

82. Is not the position this: that the bottom of the river has been raised?—I am not able to say whether it has been raised or not, but I do know that the river has always run in the same course since the bank was raised, and that the floods are no higher to-day than when the bank was raised. We had a record flood the other day, but generally speaking the position is the same now as it was then.

83. *Mr. Guthrie.*] If this Drainage Board has to cope with it, does the question of silting come into consideration?—The Drainage Board has power to deal with the Taieri River and watercourses in the Taieri District, and they can practically do what they like.

84. What is the effect of the bank on the western side—is it to keep the silt within the bed of the stream, and thereby tend to silt it up. To some extent it might do that, but the river has found its course there, and if it did not find its way through the present course it would go over the West Taieri bank. So far as East Taieri is concerned, the question whether the river is silting or not has nothing to do with the matter, because it will only affect the lower plain. If they cannot keep the river from silting up they cannot maintain their bank.

85. It has struck me that the effect of that bank being raised on the western side of the river has been to keep a large amount of silt that would naturally have flowed over the western land within the bed of the river?—Well, the river is winding, and where it runs into a curve the water mounts up on the bank and throws the silt up on the opposite side. Another thing I might say in connection with East Taieri is that the flooding has the effect of taking the silt out on the land to such an extent that on some farms it has raised the land to the height of two or three fences. Two or three fences have been buried by the silt from the river.

86. On the eastern side?—Yes.

87. Has that been the effect of the bank on the western side?—It has been the effect of the flooding which has been caused to some extent by the bank on the western side. There has always been some silting-up, and the places down there have been gradually rising, in some instances I am quite sure to the height of an ordinary fence, and I believe three have been covered by silt.

88. That is 15 ft.?—Probably that, yes. I know there has been a considerable rise in the height of the land in some parts.

89. And yet you say there is no silting-up in the river?—What I say is that the river goes on maintaining very nearly its present level.

90. The point I wish to get at is this: there is a bank which has been erected on the western side of the Taieri River?—Yes.

91. The effect of that bank there when the flood came down was to keep the flood-water from getting on to the western land?—Yes.

92. If that flood-water had got on to the western land it would naturally have carried the silt on to the western land; but the effect of that bank has been to carry the flood-water back on the eastern side, and carry the silt there too?—Yes.

93. If it had a free course on the western side without the bank, as it had formerly, that water naturally would have gone over the western lands, and deposited the silt there. When the bank was erected there it was an impediment which stopped the water and the silt; and has that been carried on to the East Taieri?—There has been a lot of silt carried back on to East Taieri.

94. Have you been damaged by that bank?—I should think the people in East Taieri would say that that bank has damaged them to some extent. It is only natural to suppose that.

95. Would you also assert that that bank which has harmed the eastern people has materially benefited the western people?—Yes, no doubt. The West Taieri people must maintain that bank at the expense to some extent of East Taieri. That is the only state of affairs that can exist, because the bank will undoubtedly be maintained. It must be, because there is a very large area of West Taieri depending on it for protection.

96. If you built a bank on the east bank of the river, that might have the effect of putting the water and silt on to the other side?—Yes.

97. If it is carried out to sea it does no harm, but if it goes back to the eastern lands it does harm?—That is doubtful. Mr. Kirkland, who lives there, does not object very much. He says the silt has a beneficial effect. It seems to be of such a nature that it is making the land fertile. Mr. Kirkland is right on the river-bank, and he does not object to an occasional flood. There is no doubt, whatever the Committee may think about the matter, that it will be agreed on all hands that the West Taieri bank must be maintained, because on it depends a considerable area, and in fact it has been there so long now that they have a legal right to maintain it and will not allow it to be taken down. Whatever the East Taieri people or anybody else may think, they will insist on the bank being kept there, because it is their protection. Away back in the sixties the action of the flood was different from what it is now. It used to go up from lower West Taieri. It did not overflow where it crosses the plain, but at Henley, some miles lower down. The position has been altered to some extent so far as East Taieri is concerned. It is natural to suppose that the erection of a bank on one side of the river would have the effect of driving the water back. There is another thing I wish to add. Speaking generally, the water gets away pretty quickly from East Taieri side. There may be a big flood to-day, and to-morrow it may be down considerably. As it gets away so quickly the farmers on the river-bank do not feel it so much as the West Taieri people, who are not very much, if anything, above the sea-level.

98. I understand that the ratepayers on the eastern side wish to get out of this drainage-area because they claim, first of all, that it is not doing them any good?—That is so.

99. And, secondly, that there is a large area in their district that not only is receiving no benefit, but rather wants irrigation in place of drainage?—Yes, a considerable area of high land, which cannot receive any benefit, no matter what is done.

100. Now, you must have some reason for wishing to get out of this drainage-area, because it is an established fact that you cannot limit to a very small area the district that is going to be benefited by any drainage-works?—Yes.