

FOXTON, SATURDAY, 20TH MAY, 1916.

ALBERT JAMES KELLOW sworn and examined. (No. 6.)

1. *Mr. Weston.*] You are manager for Levin and Co. at Foxton?—Yes.
2. How long have you been manager?—Just six years.
3. The whole of the shipping trade of Foxton passes through Levin and Co.'s hands?—Yes.
4. You have taken out of your books a list of the trade done in the various classes of goods by your vessels since 1907-8?—Yes.
5. This is a copy of the statement [produced]?—Yes. [Statement put in—Exhibit J.]
6. *The Chairman.*] To what dates are they made up?—To the 31st March.
7. *Mr. Weston.*] How do you account for the decrease in wool?—The decrease last year is largely accounted for by the fact that a large quantity of wool is forwarded to Wellington for the sales instead of going to London.
8. Now, in regard to hemp, that has increased?—Those figures for this year are not as big as they should be because we hold such a lot in store. The total received into store would be 42,000 bales this year.
9. The difference between 35,000 and 42,000 bales has been held here owing to the shipping difficulties?—Yes, the London shipments.
10. *Mr. Williams.*] How many bales would go to a ton?—Hemp, five bales. 48,000 bales have been received up to the 31st March, 1915-16. This is the biggest year we have ever had for shipment.
11. *The Chairman.*] How is the flax brought to your store: does it come by railway or is it carted?—The great bulk comes by carts, and a fair quantity comes down by punts. A fair quantity comes from Rangiotu.
12. *Mr. Weston.*] What percentage of the quantity shown does not come by rail?—About 80 per cent. comes by carts and punts and 20 per cent. by rail.
13. *The Chairman.*] I suppose the cartage would not be for a great distance?—No, the mills are quite close. Some mills are five miles away.
14. *Mr. Weston.*] I notice in 1913-15 you show some quantities in brackets: are those included in the total?—Those statistics apply only to stuff actually shipped by steamer.
15. What are those in brackets?—Those are the bales which would have been shipped but for trouble with the bar—harbour troubles.
16. Can the Commission take it that practically the whole of the hemp and tow produced in this district is shipped by sea to Wellington?—Practically the whole of it except owing to stress of circumstances when we cannot ship it owing to harbour difficulties.
17. If the harbour were closed what effect would it have on the hemp industry?—That is a very hard question to answer. It would have a very bad effect upon the Railway Department. I do not see how they could handle the stuff.
18. Would it be as convenient and as cheap for the mills to forward the hemp and tow to Wellington by rail?—No, and, of course, it would be very inconvenient.
19. *The Chairman.*] What is the rate of freight by ship and by rail?—The rates of freight are about equal.
20. *Mr. Weston.*] Why would it be more convenient for them to send it by steamer than by rail?—Because the local grading-stores are here, and if there were no grading-stores they would have to send the stuff to Wellington, and risk the weather and all sorts of things of that description.
21. Would they be able to dump the hemp and tow here?—Under present conditions they could, but before our stores were built they could not.
22. Can you grade after the stuff has been dumped?—No.
23. It would mean that all the stuff would have to be sent to Wellington ungraded?—No; it could be graded here and dumped here.
24. Would that mean greater difficulties in handling?—There would be tremendous difficulties in loading into the trucks.
25. *Mr. Hannay.*] What difficulty—what is the difference between loading into the trucks and loading into ships?—In loading into ships you simply put the bales alongside the ship which takes them, but in loading into trucks you have to load them yourselves. You have to load the first tier, and then load the second tier, and cover the truck. It would cost very little more, except for handling-charges, which would be increased.
26. *Mr. Weston.*] Practically the whole of the hemp and tow goes down by boat to Wellington as compared with rail?—Yes. I have the figures here covering the actual grading. In 1909 we graded 11,320 bales, and in 1916 over 48,000.
27. In regard to general cargo outward and inward there has been an increase?—Yes.
28. With regard to coal there is a big drop, from 15,721 tons in 1907 to 5,258 tons last year: what is that due to?—That is practically due to the troubles on the bar and in the river. The shipowners will not take the risk of sending their ships with coal here now on account of the shallowness of the river. In 1910 we received 18,000 tons, most of which would be railway coal, but it has gradually decreased. I know of one case where the Westport Coal Company took a contract for 4,000 tons, but they were only able to deliver about 800 tons. The Department, I understand, got rather tired of the trouble they had, and I do not think there are any coal contracts here now at all.
29. *The Chairman.* Does not railway coal come now?—Very occasionally.
30. The 5,000 tons last year would have been for private consumption?—Most of it, yes.
31. *Mr. Weston.*] The Borough Council wants coal for its gasworks?—Yes, they take a large quantity.
32. *Mr. Hannay.*] With regard to the outward and inward cargo, do you know if it has increased much since the Government took over the Manawatu Railway in 1908?—The figures show it has increased.