

an unjust provision put on the statute-book. There are 8,000 acres on the west side and 2,000 on the east side. Mr. Shand got on to the Drainage Board and got his tenants alongside him, and then the Act got on to the statute-book. We sent in a petition, but I do not know where it got to; and if there are any of those 235 petitioners who are not genuine ratepayers, I am willing to give my bit of land to the Government to do what they like with. In fact, two of Mr. Shand's tenants said the Board could not do any good for them. When Mr. Shand got on the Drainage Board and got his tenants to support him, they engaged an engineer at £800 and a clerk at £300. I do not know where the engineer came from, but I see in one of his reports that he was going away to the Nile to see how some of the sluice-boxes were decked. He has now landed us in for an expenditure of £10,000, and has done nothing for me. Most of the money has been spent in that swamp ground of Shand's, most of which was got for 2s. 6d. an acre, while I had to pay £30 an acre for mine. The plain in the early days was one sheet of water. To show what I say is correct, I will read what Sir Robert Stout said on the matter: "At once, I may say, there are millions of acres in the colony that require draining—or, if not millions of acres, at any rate hundreds of thousands of acres; and, if all the land that cannot be at once used is to be sold simply because it takes capital to fit it for proper use, I am afraid that most of the land in this country will have to be sold for equally paltry sums. I think the honourable member referred to political economy in support of the sale, but he does not give his authors. I shall refer him to works in which this very question is brought up—to Carey's works, and to the Duke of Argyll in reply to Professor Levi. They show that the most valuable lands of a State are not first taken up, but they are the last taken up. Honourable members can see for themselves. Take, for example, the district known in Otago, and, I believe, well known to honourable members, as an agricultural district, the Taieri: what was the land first taken up there? It was not the undrained swamp which boats could sail over, but it was the hilly country. The first settlers did not venture to go near the swamp, and it was only when they got more capital, and had a better market for their produce, that the swamps were taken up and drained." They got it for nothing. In regard to the lagoon where they made the cut in the river, it was Mr. Shand's father who engineered that, and now they want us to spend money in filling it up again. I will never give in to them—death before dishonour. My land is right in the centre of the Taieri—I have some in the North Taieri and some in the East Taieri. I have seen the land in flood in 1877, and I left it in disgust and went Home to the Old Country when it was one sheet of water from Waihola to Mosgiel, and when there were no banks to hold it in, and they will never hold it in. They seem to have got themselves into a corner. We sent a petition to Parliament, but we never knew where it went to—it was never looked at. There is the Mill Creek that runs through my land, and both the Mill Creek and the Silverstream flood those low swamp lands of Shand's. The Mill Creek runs right through my place, and that is the reason they brought me into the drainage-area. When it went down a certain distance Mr. Shand blocked it and would not let it go, and the Road Board properly sued him for damages. Trustees were appointed and were offered a sum of £350 to allow the water to go down through them, which was accepted, but now the water is not allowed to go down. On the east side the cut there was also made by them. The West Taieri people put in a bank from Allanton to protect themselves, and that throws all the water up on to the east side. It is very hard where a man has a great quantity of land and fifty or sixty tenants on it: he could almost get a church built if he wanted it. The ratepayers at the last election let him see how things stood, and they turned him out. I want to be cut out of the drainage-area altogether. The Board sent me a notice two or three times about the rates, but never summoned me to make me pay. There was at one time trouble in Ireland of this nature, and *Punch* stated that if they did not pay they would be made to pay, and when they did pay there would be the devil to pay, because then they turned round and shot them, and that will be the case here in the Taieri if we are not cut out.

JAMES GOW examined. (No. 11.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A farmer.

2. And a ratepayer?—Yes, within the drainage district in the Silverstream Riding. My land is a mile and a half north of Mosgiel. I have lived there all my life, having been born in the district. I know the district intimately, and the part where I live is, I think, over 100 ft. above sea-level and quite 80 ft. above any flood-level. When this proposed drainage-area was suggested first, I signed a petition objecting to being included in it, and I have signed all the petitions and protests since.

3. Do the floods reach your property up there?—No, a flood has never been within two or three miles of my property.

4. *Mr. Forbes.*] Is your land classified?—Yes. I have 600 acres in the drainage-area—325 in Class "D" and 250 in Class "C." I appealed against the classification in Class "C," and, with the exception of a small area which was mountain land, all this land is hilly land 250 ft. above sea-level, and it was put into Class "D." I hold that if I am put into Class "D" I am still liable to have my land reclassified and put into another class if the Board changed. The Silverstream runs along the northern boundary of my property. The straight line on the plan was the artificial cut made in 1861 or 1862, then the road Mosgiel to Outram was made at right angles to the natural fall of the land, and they put the material from the sides into the centre of the road. They then made a ditch to take the water through, and the settlers in drying their ground put their water into that, and dug a ditch right up the plain to the north end of Section 2. From there up was never touched by anybody—never a spade was put in it. It was a natural course where the water goes. A point has been made out of the fact that a large amount of gravel is washed out from this cut and goes down on the land below, but the part that was cut right to the top of the artificial cut is planted with willows thickly on each side, and it was piled. For the last twenty-five years, I