

SAMUEL JAMESON LAUGHLIN examined. (No. 9.)

1. *Mr. Mueller.*] Your name is Samuel Jameson Laughlin, and you are a farmer residing at Netherton?—Yes; I own a farm there of 207 acres, freehold—Waihou West Block No. 1B, Lot 3.
2. How much of that land is affected by the silt?—About 2 acres along the bank of the river.
3. Does your land flood?—Yes, from the Waihou.
4. You are down below the Junction, at Netherton?—Yes.
5. What effect has that flooding upon the pasture of your land?—It destroys the pasture.
6. Does that make a difference to your milk cheques?—Yes, the flooding kills the grass. I do not supply milk; I make butter. Three years ago after the flood I had to turn my cows out dry; they went right off the milk. I had to turn off thirteen cows.
7. What difference did that make to your receipts?—It took away practically my living.
8. Your living fell from a fairly good living to practically nothing?—To very little.
9. This last flood in March—what effect did that have on your land?—It did a good deal of damage, but nothing like the flood of three years ago.
10. Did it come as high as the flood of three years ago?—Yes, pretty near, I think.
11. Why did it not do so much damage as the flood of three years ago?—Because I had not quite so much crop.
12. Because the grass and stock were not there to be damaged?—Yes.
13. Subsequently to the 1907 flood, did you get rid of some of your stock?—Yes, I parted with a good few. I had to do so.
14. Did you part with them at a loss?—Yes.
15. There are some outfall drains on your land?—Yes.
16. Do you find them affected with silt?—Yes; there are three drain-outlets affected with silt. They are affected by being closed up at the junction with the main river.
17. Have you cleared them out at times?—One of them I have cleared out pretty often—I may say two of them; and the county has cleared them out.
18. Has that clearing been effective, or are they filled in again?—The next fresh fills them again—not the whole drain, but partially.
19. How long have you been on this land?—About eleven years; but I have owned the block for seventeen years—since July, 1894.
20. Prior to your residing there, did you often visit the place?—Occasionally I came up to have a look at it.
21. Was anybody else in occupation of the land?—No.
22. When did you first notice this land being flooded or damaged?—In the big flood about three years ago—the summer flood of 1907.
23. Prior to that, had your land been flooded?—No, I do not think so—not to a great extent—nothing big enough to draw my attention to it.
24. During these floods have you suffered loss in any other way than you have mentioned?—Yes; potatoes, oats, and bee-hives. I also lost three head of cattle, and my fences were damaged.
25. Can you give any estimate of the damage you have suffered on account of these floods and silting?—Yes, I had an estimate made out, but I have not got it with me. It is not the amount of silt we complain of at Netherton—it is the overflow of the Waihou.
26. What is that caused by?—By the junction of the Waihou and Ohinemuri Rivers being blocked up by mining *débris*.
27. What river frontage have you got?—About 22 chains.
28. What will be the result as regards your land if nothing is done to remedy this evil?—I think it is only a matter of time, and we shall be in the same position as our friends above the Junction.
29. You know the river frontage along your property: has that shallowed or filled up in any way?—I have a sample of tailings with me which I took off my river-bank. I took it this morning. [Sample produced.] There is a similar class of tailings on the opposite bank. The sample was taken off the river-bank.
30. How far is your land from the junction of the two rivers?—About seven miles below the junction.
31. Is there much of that sort of stuff on the river-bank?—Yes; there is a good deal of it shelving towards the channel.
32. Do you think there is a good deal of filling-in of the river itself?—Yes, of the banks.
33. Both sides?—In places, yes.
34. What effect has that had on the navigation of the river?—To use his own words, the captain of the steamer keeps what he calls the gutter, or the channel, which is very narrow, and it takes a man of experience to keep his vessel in it. If he gets out of that he gets fast on the bank.
35. In previous years could vessels have a wider scope in going up and down the river?—I think so.
36. Has the accumulation of tailings opposite your property been increasing lately?—Yes.
37. Can you state whether it has been increasing more this year than it did five years ago?—Yes; there are more tailings there now than there were five years ago. Every big fresh seems to put a new coating on the top.
38. *The Chairman.*] What was the effect of the March flood?—That brought down a considerable lot. It left a solution of tailings—I should call it silt—over the grass.
39. *Mr. Mueller.*] Finer stuff than you used to get?—Yes.
40. When did you first notice the fine stuff?—Principally after the last flood.
41. Have you noticed the fine stuff adhering to the grass?—Yes.
42. Does it easily wash off the grass with a shower of rain?—No, it seems pretty hard to get off.