

## SESSION II.

1906.

## NEW ZEALAND.

## DRAINAGE OF THE TAIERI PLAIN

(REPORT OF COMMISSION OF INQUIRY UPON THE).

*Laid upon the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.*

Dunedin, 21st May, 1906.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable William Lee, Baron Plunket, K.C.M.G., Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over His Majesty's Colony of New Zealand and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We have the honour to make the following report for Your Excellency's information pursuant to a Commission issued to us by Your Excellency in Council, and dated the 27th February, 1906, and extended by a further Order dated the 23rd March, 1906, instructing us to inquire "as to the desirableness or otherwise of constituting one united drainage district for the Taieri Plain in lieu of the three existing districts"; and also to report "on the subject of the drainage of the whole of the lands forming the area known as the Taieri Plain."

In pursuance of Your Excellency's instruction we visited various parts of the Taieri Plain, the Taieri River, and several of the streams leading into the same, and made ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the local conditions so far as they could be observed within the time at our disposal. We issued notices of our appointment to all the local bodies having any jurisdiction or interest in the Taieri Plain and in the Taieri River in the vicinity of the Taieri Plain. In doing so we called upon them to be represented before us, and to adduce any evidence they thought fit on the subject. We also subpoenaed a number of representative men from various parts of the Taieri Plain to give evidence before us, and we also gave public notice of the sittings of the Commission, and we invited evidence from any one who wished to give evidence before us.

Evidence was taken at Mosgiel on the 5th and 6th April, at Outram on the 7th April, at Henley on the 18th April, again at Mosgiel on the 19th April, and finally at Dunedin on the 20th April.

Fifty-five witnesses in all were examined, and notes of their evidence are attached hereto. We believe that without unduly prolonging the proceedings the evidence thus obtained is amply sufficient to enable a just decision to be arrived at.

The matters upon which we are instructed to report naturally divide themselves into two portions—viz., (a) those in respect to which Your Excellency has power to adjust; and (b) those which if adjusted at all, must be dealt with as the result of further legislative action. The first division has reference to the proposed amalgamation of the three existing drainage districts known as West Taieri, Otokia, and Maungatua. The second division has reference to the drainage of the whole of the area known as the Taieri Plain.

Before dealing with these matters separately, it will be more convenient, and will tend to a clearer understanding of the difficulties of the case, if we first of all state the facts relating thereto.

## FACTS OF THE CASE.

The Taieri Plain is a large area of alluvial land formed probably, in past ages, by *débris* brought down from higher land by the action of the Taieri and Waipori Rivers, but principally by the former river. This land is of a very fertile character, and in parts where it is not frequently flooded is capable of producing large and abundant crops.

The area of the plain is approximately about 40,000 acres, and from a report made by Messrs. Gordon, Hayes, and Flatman in April, 1900, it appears that about 21,500 acres of it, held by about 164 settlers, and valued at £296,000, was then liable to flood from the Taieri River alone. The area flooded by the Waipori River is stated in a report by Messrs. Maitland and Gordon in March, 1894, "to amount to at least 7,000 acres of very valuable flat land"; and, as the report of these