

Seeing that large areas of alluvial flats having good agricultural soil and many streams with low banks are taken up in dredging claims, your Commissioners are of opinion that regulations are required to make it compulsory for the holders of dredging claims to leave the dredged material so as not to obstruct the flow of water in creeks or rivers, and that where there is good soil on the surface of alluvial flats, such soil be taken off before commencing to dredge the auriferous gravel-drift and deposited on the top of the dredged material.

Minutes of evidence taken by your Commissioners are transmitted herewith.

All of which matters we respectfully submit to your Excellency.

Given under our hands and seals, this 13th day of May, 1900.

(L.S.) HENRY A. GORDON, Chairman.

(L.S.) DAVID BARRON.

(L.S.) JOHN HAYES.

(L.S.) T. Y. DUNCAN.

To His Excellency the Right Honourable UCHTER JOHN MARK, Earl of Ranfurly, Governor of New Zealand.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

In accordance with your Excellency's Commission of the 9th day of April, 1900, to inquire into matters in connection with certain rivers in the Land Districts of Otago and Southland, we have the honour to forward you our second interim report, as follows :—

TOKOMAIRIRO RIVER.

The main branch of the Tokomairiro River from its source to Glenore passes through hilly country, where mining operations on a very limited scale have been carried on for the last thirty-seven years. The principal gold-workings during the last eight years have been on the mining reserve between Manuka Creek and the Tokomairiro River, where the ground is worked by hydraulic sluicing. The tailings from the workings are deposited on a small flat alongside Manuka Creek. During every flood a certain quantity of these tailings is brought down by this creek, which has a great fall, and is lodged in the Tokomairiro River at the point where it passes through the Mount Stuart Estate, which is a freehold property.

Near the confluence of the Manuka Creek and the Tokomairiro River there are several small flats having an aggregate area of about 15 acres, portion of which is covered with water in ordinary floods; but the accumulation of tailings at the mouth of the Manuka Creek is raising the bed of the Tokomairiro River at this point, and thereby increasing the liability of the land referred to, to flood.

Hydraulic-sluicing operations are also being carried on in Shepherd and Fellowburn Creeks, both of which are tributaries of the Tokomairiro River. The water from the workings in the latter creek flows into a race constructed by the owner of the Mount Stuart Estate for the purpose of supplying water-power for chaff-cutting and other purposes, and silts up the race to such an extent as to curtail its carrying-capacity.

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At Glenore the Tokomairiro River enters a large plain and traverses it by a sinuous course for a distance of about eight miles, thereafter passing through hilly country for about six miles to the ocean. Where the river passes through the Tokomairiro Plain the channel is very narrow, and in some places is choked up with willows, which grow right across it; while in other places the branches of willows on each side of the banks meet in the centre of the river, and, catching all the floating *débris*, form what might be described as temporary dams across the river. Farmers whose lands are adjacent to the river, but who hold no riparian rights, state that, owing to the fact of there being a reserve between their lands and the river on the south side, they consider it is the duty of the Government to keep the channel clear, though they fully acknowledge they have made use of the reserve for farming purposes without being called upon to make any payment by way of rental. It is quite apparent to your Commissioners that, unless these obstacles are removed, the adjacent lands will be far more seriously damaged than hitherto in high floods.

All the farmers having land alongside the river state that portions of their holdings are flooded three and four times every year, but the evidence taken by your Commissioners shows that the land is not more subject to flood than it was before the commencement of mining operations. Evidence was tendered to the effect that the bed of the river had been raised by the deposit of silt since dredges commenced work, about seven years ago. Other evidence, however, showed that there was no perceptible difference in the height of the river-bed on the fords during the last thirty years, though the channel was gradually getting narrower by the accumulation of vegetable growth and silt deposited from muddy water, testimony which appeared quite proved to your Commissioners on personal examination of the river.

The banks of the Tokomairiro River where it passes through the plain are generally much higher than the surrounding land, and when the water overflows the banks it covers a large area for a considerable distance back from the river. This is particularly instanced in the case of land across the railway from the Meadowbank Estate, where it is stated that in very high floods the water covers portion of the railway, and extends for fully a mile back. Claims for compensation are therefore made by landowners whose lands do not abut on the river, but which are liable to be covered with silt from dredging and sluicing operations.

The first dredge placed on the river was on the mining reserve at Glenore about seven years ago. Since then four other dredges have been constructed, and are at work in the bed and on the banks of the river lower down. Two farmers have made arrangements with dredge-owners to dredge portions of their lands on their receiving £2 per week during the time the dredges are at work, and 7½ per cent. of the value of the gold extracted from the land after the first 10 oz. per week, which represent the working-expenses. Another has sold land in fee-simple for £14 an acre,