

him no other reason than that he understood, although not fully conversant with the discussions of the miners at Greymouth, that it was assumed by them that, if the mine was not paying, the concession applied for should be made by Government to save the district. Mr. Lomas did not urge any other reason.

43. That such concession, if made, must necessarily be considered from two different aspects—firstly, its effects on those who would benefit by it; secondly, on those who would suffer by it.

44. That, with regard to the first aspect, it is evident that, primarily, the company would, apparently, be the beneficiary; but the Commissioners have had evidence from Mr. Kennedy that, whilst he also had on the 16th July, 1890, made a similar application, he asked for it only as a temporary measure, and from Mr. Bishop, the mine-manager, that a royalty of 6d. per ton is a reasonable rate, and that railage at 2s. per ton for receiving the coal at the mine, hauling seven miles, and delivering into the vessel by hydraulic cranes is not excessive when compared with railage charges elsewhere.

45. That so far as the company is concerned it has been able, without any such extraneous aid, to arrange for a resumption of work at the reduced rates of wages offered.

46. That in making the application it clearly was not the intention of the miners to benefit the company, but to enable it to pay the hewers the higher rate of wages involved in the change of system introduced in March, 1890; but it is clear, from what the Commissioners have already reported, that such increase was not warranted, for the following reasons:—

- (1.) Because, when the change of system was made, it was only insisted on by the hewers as an equivalent to the rate of 4s. previously paid on screened coal, although it resulted in an increase of cost to the extent of 1s. 7d. per ton.
- (2.) Because the wages earned by the hewers who were directly interested, and also by the wages-men who were not interested, are very much in excess of what is earned by similar labour in other parts of the colony.
- (3.) Because, in the face of the fact that the men had forced up hewing-wages in March, 1890, to a price which left the employing company a direct loss, they, for purposes of their own, by arrangement among themselves, and without notice to the company, voluntarily restricted their output so that no man should earn more than 16s. per day, without handing over the surplus to their association—a restriction which tended to inflate the company's loss by keeping the large staff of wages-men without full occupation.
- (4.) Because the different character of coal at Westport and Greymouth seems to afford no reason why the rates at the mines at these places should be the same, the present workings at the latter being much easier than the former; nor do the conditions of life at either place, nor the respective cost of stores or of house accommodation, into all of which the Commissioners made inquiry, furnish any reason for equalising the hewing-rates on the pillar-coal at Brunnerton with the solid coal at Westport.
- (5.) Because, after the system of payment had been altered from 4s. on screened to 2s. 10d. on unscreened coal, the waste from the slack screened out increased from 37½ per cent. to 45 per cent., and whilst it is alleged by the men that this was caused by increased pillar-workings, this is denied by the manager, and it is affirmed by Mr. Kennedy that it was because the hewers had no incentive to turn out a better quality of coal.

47. That, as regards the second aspect mentioned—viz., the effect of the concession on those who would suffer by it—that is, the Government of the colony and the public generally—there does not, in our opinion, appear to be any reason why they should forego a revenue which is admittedly not exorbitant from those who use, and in using exhaust, public property or estate in so valuable a class of coal.