

country becomes periodically flooded. This flooding is further intensified by all the water of the Silverstream being penned back by the Taieri River, and until the flood abates there is no means by which the country can be relieved of the storm-water.

Dealing with the Silverstream exclusively, the evidence adduced showed that the works on the upper portion of this stream have caused a scour by which the creek at its outlet and for upwards of nearly two miles up stream has been practically blocked by the gravel brought down from the upper reaches. To cope with this difficulty the stream was cut by a straight course into the Taieri River, it being presumably expected thereby to keep the outlet clear. The desired result was not, however, attained, as a good part of the channel has become practically blocked by the travelling shingle. It may here be pointed out that on this side of the river there is no Drainage or River Board to deal with these matters. The settlers, through want of concerted action, have apparently been content to allow things to drift until now they recognise the necessity of taking measures to deal with both river and stream in a comprehensive way.

It has been asserted by several of the witnesses that, as the Owhiro Creek runs at a much lower level than the Silverstream, the latter should be diverted from its present course at a point probably a mile from the Taieri River, and conveyed into the Owhiro Creek, and thence by that stream into the river. The two principal arguments for this proposal are that by the lower level of the Owhiro and the better outlet this stream has into the Taieri River the flood-water would be more quickly carried away, and hence the flooding would be of a very temporary character.

Another scheme suggested is to clear out the Silverstream from the point at which it is now blocked by gravel, and carry it by a comparatively straight cut into the Taieri River. The advocates of this scheme hold that by carefully selecting the point and method of discharge into the river there would be little danger of the stream not keeping itself clear.

Taking the first of these proposals, we may say that everything depends on the alleged difference of level between the two streams. If such a difference exists, the advocates of this scheme think it possible to continue the embankment of the Taieri River to Allanton and prevent the back-water and Silverstream flooding this block of country. This would mean that all the water from that side of the plain would be diverted from the present main outlet by the Silverstream into the river by a new course, and that the Taieri River would be confined with embankments on both sides to Allanton.

We think that, before a definite opinion can be offered on these and most of the other engineering suggestions, careful surveys would require to be made, and, as we do not consider it is intended that we should do more than ascertain the facts in a general way, we have confined ourselves to the statement of same.

PROPOSED REMEDY.

We are, *inter alia*, instructed to report as to whether or not the West Taieri, Otokia, and Maungatua Drainage Districts should be amalgamated; and, so far as that is concerned, we have no hesitation in reporting that this is highly desirable, but it is not in itself sufficient. There is another district—viz., the Berwick Drainage District—which should be included, and there is also a considerable area of land outside these four districts that would be benefited by a proper system of drainage, which ought therefore to be included.

Your Excellency has, however, at present only power under section 15 of "The Land Drainage Act, 1904," to unite the three first-named into one district. No petition to include Berwick District has been presented as required by subsection (4) of the section. Even if Berwick were included, we are of opinion that this would not meet the requirements of the case.

This aspect has apparently been recognised by Your Excellency, for in the extended Commission we are instructed to report on the drainage of the whole Taieri Plain.

In pursuance of this latter direction, we have the honour respectfully to submit, firstly, a proposal to make one united district to deal with the river and drainage works for the whole plain; and, secondly, proposals as to such further legislative powers as would in our opinion be required to enable such a United Board to be set up and to successfully carry out the necessary works.

FIRSTLY, PROPOSED UNITED DISTRICT.

From among the fifty-five witnesses whom we examined there was hardly one who did not favour the proposal to unite all the four drainage districts on the west side of the Taieri River into one district, although they were divided in opinion as to the necessity for including the two River Boards in such district.

Similarly, there was little or no dissension to a proposal to create one drainage district for the east side of the river; but the great bulk of the witnesses (though not all) opposed making one United Board for both sides of the river. This opposition has its origin mainly in circumstances already explained; but in addition thereto there is a fear that such a Board would not work amicably on account of the diverse interests of east and west, and also a fear that the rates or funds of one side would be utilised for works on the other side. The east side is also apprehensive lest the west side should outvote them on any question in which the east might have a special interest. This arises from the fact that the area of the west side is twice as large as that of the east, and the west side is therefore entitled to twice the representation of the east side on such a Board. These difficulties will be found to be met in our proposals as to the special powers required to be granted to such a Board, and they are not, therefore, discussed here.

No solid reasons were adduced before us against the proposal to create one United Board for both sides, other than those first stated; and we now enumerate the reasons why we consider that one United Board is not only required, but it is an absolute necessity if the drainage of the plain is to be efficiently carried out. These reasons are:—