

(By permission of the Chairman, Mr. MacGregor, who represented the Taieri Drainage Board, was allowed to cross-examine the witnesses.)

52. *Mr. MacGregor.*] One member of the Committee has asked you with regard to the Silverstream?—Yes.

53. You are probably aware that within the last ten or twelve months a good many chains of this Silverstream on the lower land has been filling up?—Yes, a good deal has been silting up.

54. But do you call it silting—is it not principally gravel?—Yes.

55. Are you not aware that within ten or twelve months 12 chains of the channel have been filled up?—I do not know the extent, but there has been some filling-up.

56. You do not know how much?—No.

57. You stated that you were supported by some ratepayers on the west side of the river?—Yes.

58. Have they signed the petition?—They have sent a separate petition in.

59. Is it before the Committee?—I do not know whether it is, but it should be. There is a separate petition sent in by West Taieri supporting East Taieri. [Petitions produced.] I see there is also another petition here supporting us.

60. I want to know whether there is any petition from West Taieri before the Committee?—I prepared it for them, and they got it signed by about a hundred people, and it was sent up to Wellington, but I am not able to say where it is now.

61. Then the position is this: that the Silverstream at the lower part does require attention from somebody?—Yes, there is no doubt it does. The land is pretty level there where the water is running slowly, and it is silting.

62. You know Mr. Renton's and Mr. Charter's land?—Yes.

63. And you know their land is suffering very much?—Yes, I believe they have suffered to a certain extent.

64. I do not know whether you are aware that the new Board has spent a considerable amount of money in clearing the channel?—I believe they have spent a good deal of money in clearing the swamp and draining the land for the people.

65. Have you been down there lately?—No.

66. Are you aware that the new Board has spent a good deal of money on the new channel along the Silverstream?—They called for tenders for cleaning out the Silverstream, but the new Board has abandoned that.

67. Has not a good deal of work been done?—I do not know what extent of work has been done there, but it is quite possible there has been. I do not know the exact position there.

68. With regard to the Silverstream, you referred to what two of the classifiers had said regarding the district?—Yes.

69. Do you remember the exact words that were used?—I cannot remember the exact words, but practically what they said was that North Taieri and the Irregular Block, East Taieri, should not have been included in the district. "North Taieri" means north of Mosgiel, and the "Irregular Block, East Taieri," east of the railway-line.

70. You do not wish the Committee to understand that the classifiers expressed any opinion to the effect that what is now asked for should be done—namely, the exclusion of East Taieri and North Taieri generally?—They did not express any opinion about the lands near the river.

71. It was about the particular road?—Yes, the Mosgiel—West Taieri Road; but that comprises a considerable area of land.

72. It includes the land that is referred to by Messrs. Lundius and Buckhurst as the "dry land"?—That is so, and they reported in effect that the people occupying the lower land did not want to be included if the people occupying the higher lands are to go out.

73. Was not this the reason given: that they could not see how the lands already drained would derive any benefit from an extended new drainage scheme?—The reasons given were that those lands were high and dry and well drained, and that they cannot derive any benefit from any scheme.

74. And an endeavour was made to impress that view on the Assessment Court, was there not?—Yes.

75. But unsuccessfully, I think?—Yes. The Magistrate took the view that because those people were included in the district it was intended that they should be rated.

76. There is nobody here appearing in support of the West Taieri petition, as far as you are aware?—No. I prepared it, and they wanted it to go in.

77. Now, with regard to the silting-up of the river, are you not aware that there has been a very considerable silting-up of the river down towards Henley?—I know that large quantities of silt come down the river, but the river has been in its present state, so far as I know, for a great many years.

78. Are you suggesting to the Committee, then, that the river is now at the same depth as it was many years ago—the level at the bottom?—It is impossible to say whether it is at the same level or not.

79. Well, I wish the Committee to understand that?—Let me explain. The river sometimes silts up in one place, but cuts a deeper channel in another place where it was silted up before, but the result has been the same during the last forty years.

80. Are you not aware of this: that at one time the Government proposed to find a dredge for dredging out the river if the Boards would bear the expense of working it?—I am not aware of that, but I am aware of the fact that the Government sent Mr. J. T. Thompson to inquire into the silting, and his report is here and can be considered.

81. How late is that report?—It was considered in 1877, and the position is exactly the same now except that the bank has been erected on the west side—the floods are no greater.