

That report drawn up by the subcommittee was submitted first to a full meeting of the Board, and a large majority approved of it; three, I think, dissented, but the Government nominees were unanimous in assenting to it. In the earlier history of this movement, I think I am right in saying that the Royal Commission was set up originally to report upon the West Taieri matters, but some of the East Taieri ratepayers wrote asking that their grievances might be looked into with a view of forming a Board for their relief. Amongst those ratepayers who wrote asking for that were Messrs. Blackie, William Shand, William Kirkland, and William Kirk.

10. *Mr. Allan.*] Did they not refer specifically to the low lands?—I believe they did. When those four gentlemen wrote asking for something to be done, they evidently did so because they were in a bad state, and Mr. William Shand said yesterday that they were in as bad if not a worse condition than the East Taieri. They must have wanted something badly, or else they would never have made that request. Furthermore, we have Mr. Blackie practically at all the Board meetings, either writing or appearing in person, showing the necessity for works to be done to give him immediate relief, and at the last or second-to-last meeting of the Board Mr. Blackie was there with others on the same errand, and he said that the position was getting so acute that if nothing was done within a month—I think he was specific in stating the time—he would have to take steps to protect himself. In other words, he threatened the Board with a claim for compensation if some redress was not given him; and that is one of the gentlemen who places his name to the petition asking for severance. It has also been stated that no reasonable opportunity was given to the people of North Taieri to state their objections and reasons why they should not be included in the drainage-area. Messrs. Gow, Kirkland, and Donald Reid are the principal landholders in the North Taieri—at least, they are amongst the largest there—and they had ample opportunity of stating their case before the Royal Commission. It has been pointed out to me that any one would have the right to say that he did not know the Royal Commission was sitting; but that could not be so, because it was advertised in all the papers, and every one knew what the purpose of that Commission was. The last point I wish to touch upon is the effect of severance. It is evident that the Royal Commission took a wide view of the whole matter. The matter of the drainage of the Taieri Plain, of course, is a matter of gigantic importance, and interests everybody concerned, and if, after we go back, this Committee should decide that it is a right and proper thing to separate the two districts and enable the East Taieri to go out of the present Board's control, it will mean of necessity the curtailment of the powers now vested in the Board for comprehensively dealing with all the problems in connection with the Taieri Plain. It is a little over twelve months since the election of the members of the Board took place, and it has been asked what works have been done by the Taieri Drainage Board since its constitution. I would just like to say in that respect that a matter dealing with such gigantic issues, and meaning perhaps a fairly large expenditure, should not be rushed without due consideration. Of course, the position necessitated the appointment of an engineer of high qualifications, and it would of necessity take that gentleman some considerable time to get over the district, get levels taken and checked, get contour-lines taken of the whole plain, and a knowledge of all matters generally, before he could come forward and place a scheme before the Board for acceptance or rejection.

11. *The Chairman.*] You mentioned that Messrs. Lundius and Buckhurst had raised the classification on some of the lands higher than the Board had?—Yes. There was only one case in the East Taieri, but there were several in the West Taieri. There was one case in the West Taieri where the Board had by agreement placed most of that land in "B" classification, and a very small portion of it in "A"; but under Messrs. Lundius and Buckhurst's classification the whole of that had been placed under Class "A." That is Mr. John Sutherland's farm at West Taieri.

12. With regard to the places raised, they were principally on the east side?—No; there was only one on the east side that they put higher than the Board's classification—that was Mr. Gow's.

13. Was there anything in the report which showed what induced them to raise it?—No.

14. *Mr. Hogg.*] Is the scheme for protective works completed or nearly completed?—I might say that in connection with the Silverstream the Engineer submitted not quite a complete scheme, but a fairly complete scheme, for the control of the Silverstream; but when it came before the Board we had received a communication from the Under-Secretary for Lands asking the Board not to enter into any expensive works until this matter of the petitioners was decided. We agreed to accede to that request, and to stay our hands till the end of October. After that we considered the tenders, but we decided they were too high. From the discussion that arose, although there was no motion before the chair, it was practically decided that the Board could by buying their own plant and doing the work themselves execute the work cheaper than any contractor could. That is the position that we are in at the present moment in connection with the East Taieri. Practically this petition coming up has tied our hands in connection with the prosecution of any permanent works. Then we have cleaned out the 46 chains that I mentioned; but that is only to cost something over £200. That is only a temporary thing, because if nothing is done higher up the stream the first flood that comes down will practically fill it up again. One of the Board's operations, if they are going to control both east and west, must be to control this gravel which comes down from the higher reaches, by weir-walls or something of that kind. That has been discussed by the Government and by our Board. That is one of the first things we must undertake, because if you create open channels lower down they will not be effective permanently if you allow this scouring process to continue the work of excavation in the lower reaches.

15. Really the scheme is still in abeyance?—Quite so.

16. And you have had no opportunity of ascertaining whether the works are going to be effective?—No. I produce a copy of the statement of expenditure to date in connection with the East and West Taieri. Of course, the West shows the greater amount, but the greater portion of that was incurred in connection with the flood of July, 1908. It practically cost £5,000 coping with the flood and reinstating the embankments. The East Taieri expenditure is £1,619 6s. 5d.