

81. But you are aware that was the question that was before the Magistrate with regard to the lands you represent now—the Corporation tenants' land?—We objected to being rated at all, and I told the Magistrate that if it had been sooner I should have been there objecting in my own right. We did not want the land in any class at all, because, although it may be in Class "D" to-day, it may be in "A" or "B" to-morrow.

82. But that was the question that was before the Magistrate, was it not?—I cannot tell you.

83. Do you not know what question the Magistrate adjudicated on? Was it not a question whether or not your tenants and those on the high lands should be rated at all?—We did not want to be rated at all.

84. Was not that the question before the Magistrate?—The question before the Court was that we did not want to be included in the district.

85. And the Magistrate held that you should?—The Magistrate practically upheld the classifiers.

86. I am asking you what took place before the Court. The Magistrate upheld the classifiers upon the whole; but do you remember what the question was that was before the Court?—We were objecting to the classification—we did not want to be included at all.

87. That was the question before the Court?—Yes.

88. And the Court upheld the classifiers upon the whole?—That is your evidence.

89. Do you know what the decision of the Court was?—I know that the Court backed up the original classification generally.

DONALD REID, Jun., examined. (No. 4.)

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee desire you to explain how the Taieri Drainage Board Bill was brought on, and what information was brought forward when it was agreed to?—Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—There has been trouble over this Taieri drainage for many years. I represented the Taieri District in Parliament for six years, beginning in 1902. In 1903 Mr. James Allen and myself called a meeting at Henley of all the Boards on the West Taieri side. This meeting was called to see whether some arrangement could be made for the different Boards to amalgamate. That was only a meeting called to deal with the West Taieri side, and not with the East Taieri side at all. We did not succeed in getting anything done, and consequently another meeting was called at Outram, at which they made some progress towards effecting an arrangement for amalgamation. Later on there was an expression of opinion that if we could get the Government to take the matter up, probably that would be the best way to arrange for the amalgamation. In consequence of that I wrote to Mr. Seddon, and put before him the difficulties in connection with the matter—that there were four Boards there fighting one another, and spending money to very little use, and that that seemed to be the regular course of things unless amalgamation was effected. I also suggested that there were means by which the Shand estate, which was the largest estate which would be benefited by any expenditure, could be taken over by the Government under the land-for-settlements scheme, and that after the land had been improved it could be let out in areas to tenants. Cabinet decided to have a Commission appointed to look into the matter, and in consequence of that a Commission was appointed which those members who were in the House at the time will remember. The Commission consisted of Mr. Barron, Crown Lands Commissioner; Mr. Cruickshank, the Magistrate; Mr. Usher, of the Public Works Department; and Mr. Short, of the Roads Department. Those gentlemen went into the matter, and during the time it was under consideration some representations were made by a small party of ratepayers and electors in the flooded area of the East Taieri. The proposal first made by those persons was that the owners would supply £500 to a fund, the County Council to supply another £500, and the Government to supplement it with another £500, and that they would then form themselves into a separate Board and look after their own drainage. The Government did not see their way to fall in with that arrangement, and it could not be carried out, but the Commission was instructed to take that into consideration as well. The Commission was then in process of being formed, and they were asked to report on the East side as well as the West Taieri side. They reported, and in the schedule to their report they gave the district that they thought ought to be included. They gave it in broad lines, and provided that the land might be classified under the Drainage Act. Class "D" under the Act is land that does not bear rates. I thought that the effect of that would be that they would classify out of the district mentioned by the Commissioners a large area of land that was not going to be benefited, and that the broad lines of demarcation, the boundaries up one road and down another, were given in general terms so as to give the public to understand what district was to be included, because to give it in sectional numbers would be a difficult thing. As soon as ever this was made known, a number of those in the North Taieri—the East and North Taieri are really one in this respect—objected to coming in, and sent a petition to me to present to the House. That petition was presented, but, owing to the Bill not then being down, there was really no Committee to present it to, and it was referred to the Lands Committee, of which our present Chairman was Chairman, and they reported it back to the House. When it was reported back to the House, Mr. McNab said, in reply to a question from myself, "The intention was to appoint a Commission to investigate, and report to the Government what legislation would be necessary. There was no intention whatever to drop the legislation in connection with this very important subject; but, as the honourable gentleman knew himself, there was a division of opinion, even in regard to the report brought down by the Commission, and, when they considered that the Bill would have to be sent to a Committee, and the objectors heard, before legislation could go on, they would see that the possibility of getting that legislation through this year vanished into thin air. That was why it was impossible to bring down the Bill." In the following year, and near the end of the session, the Government suddenly brought in the Bill. It was put through in very quick time, and no