

49. *Mr. Ell.*] Roughly, what would be the rateable value of the district that you say it might be desirable to form into a separate drainage district?—I am not able to say.

50. Can you tell me the area there that you propose to cut out of the drainage district?—No, I am not able to tell you that.

51. When the Taieri River gets in flood, does it spread over the eastern side?—Yes, rushes on and works havoc on the low part.

52. Then, in the event of the Taieri River ever spreading its banks?—It would injure that low portion near the river. The settlers themselves have made a cut through to the river and drained the low part, and now the water comes through in a great volume in that cut in flood-time.

53. In the area that you propose to cut out, has any money been spent on drainage-works?—I am not able to answer that question. I have not been on the Taieri for some time and do not know what the Drainage Board has done.

54. Do the petitioners comprise the whole of the people in the proposed area to be severed?—I am not able to say who have signed. I believe about twelve or thirteen out of about 250 are opposed to being cut out.

55. *Mr. Witty.*] Would the number of settlers in the area that would be benefited by drainage be sufficient to form a Drainage Board of their own without drawing on the outlying portions—the fifteen people or whatever number may be in the wet area?—To handle the problem themselves?

56. Yes?—I could not answer that.

57. You do not think there would be sufficient people to do so?—It is rather a small area to handle a river of the magnitude of the Taieri.

58. It is only to back the water, I take it?—Yes, to keep the water back.

59. I think it was said that two hundred petitioned against being included in this area. What is the total number of individuals on the eastern side that are affected?—I cannot give that information. Those that I speak of object entirely to be rated, because they cannot get any benefit at all.

60. Are there any other streams besides the Silverstream that go down into the Taieri?—Yes, there is the Owhiro River and the Mill Creek. The Owhiro on the south side flows direct into the river, but I do not know where the Mill Creek flows into.

61. Do they overflow the land in any way?—The one I know best is the Owhiro, and I have not known of it silting up and flooding.

62. And the only floods that you get are from the backing-up of the Taieri River?—Yes, that is where the trouble comes in.

63. Before this wall on the west side was erected did you get some floods?—Well, I can only speak from hearsay on that question. The settlers on the east side say No.

64. It would be impossible to build a wall on the east side and confine the water for fear of the water getting in behind?—It would be possible to build a wall, but it would be out of all reason on account of the expense.

65. And then there would be the probable expense of taking the wall down again?—Yes.

66. *Mr. Hogg.*] Are those two hundred objectors landowners?—No, owners and occupiers.

67. I presume the objection of the petitioners is that they are compelled to pay rates for works that, instead of benefiting them, are doing them damage?—Yes, that is the point—doing them no good whatever.

68. *Mr. Forbes.*] What sort of work is proposed in this drainage scheme—is it the embankment principle?—There would be an embankment, but there is no scheme before us.

69. You have not actually got the work done?—I believe certain work has been done, but to what extent I am unable to say. I have not examined it.

70. You really do not know much about the district?—No, I do not know what the Board has done.

71. *The Chairman.*] You were in the Government employ, were you not?—Yes.

72. Were you not sent to make a report on this?—Yes. I reported once by your instructions on the application of Mr. Douglas, who was either at the time or subsequently Chairman of the county. He wanted that big gap filled up that was made in the early days, and through which the Taieri goes now. He also wanted sluice-boxes put up and controlled so that the river could be kept back.

73. What was the nature of your report?—I was not in favour of the proposal. It is a very big problem, and any little tinkering like that is only making matters worse: it wants to be handled boldly.

74. Do you know anything about the scheme that they propose at the present time?—No, I have never seen any scheme.

75. You do not know what they are going to do?—No.

76. *Mr. Witty.*] The position is that the two hundred petitioners allowed themselves to be driven by fifteen or twenty who wanted the works done?—Yes, that is the position as it appears to me.

77. Why did they allow it to be done?—The minority ruled in that case. Mr. Allen knows how these people got up petitions and how the petitions failed, but I cannot give you the particulars.

78. *Cross-examined by Mr. MacGregor.*] You gave evidence when this matter was before the Assessment Court at Mosgiel?—Yes.

79. On the review of the classification?—Yes.

80. And some weeks were spent by the Assessment Court in hearing evidence as to whether or not what are called the dry lands in the North and East Taieri should be removed into Class "D," which is the class which is not rated. Is that not so?—I could not tell you that.