

occupy high and dry land should pay for the drainage of land at a lower level, and I do not think the Committee will consider that ground for one moment. Those, so far as I know, are the grounds on which the request of the petitioners is objected to, and I should say the objectors are objecting because they want to get their swamp lands drained at the expense of higher lands which Mr. McCurdie, the engineer, says require irrigation really more than drainage. That is the case.

1. *Mr. Anderson.*] You said the Taieri is not likely to silt up?—I am guided by the engineers who have reported on the matter during the last forty years, and they say not. That is also our own experience.

2. You know the lake at Kokonga has filled up?—Yes. There is a considerable volume of silt coming down, but there is also a considerable volume of water which must get out to the sea. It will cut a course for itself somewhere, and so long as the west bank is maintained it is unlikely that it will cut through the bank.

3. *Mr. Witty.*] I think you said it was something new to rate hilly country for swamp land for drainage purposes?—Yes.

4. Well, that is not new. There are a great many places where there is a watershed, and the higher lands have got to pay a certain amount towards the cost of taking the water off the low lands which is drained from the high watersheds?—Yes. I should like to say that if you take in a watershed, that is one thing, but if you take in a small portion of dry plain, that is another. The watershed of the Taieri River includes about half a dozen mountain-ranges forty or fifty miles up Central Otago. The snow from these mountains is a considerable factor in some floods, and, as a matter of fact, the bulk of the water and gravel which they complain about as coming down the Silverstream comes not from the lands which are included in the district, but from the hilly land above which is not included in the district.

5. Is it the Silverstream that drains the mountains or the Taieri?—It comes from the hills. It is not merely a stream of the plain. It is a stream which takes its rise and, curiously enough, has a greater volume of water up in the hills than on the plain. The water sinks into the gravelly country in North Taieri which is included in the district, and a small quantity flows from North Taieri. That is the case to such an extent that the Mosgiel Borough has to go beyond the Taieri district for its water-supply.

6. What I want to get at is this: Apparently from your statement there are a lot of hills beyond the Taieri Plain?—Yes; the plain has a mountain on one side and a range of hills on the other.

7. On what side are the hills?—On both sides.

8. Is any of this hilly land benefited, or does any of the water come off those hills on to the bulk of the land?—The bulk of the water that goes on this land comes from the hills.

9. I am not speaking of the west portion, but the portion included?—No, I should say not sufficient to cause a flood.

10. Has East Taieri district ever had a Board before?—No, never.

11. First of all they backed the water on to you and then gave you a Board?—Yes, that is the position. I believe what really brought that Commission out was the trouble and litigation on the west side of the river. They had four Boards and two River Boards, and they were always at loggerheads. We have no River Board on the East Taieri side of the river.

12. And you do not require one?—And we do not want one. We have protested against being included all along.

13. Why is there a Class "D," and lands under that class not rated?—There is a Class "D" which is not subject to rating, and there is a very small area of land included in that class.

14. Why was it not left out altogether? It must have been brought in for some object, or otherwise it would have been classified?—I do not know. There is undoubtedly a Class "D" which is not liable to be rated, into which some of the lands in the Taieri District have been put; but the Magistrate refused to put any lands out of other classes into Class "D."

15. Are you taxed at all on the east side for the purposes of the west?—There is provision about rating in the Act. There is a general rate for maintenance and general purposes, such as the payment of the Clerk's salary and the Engineer's salary.

16. You pay your proportion of the expenses?—Yes, of course.

17. But anything done on the east side is not paid for by the west?—No; and works done on the west side are not paid for by the east. Any works done on the west side have to be paid for by the west side, and the same remark applies to the east side. It would not be an injustice to the west side if we were not included.

18. You have no assets or liabilities?—No.

19. Are you benefited at all by the wall on the western side?—No; it is a distinct detriment, because it forces the water back on East Taieri.

20. How long has the wall been up?—I do not know the exact date when it was put up, but it has been up so long that we cannot interfere with it. I understand it was put up in 1877.

21. Has it not been improved considerably since the Act came into force?—It has been maintained.

22. Not raised?—No. I think it is since the Act came into force that we have had the record flood.

23. *Mr. Forbes.*] Does the Silverstream cut require any attention at all?—It would require some attention down near the river in the swamp land, but in North Taieri I think it is about 20 ft. below the original level of the land.

24. It is a deep cut at the top end?—Yes.

25. Who keeps that stream open at the present time? Does the Drainage Board spend money in keeping it open?—I do not think any money has been spent in keeping it open at the lower end; that is one of the troubles. It will keep itself open for part of the way, practically on all the high land, but lower down it does not do so. I believe some gravel goes down and causes trouble there.