

1877.

NEW ZEALAND.

# REPORT ON PETITION OF LANDOWNERS IN THE TAIERI COUNTY,

TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

*Report brought up 7th August, and ordered to be printed.*

## REPORT.

THE petitioners state that the action of the Taieri River Conservators in making an embankment on the west bank of the river has had the effect of raising the flood waters of the river beyond ordinary height, and materially damaging the petitioners' property on the east bank, and they pray that no subsidies be granted to the Taieri River Conservators as at present constituted.

I am directed to report that, in the opinion of the Committee, the matter is a question for the consideration of the Government, as it involves a difficult engineering question, and should only be dealt with after careful inquiry and on a comprehensive plan, especially as a considerable sum of public money has been expended on river works, the utility of which appears to be doubtful.

T. KELLY,  
Chairman.

7th August, 1877.

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

The Hon. D. REID examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] Mr. Reid, you have read this petition?—Yes.
2. Are you acquainted with the locality referred to?—Yes; very well.
3. Would you kindly state to the Committee your view on the matter?—Well, there is no doubt that the embankment on one side of the river will raise the water on the properties on the other side of the river to some extent, if they do not take steps to protect themselves.
4. Can they not take steps under the Acts referred to?—Yes, if they bring their land under the operations of the Act. If they could get all the people to go into it they have a considerable area, though it is not so great as on the west side; but the embankment would not require to be so high, and there is not so large a force of water. It requires the voluntary action of a certain number of the owners to enable them to come under the Act, and all do not seem disposed to come under it.
5. That is, I suppose, because only a few would be affected by the floods?—Yes. Those furthest back would not be affected very much by the floods; the worst that could happen being the overflow of a little backwater, the currents not coming near them.
6. Do you think the action of the Conservators will have the effect of increasing the depth of the floods on the properties of those who complain?—Yes; I think it would; indeed it has done so. It is really a matter, however, upon which I do not like to give an opinion, as there are some very strong opinions amongst the people in the locality; but I think, where owners are prepared to spend money to protect their property, unless it can be shown that they are doing serious injury to others, they should not be interfered with. I cannot see that any very serious injury will be done here. It will of course increase the height of the water if the embankments are made large enough, but it will not materially affect the currents—merely the depth of the backwater.
7. What length of embankments is there made under this Act on the west bank?—I dare say two or three miles.
8. Already constructed?—Yes; there had been. But it has been partly washed away by the recent flood.
9. *Mr. Burns.*] From your knowledge of the locality, do you think a flood would do more harm on the west bank than on the east bank, taking into consideration the amount of water thrown up as flood-stream on the west bank?—Yes. The last flood was higher than many of its predecessors, but I do not know that there was any more water than on previous occasions. The water was dammed in to a certain extent by the railway works. I attributed the height of the flood partly to that cause.