

and the Stationmaster here, but nothing has been done. With the "Queen of the South" coming here with a load of cargo she had to discharge part of one hold into the goods-shed, and all the cargo in the after hold has to be put into the railway-trucks. This last week she came here and we loaded seventeen trucks with cargo, and I suppose about nine of those have to be returned to the goods-shed, discharged on to the floor, and loaded up again.

61. Has the cost of working your ships increased on account of the want of shed accommodation?—Certainly. We have delays. For instance, at Easter time we had the "Queen of the South" at Foxton on the Wednesday and her cargo more than filled the goods-shed. Then on the Thursday we had the "Awahou" with 300 tons of cargo, and every ton of that had to go into trucks, and was lying on the Foxton Wharf until the first cargo could be dealt with.

62. *Mr. Hannay.*] Did you pay any extra charge for that?—Seeing it was not our fault I do not think we were to be expected to pay anything extra.

63. Who bore the cost?—The consignee had to stand the delay of his goods. On the Saturday the "Queen of the South" came in again, and her cargo had to be dealt with, while the "Awahou's" could not be touched at all.

64. But you may not have any cargo for a week?—Yes; the bar may be bad. The Railway Department may have these railway-trucks in Foxton or elsewhere empty for a week whilst our stuff is lying in Wellington waiting to come up, and because the bar is not touched or improved we cannot get the vessels in here. If the bar was deepened and improved we could have a bigger traffic and have a boat every day.

65. *Mr. Weston.*] The expense of putting up increased shed accommodation would not be great?—I suppose if the present railway goods-shed was doubled it would fulfil all requirements.

66. I understand the modern steamer has two holds that you work at the same time?—Yes.

67. Can you work the two at the one time here?—Only by putting the contents of one hold into the trucks. Of course, that costs the Department more to handle the stuff than if it were put straight into the goods-shed.

68. I take it that the cost of working would be materially lessened if they had better accommodation?—Yes, materially lessened. I reckon that if the Department would spend £600 or £700 in putting up decent goods-sheds extensions they would save £100 a year in labour.

69. And that money would be available to develop and improve the bar if the port were in the hands of the Board?—Yes.

70. You have your diary here showing how your vessels have been held up by the present state of the bar?—Yes. The river is the biggest difficulty, and the bar occasionally.

71. I take it that at the present time the conditions are such that you cannot work for seven days during neap tides?—It practically means that traffic is suspended during neap tides.

72. And during the rest of the time you are constantly stuck?—Yes. We sent the "Awahou" out on Easter Sunday empty for Greymouth drawing 6 ft. 6 in. on a 1 o'clock tide. That is a fairly good tide. She stuck towards the bar, and she got back to town on the following Saturday. She was there for a week with nothing in her at all. She did the same thing within a month. She went down on the Monday morning and came back on the Sunday for coal.

73. It has become very much worse during the last eighteen months?—Yes, it is getting worse all the time.

74. *The Chairman.*] It will be necessary to have dredging to make the improvement?—Yes, that is the only means.

75. *Mr. Weston.*] You know the proposal suggested by Mr. Howarth, the Engineer to the Wanganui Borough?—Yes; that is the idea approved by the captains of the ships.

76. Do you think there would be any difficulty in getting the district to give security by means of a rate, say, for £10,000 or £12,000 to buy a dredge and improve the harbour?—If the Board has to pay all its revenue out in interest to the Department the district could not look at the thing.

77. *Mr. Hannay.*] What is the rate of freight on merchandise from Wellington to Foxton?—9s. per ton on most cargo—a very cheap rate. The cost of labour has made the running of ships very costly, and it has gone up from 7s. 6d. to 9s.

78. *Mr. Weston.*] With regard to the work done by the Railway Department out of the wharfares in regard to inward cargo, where does the responsibility of the ship end?—When we deliver the stuff on to the trucks and hand-trucks from the slings.

79. They take it from the slings into their trucks?—Yes.

80. And the only work the Railway would have would be to take the trucks and attach them to the train?—Yes, and put a cover over them.

81. With other cargo they would take it into the shed and store it for despatch?—Yes.

82. With regard to flax and tow, what work would they have to do on that?—No work at all. I estimate the Railway Department receives about £750 wharfage on flax, tow, and wool per annum, for which they do nothing.

83. What do they do with regard to outward cargo?—They put the truck alongside the ship. We handle it, and sling it, and put it on board.

84. *The Chairman.*] I presume that in loading a truck from Longburn or Palmerston the goods for the ship will be put into one truck by themselves?—Yes.

85. And then brought alongside the ship and the ship slings them?—Yes. We supply the labour to put it on board.

86. *Mr. Weston.*] So that practically the Railway Department has very little labour to pay for in the working of the cargo?—Yes, outward cargo.

87. Supposing the ship is not ready to take the cargo from the truck, what does the Railway Department do then?—If they do not want the trucks they leave it there; but if they want the trucks they discharge the cargo, and charge 1s. per ton handling-charge.