

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

FRIDAY, 11TH SEPTEMBER, 1903.

WALTER PHILLIPS, Mayor of Waihi, examined. (No. 1.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—W. H. Phillips.
2. You are Mayor of Waihi?—Yes.
3. You are here to give evidence upon this Bill in Committee?—Yes.
4. Have you any statement to make respecting this Bill?—I may say, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, that the reason of my appearance here is to explain our views upon it. The Borough of Waihi was formed February twelve months ago, and from time to time we have been receiving the gold duty, and we have entered into certain contracts believing the gold duty honestly belonged to us. According to the Municipal Corporations Act we are bound to build an abattoir; we are committed to expenditure upon municipal buildings, and our liability with regard to the Hospital is approximately £1,500 a year. To now take this gold duty from us would put us in a position of bankruptcy. I may point out with regard to the township there, that it is purely a Government township which we cannot rate. We are quite prepared to recommend that the same basis of rating should be adopted as in the South Island at the present time. On the rating value Waihi would pay the borough £16,700, which would be more than the present duty. I do ask that the present plan be not interfered with. I understand the idea is to enable the gold duty to be diverted; it might be for maintenance of the river, but in that connection we are quite prepared to pay a proportion of the amount for that if necessary.
5. *Mr. Herries.*] Will you state the amount of gold duty at Waihi?—As nearly as possible, £14,000.
6. Will you state to the Committee the liabilities you have incurred in connection with the formation of the borough?—The liabilities to the bank at the present time amount to £8,000. I am not prepared to say what proportion of gold duty is due—probably about £2,000. We are committed for abattoir and water-supply. Your Government has been pleased to vote £15,000, but that is insufficient for our further requirements. It will take £10,000 more to carry out the water-works. Then, there is the annual cost of the Hospital—£1,500—and there is the Fire Brigade Station. There has been some statement made—it was mentioned to me by the Premier at Waihi—that we have been extravagant by voting sums to bands. That I emphatically deny; there has been no extravagance at all.
7. What is the nature of the award?—Our liability is not exceeding £4,300 per annum.
8. Are you proposing to undertake the various works?—Yes.
9. What is the population of the borough?—About 5,000.
10. Is that expected to increase or decrease?—It is expected to increase.
11. Supposing you levied a rate at the present moment, would you be in a position to meet your liabilities?—No.
12. What would be the effect if you only received half the gold duty?—We should be in a state of bankruptcy.
13. You state that when the Borough of Waihi was started these works were needed?—Yes.
14. And you think if the gold duty is taken away you should be put in the same position as other parts in the South?—Most decidedly.
15. If you were placed in the same position as the South Island you would be satisfied if the gold duty was abolished and rating-power substituted?—Yes.
16. Do you know any reason why this Bill should be brought in?—No; quite the contrary.
17. You are in the dark?—Yes.
18. Are there any other claims against the borough?—Yes; they can be made by the other counties.
19. These would be still further liabilities?—Yes.
20. Why is it necessary for this expenditure in Waihi? Are the streets formed?—Yes; but we require a good deal more money yet to meet the responsibilities we are under at the present time.
21. You mention a loan from the Government of £15,000. What is the security for that loan?—Simply the gold duty.
22. And if the gold duty is taken away it will reduce the Government's security?—Yes.
23. What is that loan for?—For waterworks.
24. Have they been started?—They have been commenced this far, that a survey has been made of the work and the formation commenced. The Engineer took charge last Monday morning, and he is proceeding to carry out the work.
25. What is the nature of the loan—when is it repayable?—In twenty-six years.
26. What is the interest payable?—Four and a half per cent.
27. That would be provided out of gold duty?—Yes. We are liable to pay £4,300 to the County Council, which would leave us with about £4,000 revenue, and out of that we have to pay for Hospital and interest on loan and making streets and drains.
28. And anything for lighting?—We are trying to deal with that. We have no money at the present time, but the matter is to be considered when I return. We have had offers from private companies.
29. *Mr. Moss.*] What is the size of the Borough of Waihi?—Four square miles, I think. You must know from your knowledge of the place.