

who will have to pay. The mere fact of merchants telling you such things is not evidence, as they are interested parties in saving so much per ton upon their goods?—The merchants say they would readily pay higher wharfage-rates if they were saved lighterage.

153. *Mr. Allen.*] Mr. Higginson estimates that in five years' time you will have a deficiency of £8,445?—What we propose to do is to ask Parliament to allow us to spend £40,000, so as to bring this work to a useful distance. All we have got to provide is the interest on the £40,000, which will be about £2,000. To raise the money we ask to be allowed to invest the unexpended balance of £60,000. The rate we levy now can pay interest on £100,000. The loan is £200,000. We have deposited in the bank £105,000, and we have £25,000 as a guarantee reserve sinking fund. We have spent £59,000 upon works, and the balance is necessarily what we would have to spend.

154. *Mr. R. Thompson.*] What interest do you get on this £105,000?—On one deposit of £85,000 we are getting  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. from the Union Bank.

155. What interest do you pay on the loan?—Five per cent. The guarantee sinking fund is invested differently by sinking-fund commissioners, and is realising something like  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

156. *Mr. Tanner.*] You have said that if £40,000 more were expended it would mean a trifling addition to the rates?—It might; I do not say it would. Supposing the trade of the district does not increase much, and settlement does not progress, it might involve a trifling addition.

157. What do you call a trifling addition?—If we stop now we would have a fraction less than  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 1d., and if we go on we might have a fraction more than that. The question is, is the district prepared to pay a fraction more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 1d. to get some accommodation, or pay a fraction less than that to get no accommodation?

158. *The Chairman.*] The Act, according to my reading, will not allow you to levy more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. and 1d.?—I cannot say that.

159. *Mr. Tanner.*] If this pier were extended as far as £40,000 would carry it, you would be able, you say, to ship a large quantity of stock?—I have no doubt we would.

160. What size of vessels can you ship stock in?—I think the depth of water would allow of vessels this the "Omapere," the "Ohau," the "Australia," and "Suva" going alongside the pier.

161. Are they large enough to carry stock?—Yes.

162. How many feet do they draw?—I cannot say exactly. The "Ohau" and "Omapere" draw very little water: they are larger vessels than the "Australia" or "Suva," but they are of light draught.

163. It is only contended that vessels of the size of the "Australia" would be able to lie alongside the wharf if it were extended?—Generally speaking, vessels of the size of the Union Company's smaller steamers.

164. Would vessels of the size of the "Australia" be equal to the requirements of the stock trade?—Yes.

165. *The Chairman.*] Do you know the gross amount actually paid for lighterage?—I cannot say. Our Secretary will give you that information.

165A. The "Australia" is about the only boat you have trading to Gisborne?—We have also the "Suva," the "Omapere," and the "Ohau."

166. Could these boats lie at the pier if this extension were made?—I think so, in ordinary weather.

167. Have you seen these petitions presented against the passing of the Bill?—I have not seen them. I have heard of them, though.

168. Are you able to say, looking at this petition [produced], whether the signatures are those of persons who are ratepayers?—[Petition examined by witness.] I should say that all here are ratepayers except the Natives. I do not think the Natives are ratepayers.

169. Why do you think the Natives are not ratepayers?—I signed the rate-roll as Chairman of the Board, and I have no recollection of seeing Native names on it.

170. Here is another petition. [Produced.] Will you examine that?—I see a number of Native names here. I can hardly say whether the names are those of ratepayers or not. Our Secretary will be able to tell you, no doubt. I should like to say this: There has been considerable trouble about this harbour question, but I think the opposition that has been made to it has been of an insignificant character, and I do not think the community have taken any part in it at all.

171. Is it not a fact that some of the members of your Board are strongly opposed to the further prosecution of this work?—They are now; they were not at one time. I have stated in the Board plainly that that divergence of opinion arose from one point. We were always unanimous as to the plans and carrying-out of the works up to a certain stage, when the Board resolved to construct the work by labour under the superintendence of the Engineer. From that time the members who wished to have the work done by contract went into opposition, and have persistently obstructed since.

172. *Mr. T. Thompson.*] Then your Board is divided amongst themselves?—Unfortunately so.

173. *The Chairman.*] Did not one of the members of your Board say at a public meeting recently, "We must tell the Government plainly, if we do not get some assistance we must stop at the end of the year"? Then another gentleman, Mr. Matthewson, said, "That is not what the ratepayers voted for. The present scheme is proved to be only an abortion, and the sooner it is stopped the less we shall have to pay for a useless thing"?—I can only say that Mr. Matthewson and Mr. Dixon are the two men who proposed and seconded that the present plan should be given effect to.

174. Then, again, Mr. Chambers says, "It is plain that all the money upon which we could pay rates would be exhausted by the end of the year. If we went on we might spoil the river. I am not in favour of shutting down the works altogether, but, still, we shall have to stop if there is no assistance given."

*Mr. Sievwright:* May I ask what you are reading from?

*The Chairman:* I am reading from a report of a public meeting held some time in May, as published in the *Poverty Bay Independent*.