

62. Do you know Mr. Cox, of the South African Steam Service?—Yes, I know him slightly. I cannot say I know him very well.

63. Were you or Mr. Donne in communication with him over this contract in the early part of December?—No.

64. Did you see him about that time?—No.

65. You are aware, I presume, that he was in Auckland for about a fortnight at that time?—I believe he was in Auckland. I am not aware of it personally, and I do not know how long he was in Auckland.

66. You were not in Auckland yourself?—No.

67. Was Mr. Donne in Auckland?—I do not think so.

68. Was your Minister in Auckland in the early part of December up to about the 11th or 12th?—Yes; I believe he was in Auckland in December, but I do not know the date.

69. Your Minister did not report to the Department any communication that he had with him?—No.

70. And there was no communication, I presume?—No.

71. Are you aware that it was the general talk in London shipping circles from about the 12th or 14th December that such a contract was about to be entered into?—No, I am not aware of that.

72. Do you know that the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company then issued a circular on the 18th December announcing that they were going to load a vessel outward at Liverpool and Glasgow for the colony?—Well, I have seen a circular somewhere saying that they were proposing to commence a steam service from those ports, but I would not be sure about the dates.

73. You are aware, of course, that until that occasion there had been no steam service from that coast to New Zealand?—Yes.

74. On the 18th December the Shaw, Savill, and Albion Company issued a circular from their Glasgow office—Patrick Henderson's?—Have you the circular?

75. No, I was cabled to that effect—that a circular was issued. Are you aware that another company—the Tyser Line (Limited)—also plunged in and announced that they were going to despatch a vessel?—I am aware that the Tyser Company announced they were going to load a vessel.

76. Are you aware that vessels were put on?—I will agree to everything you say except the dates. I think they loaded a vessel in January or February.

77. Then, all these companies were entering into the trade, and presumably on account of this rumour I speak of, and you say that your advertisements were not issued at that date?—The advertisement was not issued until the 24th December.

78. I do not think there was an advertisement issued in London, but there was a circular sent out by the Agent-General to different shipping firms, including the Baltic and at Lloyd's?—Yes.

79. That was issued on the 30th December?—Yes, I think so.

80. With the knowledge that these companies were loading steamers, was not the necessity suggested to you of dealing with this outward freight?—I was not at work during that particular time. As a matter of fact, I was away on holiday leave from the 20th December until the 8th January, and your suggestions as to what I should have done do not apply, because I was not there.

81. You assume the reins in the absence of Mr. Donne, and would be posted in all the transactions of the office, which should enable you to reply to questions put by the Committee?—Yes, but I cannot reply to problematical questions as to what I should have done had I been there at the time.

82. You told us that you had had shipping experience?—Yes.

83. In sending out a circular from London on the 30th December in connection with such a service as this, and advertising in the colony on the 24th December in the presence of the fact that the interim was the holiday season, while tenders were to close on the 7th January, was it giving anything like a fair opportunity to the shipping people to get the necessary information enabling them to tender?—Yes, I think so, judging by the result. We got three tenders, and a satisfactory service without paying any subsidy. We could hardly expect to do better.

84. You only got three tenders. You got no tender from the Tyser Company?—No, the Tyser Company did not tender.

85. Do you know why?—I suppose it was because it did not suit them to do so.

86. Yet they were so keen in the matter that they put a vessel on to carry outward cargo?—That was a different thing, because they had cargo to carry back to London. Hitherto they had come out to New Zealand *via* Australia, and they may have thought it was a good chance to get outward cargo direct to New Zealand. They have also gone regularly to New York in the past to get cargo for New Zealand.

87. In December, when they plunged into the trade, it showed that they were not indifferent to it?—They were all evidently indifferent to the west-coast trade from New Zealand, or they would have taken it up years ago. Apparently they were not indifferent to the outward cargo.

88. You have no explanation to offer for not giving greater publicity?—I am quite satisfied there was sufficient publicity and that every one had a chance to tender who wanted to tender, and no one asked for an extension of time.

89. Do you not recognise that the service you promoted is a very important one?—Yes.

90. The steamers have been allowed to go by way of Australia and have an opportunity of filling up at those ports. If short of cargo from here they can pick it up there?—Yes, but they are only allowed to load at one port in Australia. There is one optional port and one compulsory port—Fremantle.

91. I think your contract allows them to call at two ports?—Yes, but one is compulsory—that of Fremantle.