

very strongly, to anything more being done. The works, they assert, should never have been undertaken in the way they were without their being referred to a poll; and they are satisfied that, by the admissions of the Board themselves, an extension which will only allow of a small steamer like the "Australia" coming in can have no possible effect on their interests. All the way up the coast they have been obliged to create a steamer-service to take away their produce; and, as the vessels which would call at Gisborne are no larger than those at present trading up the coast, it would be infinite loss to them if they had to send their goods down to Gisborne, and pay harbour dues, and then put them on a vessel in an open roadstead which takes from three to five months to load. The question as to whether or not this is a proper work from an engineering point of view I am not capable to offer an opinion on, but I would like to place before the Committee the opinion of practical people on the question—I refer to Captain Fairchild, who published a letter in the *Auckland Star* on the subject about March last, and also to the opinions of captains of any of the ocean-going steamers like the "Mararoa" and "Wairarapa." I think these opinions should carry weight, although not those of marine engineers. There is no marine engineer that has reported on the subject with the exception of Sir John Coode, and the present work is not Sir John Coode's scheme at all. I would strongly recommend the Committee to get Sir John Coode's plan before coming to a decision. It has been asserted that Sir John Coode's scheme would have cost more than the present one: I think you will see by comparing the lengths of the two works that this is manifestly impossible.

316. Your main objection to this work as proposed now is that it will be no benefit to the settlers in the north part of Cook County, and their fear is that further rates may be imposed upon them in consequence of carrying out this work?—As the law now stands they will undoubtedly be liable to further rates.

317. *Mr. Allen.*] What means of communication have you on the coast district?—The "Australia" comes up regularly every week, and calls at all the small ports on the coast.

318. If the proposed extension were made, so as to allow of the "Australia" going alongside, would the people up the coast derive any benefit?—No, not the slightest. To get to Gisborne you have to climb the steepest of hills in one part, and at other points you have to go at low water from half a mile to two miles amongst papa rocks, to the danger of your life. [Sir George indicated on the map the route to Gisborne, and particularised the difficulties met with at the different localities.]

319. Is there any settlement back in the country?—Very little, because there are no roads except the tracks we have made at our own expense.

320. *The Chairman.*] If you have no roads, supposing Sir John Coode's plan were carried out, how would you have benefited by it?—We got the promise of endowments of land from Government, and then there is a sum of about £20,000 which was granted by Government, and during the past six years an equal sum received from rates and other sources in this northern district to make roads.

320A. You expected, if the scheme had been carried out, that Government would have been bound to make roads for you?—The £20,000 obtained from these northern rates, &c., is a great deal more than would have been required, in addition to the sums already given, to complete these roads, parts of which are already formed. And then there were, besides, these endowments of land from Government.

321. If Sir John Coode's plan had been carried out, and the roads had not been formed, the work would have been of no benefit to your district?—No. We speculated, of course, on Sir John Coode's well-known reputation, and we were prepared to run the risk of the success or non-success of his scheme, believing the roads would be made.

322. What solid reasons can the settlers in the northern part of Cook County give for being absolved from future rates? One of the things Mr. Ormond put forward was that the unexpended balance should be invested with the view of reducing the rates of the Cook County settlers?—We never voted for the present work at all, and, even if the prophecy that it will produce a good harbour for vessels like the "Australia" prove correct, it is admitted we have no interest in it whatever. If the people of Gisborne wish to speculate in a harbour which will in all probability prove just as vain as the present scheme, let them do so; but we do not want to be taxed for it. As you have referred to Mr. Ormond's suggestion, I may say what we would like to see would be the stoppage of the works, to see the Government put its fist down, take over the whole of the money, and use it as a sinking fund until we were able to pay off the debt.

323. *Mr. R. Thompson.*] I understand from your evidence that you consider any further expenditure on these works would simply be for the benefit of the Gisborne Township?—Yes; the township and the country between the two little rivers in the locality of the township.

324. The works would be of no benefit to your district?—Not the slightest.

325. Would it not be possible for the district which would be benefited by this further expenditure to rate itself sufficiently to pay interest and relieve your district from any further liability?—I understand they are willing to do that. I understand so from a communication made to me by Mr. Sievwright, the present Chairman of the Board. He said to me, "Well, if we exempt your district, will you consent then?" I said, "Certainly; we do not want to do you any harm, or avoid payment of the rates which at present have to be levied. What we want is to be placed in the position that whatever you do in the future, you do entirely at your own risk."

326. *Mr. Whyte.*] Did you vote for the Bill of 1884?—Yes.

327. On the idea of Sir John Coode's plan that you would get a harbour of refuge?—Solely.

328. Do you see by this report of Mr. Higginson's that that would have cost £60,000 more than the present scheme?—£46,000 I make it. But that is not Sir John Coode's estimate; his estimate was £200,000.

329. Do you see that by the present scheme you can get a depth of 21½ ft. for £175,000, and you can only get the same depth under Sir John Coode's plan for £246,000?—These estimates have