

wharf, which the townspeople enjoyed prior to 1895, but which they lost some time after that owing to the Ohinemuri River becoming much shallower by the deposit of mining-tailings therein. All the foregoing disabilities are attributed to the deposit of mining debris in the river, for which, it is contended, the Government is directly responsible, as the Government, by declaring the river a sludge-channel in 1895, permitted the fouling of the stream to take place. All liability to contribute towards the cost of the scheme is therefore denied, or at any rate until such time as navigation to the town wharf is restored. In the event of the Ohinemuri River being made fit for navigation by seagoing steamers of the class now trading to the Puke Wharf, the borough would then be willing to make a small annual contribution to the fund.

(d.) *The Ohinemuri County Council.*

On behalf of the Ohinemuri County Council Mr. Montague admitted that lands within the county were benefited by the scheme, and if the cost had been kept within the original authorization of £150,000 his clients would have been quite willing to bear their proportion of the amount; but they disclaim all knowledge of the present estimate of £625,000, and state that it is a great surprise to them, and that they, as contributors, ought to have been informed when the insufficiency of the original estimate was first ascertained, and should also have been consulted as to whether works on such a scale of magnitude as now in hand should be proceeded with. He said that the settlers wanted the works, but if they have to pay such a large contribution to secure them they would rather do without them.

(e.) *The Matamata County Council.*

Mr. Gilchrist appeared on behalf of the Matamata and Piako County Councils and the Borough of Te Aroha.

As regards the Matamata County, he submitted that the river-improvement works are of no benefit to them whatever, and that the settlers in the county do no damage to the river by depositing drainage silt therein. He claimed that the natural waterways of the Matamata County were the Waikato, the Waitoa, and the Waihou Rivers, but as regards the latter he stated that there is only one artificial drain in the county leading into it, and this drain serves only 150 acres, and that there has been practically no erosion from this drain during the last seven years. He also stated that the county did not derive, and never would derive, any navigation benefit from the Waihou River, as it was commercially impossible to run freight-bearing craft above Te Aroha, and no goods for Matamata County are carried on the vessels at present trading to Te Aroha. As, therefore, the county derives no benefit from the scheme and contributes no damage to the river, he claims entire exemption for it.

(f.) *The Piako County Council.*

As regards the Piako County, Mr. Gilchrist stated that the drainage system of the county, on the eastern side of the Waihou River, discharges nothing but natural drainage, that there is no drainage by the hand of man with the exception of Roche's Creek, and that the work there was done as long ago as 1887. It was washed out then, but there has been no erosion since. On the western side of the river about 20,000 acres drain into the Waihou River, and the rest of the country into the Waitoa, which is a tributary of the Piako. No benefit from the river-improvement works accrues to the county at present, and none will accrue until the works above Mangaiti—hardly touched at present—are completed, and even then the area beneficially affected will be small. It was further contended that the artificial drainage system of the county had long since been completed, and that there is now no silt being deposited by these drains; but if there is, the proper remedy is to take advantage of section 16 of the Act, or section 64 of the Land Drainage Act, and not to rate the lands of the county or to call upon the County Council for a contribution towards the river-improvement scheme. He therefore asked for entire exemption for the Piako as well as for the Matamata County.