

52. I suppose you know that the Nelson Harbour Board is in very much the same position in regard to the wharf there as the Foxton Harbour Board is in regard to the wharf here?—We are in a far worse position, because there has been some understanding between the Government and the Nelson Harbour Board whereby the Government has found for it in the shape of endowments fairly large sums of money.

53. I suppose you know that in Nelson the Government take all the wharfages?—Yes, but the Nelson Harbour Board get endowments.

54. You have some endowments?—Yes.

55. I suppose if you got your wharf here for nothing you would say the Nelson Harbour Board should get their wharf for nothing?—Perhaps it would be only just that they should. I want to qualify that answer by saying that provided the Nelson Harbour Board's endowments are the same I say they are just as much entitled to the wharf as Wellington is to their wharf.

56. You told the Commission that you think the wharf would have cost about £3,000?—I am calculating it on the figures given me by Mr. Weston.

57. Do you remember telling the parliamentary Committee in 1910 this: "As far as I have been able to ascertain, after careful inquiries, the cost of the present wharf has been between £5,000 and £7,000, which, of course, does not include reclamation, laying of rails, &c."?—I notice I have qualified my remarks—as far as I could say. I could get no information from the Railway Department as to the cost of the wharf.

58. You say you should get this wharf for nothing?—I reckon we are entitled to it.

59. You do not even want to pay its present value as a structure?—Not if I could get it without.

60. I suppose you recognize that without the railway connection at the wharf the wharfages could not amount to anything like what they amount to now?—To that I would answer that the same thing applies to practically all our wharves in New Zealand. The railway has been run for the wharves and for the convenience of the railways, not for the convenience of the district.

61. It is a fact that without the railway the wharf would be of little value?—If the station was a mile or half a mile away from the wharf it would be the duty of the Harbour Board to get connection with the railway by paying for it themselves.

62. The Harbour Board, if it got the wharf, would also be getting the benefit of the connection of the railway?—Yes. This river was a great factor in colonization, and it was for the benefit of colonization that this railway was built, and the wharf and the river at that time took a very large share in the settlement on this coast.

63. I think in 1910 you were prepared to pay £10,000 for this wharf?—I always made this offer subject to the Board, and if it was not turned down by the Board it was turned down by the district.

64. Do you remember being asked before the parliamentary Committee, "What do you think is a fair price?" and do you remember answering, "Although £10,000 is over the cost I think my Board would be prepared to pay for it"?—Yes, I said that.

65. The wharf is worth no less now than it was then?—It is six years older.

66. But do you not know that £1,400 has been spent in repair work?—I am not a practical engineer, but it seemed to me to be a waste of money to put a new decking upon a rotten foundation. It means those piles have been in there for forty years—some of them longer.

67. Do you say the foundation is a rotten foundation?—I should say it has served its day. It is not exactly rotten, but the upkeep of that wharf would be considerably more than for a new wharf.

68. Your idea in 1910 was that this wharf had originally belonged to the Foxton Harbour Board?—No, I have not said anything about that at all.

69. I put this to you, that for years the Harbour Board's application to the Government for this wharf was based upon the contention that it originally belonged to the Board?—No, not the wharf. You will never find that in any part of my evidence. I have never said that the wharf ever belonged to the Board. I said when the original Board was in existence—

70. Listen to this question in 1910 before the Committee: "When did you have the wharf?" and you replied, "We had it conferred on us by the Act of 1876 and 1878, and abolished in 1886"?—Yes, we had it conferred, but it was not taken possession of.

71. Do you contend that this wharf ever belonged to the Board?—No, the Board never had possession of it. The position was this: when the Harbour Board was brought into existence first the Act gave the foreshore to the Board, and the Government built the wharf on our land. The wharf was in the hands of the Customs Department and they offered it to the Board, but the Board at that time could not see their way to finance the pilot's "screw."

72. Is it not a fact that about 1878 the Marine Department asked the Board whether it would take the wharf over and take the wharfages, including the maintenance of the wharf and the pilotage rates?—Yes, I am quite satisfied the offer was made to them and that the Board refused.

73. Do you not know that the Government then in 1880 spent this extra money, extended the wharf, and made the reclamation, and that immediately afterwards the Foxton Board came along and said, "Now we will take it"?—No. I was not a member of the Board then.

74. *Mr. Hannay.*] Mr. Howarth said that by expending the money as he suggested in improvements in his report you will get coal-vessels of 300 tons?—Yes.

75. You would not get colliers of 300 tons?—According to his report there would be 15 ft. of water over the bar and 14 ft. up the river, and that will be sufficient to allow a vessel of 500 tons to come up.

76. *Mr. Weston.*] With regard to the offer you made to a parliamentary Committee to give £10,000 for the wharf, supposing you had given £10,000 then, what would you have had back in the last six years?—We would have had the wharf paid for.