal from the storage-bins. At present steamers are often obliged to lie two and even three abreast owing to insufficient accommodation.

Loading household coal by cranes would save a great deal of breakage, and as a system should, I think, supersede the staiths.

The Secretary, Westport Harbour Board.

I have, &c.,

C. HOLDSWORTH.

New Zealand Government Railways,

Head Office, Wellington, 9th May, 1891.

SIR,—

In reply to the proposals made by you and Mr. Moynihan at your recent interview with the Railway Commissioners for the extension of the wharves at Westport and the erection of steam-cranes thereon, I am directed to inform you that at present the Commissioners are of opinion there is no trade justifying such an extension of accommodation, nor are the arrangements of a character which the Railway Commissioners think would be convenient.

As the traffic and the wharf arrangements are wholly in the hands of the Commissioners, they will themselves from time to time undertake any further extension of their premises on the railway which may be found necessary. The staiths extension, which the Board is now carrying out after the Commissioners' design, is calculated to allow of more than double the coal-traffic than there is at present at Westport.

The Commissioners are of opinion that the dredging of the berths at the new staiths and in the channel is all the river-work that is immediately desirable, and they think that it will be better to defer the execution of any part of the training-wall until the subject is further considered.

The Commissioners also consider that the deep-water basin mentioned by you, located as Sir John Coode has proposed, is not well adapted for the railway traffic and working.

I have, &c.,

E. G. PILCHER, Secretary.

E. O'Connor, Esq., M.H.R., Chairman, Westport Harbour Board, Wellington.

SIR,—

Harbour Office, Westport, 8th June, 1890.

I have the honour to forward for information of the Board some facts which were the occasion of Messrs Blackett and Bell, M.I.C.E., recommending that sheet-piling should be put in at the old coal-staiths which were built in 1878.

It was continually occurring that stones slipped into the berthage alongside the coal-staiths, to the imminent danger of vessels visiting the port, and a diver had to be almost continually employed with the service of a Priestman's dredge and hands to remove them. Some time since, in 1887, Mr. Blackett, Marine Engineer, came to Westport, and consulted with Mr. Bell, the then Harbour Board Engineer, with the result that the sheet-piling was recommended as a preventative. After some time had elapsed, a contract for this work was let and completed, but not in a thoroughly satisfactory manner, as being impeded by the heavy superstructure of the staiths. The sheet-piles could not be driven exactly in a line, as it was found on inspection by the diver that a great many of the piles were not close enough together at bottom of river, and were somewhat in an irregular line, thus * * * * *. I suggested, when the work was first undertaken, to Mr. Martin, the District Engineer and Chairman of Board, that a diver should be employed to place foot of piles close together when on the point of driving, but nothing was done in the matter, with the result that the diver has now to inspect the berthages at staiths after each flood. I should mention that although through the sheet-piling not having been driven straight in line, stones occasionally slip through into the fairway; still it is now infinitely better than when no sheet-piling was in existence, and has in consequence saved the Board a lot of expenditure. The cost of lifting stone in river prior to sheet-piling, from May, 1887, to May, 1888, was over £400.

I have, &c.,

S. A. LEACH, Harbourmaster.

The Chairman, Westport Harbour Board.

MEMORANDUM for the Hon. the MINISTER of MARINE *re* Westport Railway station and Wharves.

New Zealand Government Railways,

Head Office, Wellington, 22nd June, 1891.

THE Railway Commissioners beg to thank you for your courtesy in allowing them to peruse the remarks of the Chairman of the Harbour Board on their letters. The Commissioners have briefly to