

should have been put in possession of the quantity of sand (or as nearly so as possible) supposed to be likely to come in, as ascertained by reliable data, before he is asked to give an opinion as to the result of carrying out the work to the point here indicated. The fact that he was not put in possession of such a calculation as to the quantity of sand on the eastern side of the breakwater prevents his speaking authoritatively as to whether sand is likely to come round the end of the work from the eastern side. It seemed to me as if Mr. Blackett would not approve of the work when carried out to the point indicated, if it were to be regarded as a complete work; but even then, if we had 13½ft. of water, the work would still be of great advantage to the port in the meantime, and we hope, in course of time, to carry it to completion—that is, the complete plan as authorised, if not further. Indeed, it is one of the particular advantages of this plan that the work is capable of being extended from time to time as circumstances permit, and be still available and of great service as the work progresses, even without putting a turn on it as Captain Sinclair suggests. The next point is as to the benefit likely to accrue from this work to the harbour and district. I would point out that this district has been settled only about fifteen years. When I went there first the number of sheep was between thirty and forty thousand. But from the returns of the 31st May, 1887, the number of sheep was 452,394. Eighteen years ago it was unsafe to live there. After Te Kooti's raid nearly the whole of the European population had to leave. The whole of the development which has taken place has accrued within fifteen years. The number of sheep in the other twenty-one counties comprising the Auckland Provincial District is only 299,479, or about 153,000 less than in Cook County alone. The increase of sheep in Cook County between 31st May, 1886, and 31st May, 1887, was 66,007. This was considerably the largest increase of any county in New Zealand for that year. The increase in Hawke's Bay County, with 1,251,000 sheep, was only 37,643 during the same year. This increase is bound to go on in the future, and Gisborne to become the shipping port of a large and important district, being its only possible outlet. As to the acreage in the county, there are 408,000 acres of Native lands rated under Crown and Native Lands Rating Act; 365,500 acres Native lands, rates paid otherwise, in European occupation; 640,000 acres Native lands not rated at all; 450,000 acres Crown lands, not occupied; and 455,000 acres on which rates are paid by Europeans. The 365,500 acres of Native land occupied by Europeans is mostly held under defective titles, which they cannot improve until the titles are completed. Indeed, it is only a patch of the whole district that can be regarded as settled at all. As to Tologa Bay, they come to Gisborne along the coast by a road which is gradually being made available for dray-traffic. If we had the same facilities for obtaining cheap freight as they have in Napier, we could load wool-ships at the same rate as in Napier. The coastal freight would be less, and that, of course, would be a very considerable benefit to the coast. There is a vast extent of country totally unoccupied, which is sure to be taken up if good titles can be obtained and the country is opened up by roads. By these roads most of the lands would send down their produce of all kinds to Gisborne.

*Mr. Whyte*: That is the great point—roads. For the want of roads the district is only about one-fifth developed.

*The Chairman*: Assuming the Committee were to decide to allow the works to proceed, or to recommend this extension, would the Harbour Board object to taking a poll of the ratepayers before entering on it?

*Mr. Graham*: I do not think so. I would advise them to do it.

447. *The Chairman*.] Would they be willing to restrict the rate levied in Cook County to what it is at present?—I think so. I think the opinion of every one of the present members of the Board is strongly against spending more than is absolutely necessary—more than the ¼d. and 1d. rate would cover. They believe, from the advance of the district, that would be sufficient.

448. Would the Board object to the balance of the loan being tied up in such a way as to be unable to expend it without coming to Parliament?—No; that is practically done now.

449. Supposing, then, we were to restrict the rating radius as regards the county and extend it as regards the borough, would there be any land outside which might be taken in as getting a direct benefit from these works—that is, is there any land around the borough which would be properly rated with the borough?

*Mr. Whyte*: No doubt there is.

450. *The Chairman*.] How far is Tologa Bay?—Thirty-six miles.

451. Supposing we were to fix the radius at five miles round the borough, would that do?—In my opinion it ought to be taken further. There is a great deal of the best land in the district situated ten or twelve miles from the borough. As a matter of fact, I consider all the land in the county would be benefited by the work. But the great difficulty in the district is connected with Native lands. People will not improve until they get a perfect title; indeed, it has been costing as much to get the titles to Native lands completed as the whole of the interest upon the loan: yet, in spite of all that, the district has increased to the extent I have described. But there is one thing I should specially point out to the Committee: If these works are stopped it will be very difficult to get them started again. It will leave the impression on every one's mind that the thing is wholly useless.

452. *Mr. Allen*.] You put the number of sheep at 452,394: how much of that is in the northern part of Cook County?—There might be eighty or a hundred thousand; I cannot say exactly.

453. *The Chairman*.] With regard to the rate-roll, do you get a special roll made for these rating-powers?—The Board takes the municipal roll and the county roll.

454. Would there be much difficulty if we were to make the rating radius ten miles? Are most of the ratepayers resident in the district in the event of a poll being demanded?—Most of the absentees are on the coast.

455. Assuming they were willing to vote for the work, there would be no difficulty in getting an actual majority of ratepayers on the roll?—I do not think so.