

been closely connected with in regard to other matters of a similar nature; and I am sure my opinion is shared by a large majority of the residents of Wanganui. I think the estate has been badly managed for many years past. I say that they have largely lost their golden opportunity, which has occurred during the last seven years. At any rate, that estate might have been cut up and leased to advantage not only to themselves, but to the town. I do not know whether you are in touch with quite what the estate means to the Town of Wanganui. I have here a map of the whole Town of Wanganui. The Industrial School Estate is marked on it in blue. It is in the heart of the town itself, and it is surrounded on all sides, and practically built on on all sides. It has been said there were difficulties in the way. I admit there were difficulties; but the difficulties to my mind, as regards the leasing and settling of this estate, have not been properly grappled with. During my time on the Council we received applications from the trustees for consent in regard to transfers of leases. In some cases I did my best to oppose them, and they were not granted. I might explain the trustees asked our consent to lease sections fronting a right-of-way, and naturally we objected to it.

7. That is to say, under the Municipal Corporations Act the Council cannot deal with land unless it is roaded to the satisfaction of the borough?—That is so. That has been the stumbling-block all through. The estate has never been comprehensively dealt with. Various little odd corners have been cut up and leased at different times, and they have been readily snapped up. The estate consists of 250 acres, and even supposing 50 acres were set aside for school-grounds, which would be ample to my mind, of the remaining 200 acres there are certain portions more or less swampy, but not more swampy than a portion of the town that is now closely settled. The other portion is hilly and sandy; but that is the nature of the whole town, and some of the very best residence-sites there could be made use of. My own opinion is that the present site for the school is not the best site, for the reason that it is occupying a too valuable portion of the estate. In time to come, when the means are available to erect a new college, I think it should be erected on another portion of the estate not so valuable. If this were done, it would increase the revenue of the estate very materially, and it would add to the appearance of the town. There is another aspect which affects the town in this way. In recent years a large number of people have been obliged to go into the suburbs for residence-sites. The population of Wanganui, according to the official figures of the census, is 8,216, and the total population, including the immediate suburbs, is 12,321. That is to say, roughly, there are 4,000 outside the town, who are really residents, because they own property and conduct their business here, but for want of land have to go outside to live. I say a large number of these would not have gone outside to live if this land had been properly available. In last October I had a conversation with the Rev. Mr. Maclean and Mr. Beckett in reference to this matter, and they asked me if I could suggest any way in which the estate could be dealt with. I told them that, according to my reading of the Municipal Corporations Act and the Loans to Local Bodies Act, if a special-rating area were proclaimed over a portion of the estate, the Borough Council could raise a loan, interest and sinking fund being charged to that estate, and money would be available then to properly road the estate. Mr. Maclean and Mr. Beckett agreed that it would be a very good thing to do, and they wrote officially to the Council asking if we would take the matter in hand. That was on the 5th October. On the 30th October the Council agreed to obtain an estimate as requested. On the 2nd November of last year Mr. Gilmour, the Foreman of Works, was instructed by the Town Clerk in writing to make an estimate, and since that date Mr. Gilmour has been busy in his spare time making it. But there is a very large amount of detailed work involved. Just previous to my going out of office Mr. Gilmour had the work almost completed, and I was enabled to get sufficient data to make an estimate of my own. I have a fair knowledge of the amount of work and of the cost, and of how it should be done, and for my information, and for yours too, I have made an estimate of how I think the work should be done. I have here the plan which was submitted to the Council by Mr. Maclean, showing the portion of the estate proposed to be cut up. I may say at this point that one reason in years past why the Council would not allow the trustees to make roads as they liked was that they had all sorts of extraordinary ideas of making roads. The map of the old Town of Petre shows the town road continuing always through the Industrial School Estate, so that so far as this map was concerned, the authorities were anxious that the main street-lines should be preserved as laid off in the original town portion, and as they exist to-day. I impressed this on Mr. Maclean when he made the application, and the result is, on this map on which the estimate is based the main street-lines are preserved. The total area of the town is 1,000 acres, and the area of the trust estate is 250 acres. The total amount of rates paid by the school property itself—not by the estate as a whole—is £10 16s. 8d. per annum, and there is an amount in dispute of £54 3s. 4d. That is to say, we rated the school building, and the case was taken to the Assessment Court and was lost by the Council. The whole valuation of the estate, including the school building, is £3,164—that is, including the whole of the sub-tenants—less the amount in dispute, £500, leaving a net valuation of £2,664. Our total rates at the present moment amount to 2s. 2d. in the pound on the annual rental value, and the total amount paid by the estate is £288 12s. The whole of the 250 acres pays £288 12s. in rates. The total valuation of the whole borough is £79,000, and the rate of 2s. 2d. in the pound on the annual rental value produced last year £8,558. It means this: that the area of that estate is one-fourth of the whole of the Borough of Wanganui, and the rates paid are about one-thirtieth part of the borough rate revenue. That is how the estate affects the town financially. Now, some time ago, before my connection with the Council, the trustees asked the then Council to make a short piece of road known as Liverpool Street Extension. The Council then insisted on this road being very well done. It was formed I believe by the trustees themselves—that is to say, when the Council was asked to complete the work the road was simply formed. The Council kerbed it on both sides, and made footpaths and metalled it and put in drains, at a total cost of £240, which the trustees paid. The total length was 10 chains, so the cost was £24 per