

foot, L235,480; and, at L91 11s., L212,396, exclusive of plant in each case. The Board having only L115,000 available, there will be a deficiency in one case of L97,396, and in the other of L120,628.

Sir John Coode states that, "If the expenditure is confined to L200,000, then the pier can for this amount be carried only to a point 1,420 feet from low-water mark of spring tides, or 565 feet short of *Y Y*"

This is conditional upon a judicious expenditure of the Board's funds; and if, instead of L200,000 less L20,000 for plant, the Board has only L185,000, less L70,000 expended upon plant and unnecessary works—or L115,000 instead of L180,000—it is clear that not more than two-thirds of the lesser work indicated can be finished with the funds at the Board's disposal.

Upon the basis of the more favourable of the two estimates above referred to (that of Oamaru), the Board could not, at L91 11s. per foot, extend the work more than 1,257 feet from the starting point (high-water mark), and, with that length, would only reach a depth of 11 or 12 feet at low-water spring tides.

It appears, from the nautical evidence taken, and also from Sir John Coode's report of 20th February, 1879, that the work, if completed in full at a cost of L928,730, cannot be regarded as a colonial harbour of refuge; and the most that would be effected by the construction of the section to *Y Y* would be, that steamers of the class of the "Hawea" would, under ordinary circumstances, be enabled to load or discharge cargo; consequently the work cannot be regarded as other than of a purely local character.

Your Committee think it its duty to report that the work was commenced in a very irregular manner, and that a large part of the expenditure on account of plant was incurred without the approval of Sir John Coode, and before the Board obtained the sanction of the Governor in Council to the new design; and your Committee have to report that the evidence shows that a large proportion of this expenditure was wholly unnecessary, as is evidenced by the much smaller expenditure on plant for the breakwaters at Timaru and Oamaru.

The direct pecuniary advantage to be derived by the community, in return for the heavy charge of one shilling in the pound to be levied under the rating powers of the Board, appears to be small. Under existing circumstances, the cost of landing goods at New Plymouth is 10s. per ton, and the Harbour Board contemplate the imposition of a wharfage charge of 8s. per ton, in order to raise revenue to meet the payment for interest and sinking-fund.

There are other points in the evidence, bearing largely on the question, which the Committee think it better to leave to members to ascertain by a personal reference to the evidence itself.

The Committee, after a careful consideration of the evidence, and the facts thereby disclosed, have come to the following conclusions:—

1. That the cost of the work to *Y Y*, on plan "M.D. 404," being the shortest section of the proposed breakwater which would be at all beneficial, is estimated by Sir John Coode to be L285,800; and that the lowest estimate, based upon the cost of similar works at Timaru and Oamaru, would be L212,396. Therefore, as the total amount which the Board has available for the work does not exceed L115,000, there will be a deficiency on this basis of L97,396; whilst on Sir John Coode's estimate the deficiency will be L150,000.

2. That, as the funds at the disposal of the Board would only suffice to carry the work to a point which would secure a depth of 11 or 12 feet at low-water spring tides, which would practically be of little use for landing or shipping goods except during fine weather, the extension to *Y Y* would necessitate further borrowing being authorized by this House, and entail a still larger burden upon the owners of property within the rating district.

3. That the extension of the work to *Y Y* would only render the harbour available for use by vessels of the class of the steamer "Hawea."

4. That the evidence disproves the supposition that the proposed work would be of special value to the colony as a harbour of refuge; and the work must, therefore, be regarded as one of local rather than colonial character.

The Committee therefore consider the results from the proposed works would be altogether inadequate to the expenditure required; and, as but a very limited sum, not exceeding L5,000, has been expended upon the breakwater, apart from plant, the Committee recommend the Legislature to at once take steps to stop the further progress of the works, to take over the assets and liabilities, and, after providing for the latter, to devote the Land Fund to its ordinary purposes.

EDWARD G. WRIGHT,
Chairman.

10th August, 1881.