

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

WEDNESDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER, 1904.

GEORGE S. MUNRO, Acting-Secretary, Industries and Commerce Department, examined.

1. *Mr. Buchanan.*] I notice that among the papers in which advertisements were put calling for tenders for this service are the *Auckland Observer* and the *Free Lance*. Do you consider them to be a class of paper that would return value for expenditure upon a shipping advertisement? How came that advertisement to be inserted in such papers when there were commercial papers in which such advertisements could be inserted?—I was away on holiday leave from the 20th December to the 8th or 9th January, and the advertisements were inserted in my absence. Therefore, I could not go into detail further than to show what is on the files in connection with those advertisements.
2. You are in charge of the Trade and Commerce Office?—Yes.
3. Did it not occur to you upon your return to look over this matter and see how it came about that the advertisements were inserted in that class of paper?—Yes, possibly it did; but I did not see any reason for taking exception to it. There was only one insertion in those papers, while there were three insertions in other papers.
4. What I wish to know is whether, in conducting your own business, you would insert that class of advertisement in papers like the *Free Lance* and *Observer*? Would you expect to get value for your money? Are those newspapers circulating amongst the class of people from whom you expect to get value for the money paid for the advertisements?—Yes, I think so. The advertisement was for only one insertion in each of those papers, and it must have been a small amount which was paid to them as compared with the other newspapers.
5. Are the *Free Lance* and *Observer* upon the advertising-list of the Government?—Yes.
6. Are there not also a great many other newspapers upon the advertising-list?—Yes.
7. Well, how came those other papers to be excluded from the advertising and these particular papers made use of upon such an occasion as this?—In this case only newspapers published in the larger centres received the advertisement. There are any number of other newspapers upon the Government list in out-of-the-way places, in which it would have been useless to insert this particular advertisement. These papers, the *Observer* and *Free Lance*, are circulating in the cities.
8. Do you tell the Committee that shipowners on the look-out for employment for their ships would be likely to look up the *Free Lance* or the *Observer* for advertisements giving them information that would suit their purpose?—I think their representatives would see it there, as these papers are largely read. I cannot say that they would actually look for it in those or any other papers.
9. The Canterbury Farmers' Co-operative Association have been shipping a lot of oats from Timaru, I understand, at £1 5s. per ton?—Yes, I believe that is so.
10. What rate has the Federal line—that is, the line which has taken up this west-coast-of-England contract—been charging?—I believe £1 10s. to South Africa, and 15s. to the west-coast ports of the United Kingdom.
11. We want to get accurate information, as far as we can. You say you "believe" they were getting £1 10s.? Have they not been charging £1 15s. for South Africa?—£1 15s. is the schedule rate attached to the contract which they must not exceed, but I know as a matter of fact that they have reduced the freight during the last three or four months to £1 10s. They are entitled to charge £1 15s. according to the schedule in the contract.
12. Is it within your knowledge that outside steamers getting no subsidy at all have been doing this work for £1 5s.?—That may be so from one port in New Zealand to one port in South Africa, but the contract steamers are compelled to load at not less than four ports in New Zealand and to discharge at three in South Africa.
13. What time are these Federal boats taking on the several voyages going round by Australia, South Africa, and so Home to the west-coast ports of England?—The "Surrey," which started the service, took seventy-seven days from the last port in New Zealand to the first port in England, the "Devon" took seventy-two days, the "Dorset" sixty-six days, and the "Suffolk" sixty-nine days. Up to the arrival of the "Suffolk" I have made a return showing within what time each vessel, including the "Suffolk," has reached its destination.
14. How many Australian ports have the steamers been calling at?—They are not permitted to call at more than two.
15. Is that not in conflict with the original contract? Was it not specified that only one Australian port should be called at?—That is not so; there is one optional port in Australia, but there was another one, a compulsory port, at which they had to call in Australia, which makes the two ports. The steamers had always to go to Fremantle under any circumstances. Under this contract they are not entitled to go to more than two, which makes the one contract coincident with the other.
16. Am I right in understanding you to mean that under the original contract they could call at two Australian ports?—Yes, including Fremantle.
17. Before the west-coast-of-England contract was entered into, what was the general time taken by those steamers to get Home to England?—They never went Home previous to this con-