

useless for a considerable period, a matter of great importance to a poor struggling settler whose all is invested in his small holding. But an even more serious question is the general raising of the river-bed, which is appreciably taking place, and lessens the fall for drainage: and how can it be otherwise, when about 24,000 tons per month are deposited in the river by the Waihi Company alone, and I understand that this output is to be considerably increased. Continual complaints are also made of the silting-up of the mouths of the drains, and the Council's own experience is that after every flood the dock into which the Puke punt runs has to be cleared of silt. According to Mr. Reed, he made his inspection when the river was high; surely that was not the best time to inspect drains, the outlets of which were covered by flood-water. It seems to me that the time for examining the effects of the silt on drains would be when the river was low and not in flood. By reference to the Engineer's report it will be seen that Mr. Reed was misled (by examining the wrong plan in the Engineer's office) into the assumption that as that plan showed only one transverse section, no further deposit had taken place. As a matter of fact, at that place no second levels were ever taken since. The contention that no further deposit has taken place since Mr. Perham's inspection can, I am sure, be easily disproved, and surely the statement seems a rash one when one considers the amount of tailings that are daily put into the river. It can scarcely be held that all this is swept out to sea when we know that the Thames River is a tidal one in which the rise and fall extends far above the Junction and the flood tide runs strongly up and above the Junction. I must again express my regret that Mr. Reed did not notify the Council of his proposed inspection and take the evidence (for examination) of those most vitally affected by this question, as it would have saved me from the very unpleasant task of traversing most of his statements. I will not here take upon myself the duty of showing what injury the district is suffering from the deposit of tailings, but if a proper inquiry is held I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that a very strong case can be established. I may add here an extract from a letter received from the Hon. the Minister for Railways bearing date the 18th August, 1906: 'As you are aware, the Ohinemuri River is daily becoming more difficult to navigate, and it is quite within the bounds of possibility that the shipping traffic will, in a comparatively short time, be withdrawn from the Puke wharf, and the conditions which now exists will be entirely altered.' This seems to be very weighty evidence from the Hon. the Minister for Railways, who but a short time ago held the portfolio of Public Works, and through his officers must be well acquainted with the facts of the case. The statement of Mr. Reed *re* the inability of certain mines to stack their tailings seems to me to be beside the question. Does he mean to infer that any of the mines would have been stopped from working if the river had not been declared a sludge-channel? In conclusion, Sir, I would say that, apart from the injury done to the individual settlers, it is a sad thing to see one of the noblest of New Zealand's navigable rivers closed to traffic; and that this will be the case no one doubts unless immediate steps are taken to stop further depositing of tailings into the river.—I have, &c., W. G. NICHOLLS, Chairman." That is about all I have to say in the matter, Mr. Chairman. I am quite prepared to answer any questions which you may put.

32. *Mr. Herries.*] You were speaking about steamers that used to come up the river?—Yes.

33. And you have been a long time in the district. Could they get up at any time of the tide or only when there was a fresh?—They could not possibly get up without the tide. They could not get out of the Thames or Shortland. At that time the steamers came from Shortland. They would have to go along with the tide from there.

34. It was always at high water that they had to come up?—They could get up at half-tide—up the Waihou.

35. You say that none of them could get up now to Paeroa, even at full tide?—No, they cannot.

36. But they could get up to the Junction?—No, I do not think so, on account of this bar.

37. For instance, the "Kotuku" used to come right up to Matamata?—Yes.

38. That was always in a fresh?—That I do not know.

39. If there was a fresh on, these boats could come up?—It would have to be a very high flood. I doubt very much whether they could get over that dam that has formed at the junction of the river. I have an oil-launch myself drawing 2 ft. 6 in., and I used to keep her at my own place at Paeroa just above the bridge. Now I cannot keep her there. She is at the Junction.

40. But the "Matuku" comes up to Waihou?—Yes.

41. How does she get across the bar?—By coming up the Waihou River at full tide; she is only a 5-ton boat.

42. The bar is in the Waihou?—Yes, and the Ohinemuri is shallow.

43. I am speaking of the Waihou River. Do you say that the navigation of the river has been altered?—It is affected below the Junction—from the Junction downwards.

44. Between the Junction and Puke?—Yes.

45. But not above?—No, that is, not up the Waihou above the Junction.

46. The same boats could get up the Waihou that used to in former times—to Paeroa?—I think so.

47. Do you think from your experience that the Waihou River is worse for navigation than it was?—The lower part of the Waihou, from the Junction downwards, is.

48. You remember that in the old days when we used to have the "Dispatch," the "Patiki," and those boats, they very often used to get stuck?—They might have stuck there if they came up too early for the tide. The places where they used to stick were at Charlton's and down below Hikutaia.

49. Do you say that a boat like the "Patiki" could not come up equally well now as it did, say, in 1883?—Yes.

50. You think it would be more difficult?—Yes.

51. What do the "Waimaire" and the "Taniwha" draw?—I could not say. They do not come up further than the Puke.