

utter nonsense. There we had separating us in the past what was a double 6 ft. ditch which has been converted into a channel in which the torrent runs down, and in some instances it is now 20 ft. and even 3 and 4 chains wide, and where is the gravel? It speaks for itself. It is a wonder that people can have the effrontery to come before a Parliamentary Committee and ask that they should be taken out of the district and not contribute one penny towards any works. Now a word as to what the result of cutting them out of the district will be. No one can read the special Act of Parliament without seeing that the intention of the Royal Commission, which was given effect to by a special Act, was that this Drainage Board should have very extensive powers, that it should deal with this problem of the drainage and protection of the Taieri Plain in a comprehensive manner; and what I submit is this: that if this part of the district is excluded, that idea will be at an end. We should simply have nothing more than so many Drainage Boards of the ordinary kind amalgamated into one Drainage Board, and the idea of dealing with the problem in a comprehensive manner would be entirely at an end, because, as the evidence will show, a large proportion of the expenditure by the Board must be upon works such as widening the river where it has contracted. That is work which would necessarily be beneficial to the lands in the East Taieri. Another point referred to by Messrs. Lundius and Buckhurst in their report is a storage-basin in the mountains, and they say that they saw no signs of any intention on the part of the Board to even entertain that idea, but the reply of the Board to their report shows that that has not been overlooked. Obviously it would be impossible for the Board to carry out any of those schemes for dealing with the problem if the other district is to be taken out, because those works are of such a nature that they would necessarily be more beneficial to the people of the East Taieri whose lands are not banked than they would be to the people whose lands are banked. I submit the proposition is so obvious that it is almost self-evident. To take this part of the district out would be reducing to a nullity the special Act of Parliament and the conclusions of the Royal Commission.

1. *The Chairman.*] When the county was making those improvements on the east side, did they do anything on the west side, or what proportion did the west side get as against the east side?—On the west side there were River Boards and Drainage Boards, and none on the east side, and they levied their own rates and spent their own money. That accounts for the difference between the east and west. I understand that the policy of the County Council throughout has been, where there were Drainage Boards, not to interfere with the drainage at all.

2. Are there any of the petitioners here who were members of the County Council at the time?—Mr. Douglas.

3. *Mr. Allen.*] You spoke of a host of witnesses who were at the Assessment Court?—Yes.

4. All those witnesses were on our side in favour of the objectors, were they not?—Yes.

5. And you called three classifiers?—Yes.

6. Two of whom said the North Taieri should not have been in the district?—That is one point I intended to refer to, but forgot. It is not quite the usual or proper thing for the statement of a witness to be referred to without the actual statement being produced, but I remember Mr. O'Neill being asked the question as to his opinion before he was a classifier. My impression was that he thought all the lands to the north of the West Taieri Road should not have been included in the district. The impression that may have been conveyed to the Committee is that Mr. O'Neill was of opinion that none of the East Taieri should have been included; but that was not so. Mr. O'Neill was under the impression that none of the works which the Board intended to carry out would be beneficial to the owners of the dry land. The correct view is what has been put before the Committee, that the owners of the dry lands must in turn benefit by the works to be carried out.

7. *Mr. Witty.*] In regard to the Silverstream converting Mr. Renton's land into a swamp, what was the state of the land formerly?—When Mr. Renton bought it seventeen years ago it was a very fine farm, and he gave £25 an acre for it.

8. And what was it originally before the wall was put up?—I do not know.

MICHAEL ELLIOTT examined. (No. 14.)

*Mr. MacGregor:* What are you?

*Witness:* Engineer to the Taieri Drainage Board.

*Mr. MacGregor:* Will you make a statement to the Committee?

*Witness:* Mr. Chairman and gentlemen,—You have already gone over a good deal of the evidence that I had intended to give, but I would like as briefly as possible to call your attention to a few points in connection with the Taieri Plain. I prepared a plan before I came here which I now produce. I do not think there is any dispute between the parties as to the plan itself. The levels I have marked on are as many as we have got, and they indicate heights above low-water sea-level. I might just briefly explain the plan, which shows that the Taieri Plain is surrounded with hills on three sides, with lakes at the western end, the river flowing out of the plain through a gorge to the sea. It comes down from the Otago mountains, and then throws itself on to the plain, then through hills, and discharges into the sea. In flood-time the floods submerge the plain on the West Taieri area to the 10 ft. or 12 ft. contour above sea-level. On the West Taieri side we have streams coming down from mountains about 2,000 ft. or 3,000 ft. high. The eastern end of the plain is largely supplied with water from the Silverstream, Mill Creek, and Owhiro, and numerous other small creeks which flow through the plain and concentrate on the lower portion of the area. The discharge of the Silverstream has been described to you already as a mere fleabite, but I am not prepared to take that view of the matter. I have made some investigations as far as my time has permitted, and it is a very considerable stream in time of flood. The reason is that the hills in the catchment rise up to about 1,300 ft. The rains falling on the mountains, which are very precipitous, immediately flow off, causing heavy floods in the stream up to something like