

35. Is the effect of that to back the water of the Taieri Stream?—I have no doubt it would under certain conditions back the Taieri River flood. My contention is this: that, had it not been for the original works done by the people higher up, then, even assuming we did not contend that there is no back water from the operations of the Taieri River, and even assuming that the Taieri River itself backed the Silverstream water, my contention is that none of that gravel could come down there, backwash or no backwash, if the original works had not been constructed higher up. The gravel could not have come down if it had not a way of coming. It would not matter if the Taieri was backing it if no gravel was coming down—no lodgment could get there.

36. *Mr. Witty.*] You admit that the backing-up of the Taieri is a factor in keeping the shingle bank in the cut?—Yes, that is so—in the Silverstream channel.

37. How often does your Board meet?—Once a month.

38. Are the Government nominees there at each meeting?—Every meeting.

39. You have four members on the west and two on the east?—That is so.

40. Have you any connection with the Board?—I am Chairman of the Board.

41. Then it is since you became Chairman that you altered your mind about the east being joined to the west?—No.

42. But in giving evidence before the Commission, I understood you said you were against the east being joined to the west?—Yes.

43. And you have since changed your mind?—Yes, and I also said that if the conditions as they existed at the time the question was asked were the same to-day, then I should still be of that opinion.

44. But if you were born in the district you ought to have known the condition of the district?—No, that was not the point. I still say that if the two districts are separated and they decide to raise their own rates for each district, then there will be a never-ending friction and confusion. That was my reason for saying that I preferred the separate districts.

45. But at present there is friction?—Oh, yes!

46. And just as strong as it would be if there were two Boards?—That I could not tell you.

47. But there is friction?—Yes.

48. Do you not think that each side of the river would be able to look after its own work?—That is rather a difficult problem.

49. Then you think that those on the east side have not sense enough to look after their own affairs?—I do not say that; that is not my contention.

50. Do you not think that the east or the west are able to look after their own affairs without being joined?—Yes, if the Taieri River was not between them then I would say, certainly.

51. They would not want a Board at all then?—Oh, yes!

52. But there is bound to be friction in any case. Do you not think that the people of both sides could form Boards of their own and look after them? According to the evidence there has been no Drainage Board on the east side at all—the County Council simply looked after the work?—No, the County Council has practically done nothing.

53. How did they get on then?—The point is this: On the East Taieri side, under the old mode of procedure the establishment of Boards was done by a vote of the ratepayers of that district. The position would be this: that the small area of the East Taieri under those conditions would have to control the whole of the drainage-area and the whole of the drainage problem of the North and East Taieri.

54. Do you think it is fair under the present conditions to tax the whole of the east for the benefit of this small portion?—It is not altogether for that area only. There is an indirect benefit to themselves—the controlling, and maintenance, and upkeep of this channel.

55. But it has been going on for thirty years, and there has been no tax until now?—Yes. Of course, until Parliament stepped in, in accordance with the recommendation of the Royal Commission, the people had no opportunity of doing anything.

56. But by petition they could have formed a Board at any time?—Yes, that is so, but only for a small area.

57. You spoke of a flood when your father could not get to see his father: was not that the 1868 flood, when the whole country was under water, when all the dry lands practically all over New Zealand were practically covered with water?—As a matter of fact, I do not think the 1868 flood in the Taieri River was much greater than the one we had last July.

58. Did the people on the east side of the Taieri River know that that Bill was being rushed through in 1908?—That is a matter on which I have no knowledge.

59. You did not know that the Bill was being put through yourself?—No, I did not, not until the whole matter appeared in the newspaper.

60. Are you living on the east side?—No, on the west side.

61. And you did not know that a Bill was being put through to bring in the whole of the east side?—I knew the Royal Commission was taking evidence with a view of doing that. The whole trend of their questions pointed to that—we all knew that.

62. But you did not know the Bill was going through Parliament?—No.

63. Then the people on the east side would not know either?—That is so, I suppose.

64. Then they would not have an opportunity to object?—No.

65. *Mr. Forbes.*] The drainage interest on each side of the Taieri River is completely different, is it not?—With the exception of the control of the Taieri River.

66. On the western side you have got banks formed?—Yes.

67. You do not anticipate doing anything more on the western side?—I should not say in the matter of embankments. The main problem, I would take it, is the control of our internal drainage.

68. On the western side?—Yes.