

6. That the Committee recommends that the present contract be annulled, for the purpose of making a new agreement, such fresh agreement being consistent with the views of the Committee as herein expressed.

7. The Committee, however, consider that the fact that the Mokihinui Company's line is connected with the Government line, and lies between the coal district of Mokihinui and Westport, renders it desirable that the Government should negotiate for the purchase of that branch—the purchase-money to come from the funds of the Westport Harbour Board, and to be dealt with in the same way as the £36,000 spent on the extension of the line from Ngakawau to Mokihinui.

G. W. RUSSELL, Chairman.

31st August, 1894.

FURTHER REPORT.

I am directed to report that the Railways Committee recommend that the minutes of evidence, the minutes of proceedings, and the correspondence dealing with the above petition be printed.

G. W. RUSSELL.

5th September, 1894.

PETITION, ETC.

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of New Zealand in Parliament assembled.

THE petition of the WESTPORT-CARDIFF COAL COMPANY (LIMITED), incorporated under "The Companies Act, 1882," and of WILLIAM HENRY HARGREAVES, a shareholder, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the said company, sheweth—

1. That your petitioners are the holders of a coal-mining lease from Her Majesty the Queen, under "The Westland and Nelson Coalfields Administration Act, 1877," dated the 10th day of March, 1893.

2. That your petitioners have fulfilled their obligations under the said lease, and, in addition thereto, have expended upwards of £7,000, besides incurring further liabilities amounting in all to upwards of £22,000, for the completion of railway, tramways, sidings, coal-bins, and opening-up of the mine, which is now in working order.

3. That your petitioners and the "Mokihinui Coal Company (Limited)" are the only holders of coal-mining leases in the district; that the Mokihinui Coal Company are also owners of a railway, extending from their coal-mine to the Government Railway-station at Mokihinui, a total length of 3 miles 68 chains; that this railway was originally constructed without any legal authority, for the purpose of enabling that company to ship their coal from their wharf on the Mokihinui River—a purpose which has entirely failed of its object; and, but for the construction of the link-line from Ngakawau to Mokihinui, at a cost of upwards of £36,000, this company's line would have remained as it was, utterly valueless.

4. That your petitioners' branch railway joins the Mokihinui Company's line at a point 1 mile 22 chains distant from the Government station at Mokihinui, and that your petitioners' coal must be passed over the said 1 mile 22 chains of the Mokihinui Company's railway to reach the Government line.

5. That the total distance for haulage purposes from your petitioners' coal-bins to Mokihinui Station is 1 mile 40 chains, consisting of 18 chains of your petitioners' railway, and 1 mile 22 chains of the Mokihinui Company's railway.

6. That, before incurring any responsibility in the way of expenditure or liability, your petitioners endeavoured to get the haulage-rate over the said section of 1 mile 22 chains of the Mokihinui Coal Company's railway definitely fixed, and to ascertain whether they incurred any risk in connection therewith. Your petitioners were unable to get the rates fixed, but were assured by the Government that the haulage would be a uniform through mileage rate from their mine to Westport, fixed in accordance with the rates prevailing on the Westport Section, and that your petitioners would not be placed at a disadvantage as regards haulage on their coal.

7. That relying upon this assurance your petitioners have opened their mine, completed their works, filled their bins, and have been ready to send coal to the market for upwards of two months.

8. That, in addition to the obligations for rental and royalty under their lease, your petitioners are liable under "The Westport-Ngakawau Railway Extension Act, 1890," for part-payment, over and above working expenses of the said line, of £5 per centum per annum on the entire cost of the said railway, amounting at present to upwards of £36,000.

9. That the New Zealand Railway Commissioners having taken running-powers over the Mokihinui Coal Company's railway, under an Order in Council dated 7th May, 1894, your petitioners applied to them to fix the rates for haulage of their coal from their bins to Westport. The Commissioners replied by letter, dated 4th June, 1894, an extract from which is as follows, viz., :—

"That the Railway Commissioners have come to an agreement with the Mokihinui Railway Company, under which the company's line will be worked by the Commissioners, and the following rates will be charged for the carriage of coal from the Cardiff Company's mine to the Mokihinui Station, namely: Up to 15,000 tons per annum, 1s. 4d. per ton; all over 15,000 tons per annum, 1s. 3d. per ton. The minimum charge to your company will be as for 10,000 tons per annum, whether such quantity be carried or not, and any deficiency in the proportionate quantity hauled at the end of each four-weekly accounting period must be paid by your company."