millowners did so too. With regard to snags, under the Timber Floatage Act persons may float timber down creeks into the river. It is impossible to prevent snags being driven into the river, and all that can be done is to secure the snags when they do get into the river. As to the drainage, those who have properties on the banks of a river have the right to drain their property into the natural outlets and rivers; and they have to see that proper steps are taken to prevent damage being done. At all events, it would be an absurd thing to suppose that a Harbour Board should prevent people from draining their property because certain things come down.

Mr. Brodie: I am told that a hundred acres of land has come into the river.

Mr. Bagnall: That is not so. Even supposing we admit that these things are difficulties, I ask is the Thames Harbour Board the proper authority to have control? I ask you to look at the foreshore of the town and see how the mining refuse is allowed to silt up round the wharf. Whereas the "Rotomahana" could easily get in to the wharf some years ago, she can hardly get in now. If the Board allow their own immediate locality to be filled up, what can be expected of their control in more distant places? With regard to the boundaries set out in the Act, and the alteration that was made, copies of the Bill were sent to the Thames Harbour Board for the purpose of being distributed amongst those interested in the matter. Instead of being distributed they were secretly given to the members of the Board: they were not to be shown outside, and the newspapers were given instructions that they were not to publish them. That I am prepared to prove. But as soon as the people living up the country saw that it was proposed to include them within the Bill, then action was taken to try to prevent it. The wish of the people up the river was to try to revert to the Proclamation issued by Mr. Fisher, excluding all the river from the operation of the Act. But, as the harbour and foreshore here were silting up so fast, with the view of giving the people here an opportunity of coming to deep water, it was agreed that a portion of the river should be included, giving them deep water as far as the Kopu Wharf. The Government agreed to make that alteration in the Bill, but by some oversight the description in the schedule did not agree with the plan. There is a strong feeling among the up-river people against the Port of Thames coming even that far up the river [indicating on plan], because they do not consider that the people living to the north of the Kauaeranga River should have control of any portion of the Waihou River.

17. *Mr. Rhodes.*] All your communication, I suppose, comes through the Thames, except shipping timber away?—No; we communicate straight with Auckland. There is a steamer running twice a week to Auckland.

18. Who has control of this part of the river [indicating on plan]?—The Marine Department. The river a little higher up than is shown on this plan is within the limits of the Thames County, but that body has not been declared a River Board.

19. What is the population within these limits?—There are several settlers living there [indicating on plan], and there is a very considerable population there [indicating on plan] of Europeans and Maoris. There are three hotels there also.

20. *Mr. Brodie.*] That is about the population?—No; there are a good many settlers there besides.

Mr. Rhodes: I think I had better go and see the river.

Mr. Bagnall: I would strongly recommend you to go up and see the river. There are several country settlers present who are prepared to give evidence.

Mr. Brodie: Mr. Bagnall has laid great stress upon the Board collecting money from Turua and spending it here. We at the Thames object to the Government collecting money here and spending it at Wellington, but somebody must collect and spend the money, so that that is no argument at all.

21. *Mr. Rhodes.*] I would like to know how the loans were expended?—I can explain as to the £6,000. That was expended upon the Shortland Wharf, the goods wharf, reclamation works along the foreshore, and a portion on the Kopu Wharf.

22. *Colonel Fraser.*] Was nothing spent to show the navigation of the river?—No; that came out of the ordinary revenue of the Board.

Mr. Brodie: A portion of the loan has been spent in trying to prevent silting.

23. *Colonel Fraser.*] Are you not aware that the up-country settlers have a River Board, whose jurisdiction extends down to the junction of the Hikutaia River?—Yes.

24. And there is no control at present between this portion [portion indicated] of the river and that portion?—No.

25. You stated that the Port of Thames was the same as the Port of Shortland—that only the name was changed. Are you not aware that when the Port of Shortland was converted into the Port of Thames the boundaries were increased?—Yes; we understood that.

26. You were a member of the Harbour Board when this loan was raised?—When the £6,000 loan was raised.

27. And of that sum £2,600 was lent by the friendly societies?—Yes.

28. And you were a trustee of one of the lodges at the time?—Yes.

29. And you were paying your dues at the time without any demur?—At the time the loan was raised we were not paying any dues.

30. When did you stop paying dues?—In 1887, I think it was.

31. After you ceased to be a member of the Board?—No.

32. *Mr. Rhodes.*] Could you give us the exact dates dues were paid up the river?—We paid no dues until long after the loan was raised.

33. *Colonel Fraser.*] The people who are between the two points principally consist of Messrs. Bagnall, at one mill, and the Kauri Timber Company at the other. They are the bulk of the population. These are the people who are charged dues, and who now object to pay them?—There are others besides. Mr. Earl is one, but he is ill and not able to be present to-day. A cutter landed some sheep on his own land on the bank of the river, and he was charged wharfage.

34. Did he pay?—No, but he was charged. He has paid dues too.