

(g.) *The Te Aroha Borough Council.*

As regards the Te Aroha Borough, Mr. Gilchrist contended that there is no land-drainage from the borough area into the Waihou River at all. He admitted that the town sewerage is carried into the river, and in a crude state, but he denies that any nuisance is caused thereby or that it does any harm. He admits that navigation on the river to the town wharf is of very great importance indeed, and if a really good and easily navigable waterway were provided it would be well worth paying for; but he contends very strongly that the river-works have so far done harm rather than good. To use his own words, he states, "Our navigation before the public-works scheme came into operation was comparatively good, but it has, unfortunately, been disastrously affected by that scheme." He therefore claims entire exemption for the borough as well as for the counties—at any rate until the navigability of the river is restored to at least its former standard.

(h.) *The Hauraki Plains County Council and other Public Bodies.*

Mr. Porritt represented the Hauraki Plains County Council and quite a number of other minor governing or public bodies. He did not dispute the benefits likely to arise from the scheme, nor the liabilities of the settlers to pay an equitable contribution to the cost of the works, but he contended that the draft rating scheme submitted by the Public Works Department (see Appendix A) would be absolutely ruinous, and would crush the settlers out of existence. He also asked for a larger contribution from the Consolidated Fund, urging, as Mr. Hanna had already done, that the Government, by proclaiming the Ohinemuri River a sludge-channel, had really made themselves responsible for practically all the damage that has been done by the silting of the river.

(i.) *The Thames County Council.*

The Thames County was not represented by counsel, but at one stage of the proceedings Mr. T. W. Rhodes, M.P., appeared by authority of the County Chairman and submitted their case and called evidence. This evidence was to the effect that lands in the Thames County are very little, if at all, subject to flooding from the Waihou River, that no works for their protection are necessary, and that no such works have been carried out, and that the land would be better without them.

(j.) *The Thames Borough Council.*

The Thames Borough was represented by Mr. Clendon, who also represented the Public Works Department. No evidence whatever was called on behalf of the borough, but it transpired during the proceedings that the borough has an endowment of approximately 2,878 acres situated in the Upper Awaitei district, and that the land is subject to flooding from the Waihou River, and will be greatly benefited by the protective stop-bank proposed to be erected under the river-improvement scheme.

CONTENTIONS OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.

*Generally.*

Mr. Clendon, as counsel for the Public Works Department, admitted that the scheme of works now in hand and contemplated would, unfortunately, turn out to be much more costly than the 1910 Commission had any idea of. He stated that it would probably entail a total expenditure of approximately £625,000, and that this large increase in cost is attributable to (1) the 1910 Commission not having sufficient data before it to enable it to estimate the expense at all accurately, and (2) the intervention of the war, which had caused costs to rise tremendously.

He contended that the scheme of works now being carried out is not more, but rather less, extensive than that contemplated by the 1910 Commission, although he admitted that stop-banks 6 ft. high were now to be erected on the Ohinemuri River, and 9 ft. high on the Waihou River, as against only 4 ft. banks allowed for by the 1910 Commission. The present estimate for stop-banks is £297,800, as against the 1910 Commission's estimate of £50,750.