

26. If you did not have a Drainage Board at all you would have to make some arrangement for the keeping of that stream open—it runs through more than one property in the lower end?—Yes, it runs through some properties at the lower end.

27. You would have to make some arrangement to keep that clear, would you not?—Well, if the people down below want some arrangement, they should combine and ask for it.

28. Do you know if anything has been done at all?—Nothing has been done in the past at all.

29. It is keeping itself free?—Down to the low lands near the river it has kept itself open. I believe something has been done towards banking by private people. It was a stream that had such a fall in the upper portion of the drainage district that it cut its channel deeper. There was in some places a scour-out. Now willows have been grown on the bank to prevent that scour in North Taieri, within this drainage district, but some gravel comes from outside the district, as far up as Whare Flat, which is several miles away, and is causing trouble down below.

30. Then, money would need to be spent where the Silverstream enters the Taieri River to keep it open, would it not?—For a mile or so, or probably less, some work would require to be done.

31. But you think the people there should make their own arrangements?—All the people who are within that area and who want it should make their own arrangements, because it is absurd to take a large district embracing nearly the whole plain in order to clean out one stream.

32. Now, you say there are some people living on this low-lying land who are in favour of this Drainage Board, and who, I think, have not signed your petition?—Yes.

33. And you mentioned Mr. David Shand's name amongst others?—Yes.

34. Now, why do those people favour this Drainage Board if, as you have already said, the Drainage Board has put a wall on the western side, which has thrown the water on to them, and why do they still favour having that Drainage Board if they get no benefit? In fact, if their land is damaged, why do they still continue to ask to have that Drainage Board?—Well, I suppose they hope that the Drainage Board will deal with the lower part of the Silverstream—find a better outlet for it—and drain their land into the Silverstream. I presume that is their contention.

35. Those people there are of opinion that some benefit can be gained from the Drainage Board?—Yes, for themselves.

36. You would say that portion of that district must reasonably expect some benefit, or otherwise they would not be so strong in favouring it?—Yes. It is very problematical what benefit would be obtained by them. There is no doubt that the cleaning-out of the Silverstream will help them to some extent.

37. Anyhow, you say they are pretty decided about belonging to the Drainage Board, and one would imagine that they were pretty decided about getting a benefit?—I might say that some of the tenants—Mr. Shand's tenants—who occupy the swamp have signed the second petition asking to be cut out of the district, and are supporting us.

38. But there are some who think they will get a benefit?—Yes, there are some down there who think they will get a benefit from the Drainage Board. I do not know whether their views are that they should have a separate Drainage Board.

39. You said that some of the settlers in the West Taieri supported you?—Yes.

40. What is their object in supporting you?—Because they realise that they must maintain their bank to protect themselves, and that there is no community of interest between East Taieri and West Taieri.

41. And is it no benefit to them to have you included in the area?—It is a benefit to the men occupying the swamp, because they have a wider area over which to spread the rates.

42. But the fact that they have a larger area to draw from—is not that an advantage to the people in West Taieri?—Of course that is an advantage. The greater the area of the district and the wider the extent over which you can spread the rates, the greater will be the relief to the people who need drainage; but we say that is an unfair way of looking at it.

43. You say you have got the support of settlers in the West Taieri, who do it not from the fact that it is of any benefit financially, but that it is a matter of justice?—Yes, as a matter of justice they recognise there is nothing in common between them and us. In fact, the erection of the bank is an injustice to East Taieri.

44. Are the rates heavy that you have to pay?—We may be called upon to pay anything up to 4s. an acre.

45. Is there any rate at the present time?—Yes. I cannot give you the details of the rate, but a rate has been struck.

46. And according to the classification it gets less as you get into the higher ground?—Yes. The land in Class "A" bears the maximum; in Class "B" it may be a farthing less than the maximum, because no maximum is fixed for that class; and Class "C" is supposed to be less again, but it may be only a farthing less. In Class "D" there is no rating at all.

47. *Mr. Witty.*] I see they are allowed to borrow £75,000 without a poll?—Yes.

48. But they cannot increase that without going to the ratepayers?—No, they would have to obtain power.

49. Can you tell me what amount of the £75,000 has been spent?—Well, I am not sure about the figures, but I understand they have borrowed £10,000 for works principally in West Taieri.

50. Then it may not be necessary to borrow much more, or anything like the £75,000?—If they go in for a scheme to benefit East Taieri and prevent flooding, then probably they will have to spend £100,000. All the engineers who have reported on it and suggested schemes—some have suggested dams higher up the river to keep the water there—have said that it would cost, approximately, £100,000.

51. More than equivalent to what the people would receive in benefit?—It is out of proportion to the benefit we should receive in East Taieri.