

speaking entirely from memory, but I think it was something like the sum I named that they have spent.

637. Considering the limited funds at the disposal of the Board for prosecuting harbour works proper, do you think they were justified in spending £4,423 upon improving certain endowments?—Does that sum include the reclamation at Huatoki?

638. I think so; the Kawau Pah.—The reclamation in 1878 I always thought, under the circumstances, was not justified. I thought they had too little money for their work. Parliament had allowed them to proceed with the work; and I thought all the money they had to spare ought to be devoted to the work Sir J Coode had planned—to carry it out as far as their funds would allow them to go.

639. What class of vessels can at present enter the Harbour of Waitara?—Anything drawing 8 feet. They frequently come in with more than 8 feet, but that is not safe. I have here certain figures showing the average depth of water on Waitara bar, from 1872 to 1878 inclusive. Vessels drawing considerable depths have been in. The “Rangatira” was in twice. There have been times when vessels drawing 16 feet could enter; but that was exceptional. This paper shows the shipping of the port for these years, and the average depth of water for certain years. [Paper put in “A.”]

640. And what advantage would the district gain by the construction of the New Plymouth breakwater—the District of Taranaki, the entire district—in the event of the Harbour Board not being able to prosecute that work beyond 13 feet at low water?—In fine weather steamers would be able to land their goods and passengers at high water.

641. Would there be any commercial gain to the community in the way of a reduction of landing charges?—It would save boating charges. The boating charges are now about 10s. per ton. It would save a large proportion of that, of course.

642. Could the Harbour Board, in your opinion, afford to forego these landing charges, and meet their engagements with their creditors?—That would depend very much upon what Land Fund they receive, and the proper management of that fund when they do receive it. I reckon that the Land Fund would amount to something like the amount of their debt, if they could get the money in one sum, so as to clear off their debt.

643. That is, if they could at once realize all the Crown land in Taranaki?—Yes; if they could at once do it. But then it is an uncertain question. They do not know from year to year how much of it will be sold.

644. But if all was sold?—If all was sold at once, sufficient would be received to about clear off the debt. I have not the document before me, but Sir W Fox and Sir F D. Bell gave an estimate of the value of the land for sale, and—I am speaking from memory in reference to that document—I think they rather understated the fair value of the land. Making allowance for that, then the result would be something like what I say.

645. What improvements do you propose to effect in Waitara Harbour, by the expenditure of the £20,000 which you now seek authority to get?—If the Bill passed, it would do the whole of the inside works proposed by Sir J Coode, lengthen the present wharf, and so give still further accommodation, and, perhaps, get a dredge. But, I may say, there is very little chance of the Bill passing in its present state. Sir J Coode does not recommend a dredge to be got immediately, as, if the minor works were carried out, the channel would scour out considerably.

646. What extra depth is expected from the construction of these training walls inside the bar?—Sir John Coode does not say; but, alongside the new wharf we have erected, the scour has been very great, amounting to several feet.

647. *Mr. Pitt.*] It has not undermined the wharf?—No. But, if we had known the scour would have been so great, we would have made the piles 3 feet longer. Mr. Thompson, an engineer, has recommended, if the wharf is continued, the piles should be 3 feet or 4 feet deeper, and considerably stronger—far stronger than originally intended.

648. You anticipate, I presume, by that expenditure to so far improve the Waitara as to bring in vessels of greater draught than at the present time?—Considerably greater. When vessels are inside the river, there is a considerable depth. There are two points where vessels have difficulty [witness showed this on Sir J Coode’s plan, and made several explanatory remarks]. It is a sand bar. Sometimes there are 20 feet of water on the bar in a flood. When the flood goes away the sand accumulates on the bar, but sand does not accumulate in the river.

649. What do you think will be the effect of the settlement of the Waimate Plains, and the construction of the Patea Harbour? Will it have any effect upon the commerce of New Plymouth, the imports and exports, with these proposed works?—The imports and exports of Waitara are increasing every month. The Plains were being supplied from Hawera; Hawera being supplied from Waitara, until the roads were broken up by the bad weather. Now, the trains are running to Normanby, though not in their normal state of running yet. In another month the line will be open to Hawera for passengers and light traffic, and then goods will run direct to Hawera, and from Hawera be despatched to the Plains by metalled roads—the main road is metalled.

650. I want to find out this: Will supplies be drawn from Waitara, Patea, New Plymouth, or Wanganui?—They have been drawn mostly from Waitara. There are certain reasons for it. Waitara is only 120 miles from Onehunga. It is better to drive cattle to Waitara, and ship them to Auckland, than run considerably more than double risk in sending them to Auckland by the longer sea-voyage from Patea. The argument with regard to Wanganui is still stronger. A case came under my notice a short time ago, which will illustrate this position. A man had some sheep to send from Waitotara to Auckland, and was sending them to Wanganui to ship. A gentleman belonging to Waitara said, “Why not send them to Waitara?” He had been paying 3s. 6d. per head from Wanganui. So my friend said, by sending them to Waitara he could send them for 2s. a head. He did not believe it; but my friend said, “I guarantee, if you send the lot, you shall have them shipped for 2s. a head, which is the price I am paying.” So he sent down a cargo, and saved the whole of the difference. It was as expensive to drive the animals to Wanganui as to Waitara. And he saved 1s. 6d. a head on the freight, and saved the difference between a certain voyage of ten or twelve hours and a voyage by which, as we