

127. And do you admit that over twenty witnesses expressed their views exactly as you did against a united district?—Exactly so, and probably for the same reason.

128. Including yourself and Mr. D. T. Shand, who drafted that letter to the Under-Secretary?—Yes.

129. So that the report of the Royal Commission, which Mr. MacGregor says is your case, was admittedly against the whole of the evidence, is that so?—Yes, I take it that that must be admitted. We do not dispute that. Evidently the Commissioners' views must have been that the evidence was not in accordance with fact. That must of necessity have been the view the Royal Commission took.

130. It was only a question of opinion?—Quite so.

131. The only point I wish to establish is that the fact remains that the report was against the evidence?—Yes.

132. At the classification which took place immediately afterwards, was the decision of the Magistrate against the evidence of a host of witnesses, as Mr. MacGregor admitted?—Quite so.

133. You agree that from the beginning the people have been fighting against this matter, both those on the high and those on the low lands, but their evidence has not been accepted?—Oh, no! I think you are wrong there. The evidence of the people on the low lands was not antagonistic to a Drainage Board being formed. I think the bulk of the evidence of the people on the low lands was that something was necessary to be done.

134. You refer to Mr. Blackie and his petitioners; but did they not apply to have their low lands formed into a drainage district to deal with their own affairs?—That was not to us, that was to Parliament when the Royal Commission was being constituted. That never appeared before the Taieri Drainage Board as an official document.

135. You do not say they applied to have the whole of the East Taieri included in the drainage district?—Mr. Blackie was asked what he thought should constitute and be included in the East Taieri, and he said that the area should extend right up to the North Taieri—to the Blackbridge.

136. In regard to the damage done by the gravel lower down, you know the cut is a very old one?—That is from the lagoon to the river?

137. Yes?—That is so.

138. Do you agree with Mr. Renton when he says that millions of tons of gravel have been taken out?—I know there has been a lot taken out.

139. And Mr. Renton said yesterday that he bought his property seventeen years ago, and that twelve years ago the trouble with the gravel began?—Yes.

140. So that this trouble has arisen within the last twelve years?—According to his evidence, yes.

141. Although this stream was in that state for over thirty years as it was when he bought his property?—No, that is not a fair assumption. That is a channel that I did not cover in my evidence. The whole channel was gravel right up to the lagoon. Naturally the photo shows that that channel was not silted up, and if that channel was not silted up when he bought his property, then it is a fair assumption that it was provided with proper drainage.

142. Is this a fair assumption: that Mr. Couston says it must be the gravel away from the district that is doing the damage, because he says that is where it is coming from?—There was a mile and a half of the Silverstream absolutely unprotected on the banks.

#### WILLIAM JOHN JENKINS CHARTERS examined. (No. 17.)

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

2. Will you make your statement to the Committee?—I was not born in the Taieri, but I was taken there when I was eighteen months old. I shall be forty-nine years of age next February, and I have lived on the plain all that time, eight years of which was at the lower end of the plain—the west. For forty years I have lived on the farm I now occupy—namely, Urie Park, which is on the east side. I may tell you that one-half of Urie Park is in the Silverstream Subdivision, and the other half in the Owhiro. I have another farm higher up also in the Silverstream Subdivision, half of which is in the drainage-area, and the other half is on the hillside and not in the district. My land is in Block VIII, East Taieri, and I occupy Sections 1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. The Mosgiel land is supposed to be in the dry-land area. The division of Silverstream and Owhiro Subdivisions is land between Sections 3 and 4 of Block VIII. I might say that my neighbour has 15 chains off one of the lower sections, and to let you see how dry that land was in the early days, he bought that land in order to get access to the stream to get water for his stock.

3. Is it not dry sometimes now?—No, it is not. The Silverstream runs right through the farm. I know every foot of the Silverstream from the river to the Blackbridge. I have been over it and through it times without number, and I know it better than any man here in connection with this matter. I have lived on it for over forty years, and, having a farm through which it runs, I ought to know it well. The natural state of the stream running through Urie Park was a wandering, narrow, deep stream, with very little gravel at the bottom. The white gravel with water above it gave the water a silvery appearance, and therefore it derived its name Silverstream. Now at the present time it is not a stream at all, it is a sludge-channel.

4. What has made it into a sludge-channel?—The operations of the people up above making this 12 ft. cut and then the bringing-down of the gravel, and the Provincial Government also helped with that. You have heard a good deal about the West Taieri embankment causing the sludging-up of this channel, but that has nothing whatever to do with it. I say that most emphatically. The West Taieri water comes out of the cut, leaves the mouth of the cut, and spreads on land up to the same level. We have from the Gladfield-Owhiro Road down to the mouth of the cut over a mile, and in that mile there is fully 13 ft. Shortly before 1875 the Provincial Council made a road