

opportunity of objecting to it at all, and they were compulsorily put into the district. It is true the district is divided into East and West Taieri, the West people paying for their own drainage and the East people paying for theirs, but every one who appeared before the Commission objected to having a united district. They desired to be separate; they wanted two separate districts and did not want to be joined with one another, but in consequence of this Act they were amalgamated whether they liked it or not. Since that time the agitation has continued on the part of the East Taieri at every opportunity. When the election took place and the Board was elected, the land was classified immediately, and all the ratepayers on the East Taieri side objected to the classification, and objected to being put into the classification to pay rates. Mr. MacGregor has referred to the fact of the Magistrate dealing with the matter when before the Assessment Court, but the Magistrate in his decision went on these grounds: that, the Commissioners having put into this district a large area of land, if he reclassified it and put it under Class "D," where it would not be paying rates, he would be acting contrary to the intention of the Commissioners; and he would not do that. There is another point with regard to what opportunity the ratepayers had of appearing to object. When this Bill was brought on suddenly, it was brought in one day, read in the House, immediately referred to the Committee and considered by that Committee next day, back to the House, got through its second and third reading, and then went on to the Legislative Council, and there was no opportunity for the ratepayers to appear. It was very near the end of the session, too. It went before the Lands Committee, and Mr. James Allen and myself, who were interested in the adjoining district, with the consent of the Chairman and Mr. McNab, altered a clause and compelled the Drainage Board to classify the land under the Drainage Act. They were not compelled to do that, but in this Act we had an alteration made compelling the Board to classify the land, and not leave it to their own volition as it is in the Drainage Act. We thought, by doing that, that land which got no benefit would be put in Class "D," being the class that bore no rates at all, and that would get over the difficulty and free those people who would not get any benefit, but who were compelled to go into it against their wish. Since that time there has been a continuous agitation, and I do not think it would be wise for Parliament to compel people against their wish to go into this district. There are only a few at the lower end of the east side who desire to remain in, and those people, of course, get some advantage. That explains the position and how it is these people are put in the district against their wish—they were put in there by Act of Parliament, and had no opportunity of objecting.

2. *Mr. Guthrie.*] How many of them have been classified as having their land in Class "D"? —I think only a very few stray pieces of land have been classified as Class "D." I cannot give evidence as to that, but some evidence will be brought before you by some people who will be able to explain that.

3. *Mr. Anderson.*] The pink line on the plan is the boundary-line of the drainage-area?—Yes.

4. Is the Borough of Mosgiel in the drainage-area?—No, it is not.

THURSDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 1909.

HENRY PALMER examined. (No. 5.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A farmer at Otokia.

2. *Mr. Reid.*] And you are also a ratepayer there?—Yes.

3. Will you make your statement to the Committee?—I have been all my lifetime on this property. During the first floods in 1868 there were no embankments on the west side of the river, and the river-banks on the east side at Otokia were rather high, and we did not suffer from floods. Since then the large embankment has been erected, and my land is covered with water during flood-times. [Witness indicated on plan the position of his land.] I had 21 in. of water in my house during the last flood, and 150 acres of my property previous to the embankment being put up were clear of floods. In the 1878 floods the embankments were only carried down as far as Momona, and I had 100 fat bullocks on the banks of the river in my paddocks, but now I have nothing there on account of the water. The whole plain was under water. The West Taieri side was under water in the 1868 flood, and later it has been quite as high. There is only my land between the hills and the river, and the embankments force the water on to my property—it really makes it the river-bed.

4. *Mr. Anderson.*] And what you want is the west bank taken out?—Yes, or else some other relief of some kind.

5. *Mr. Reid.*] That bank does not do you any good?—No, it injures me—it is on the opposite side of the river.

6. What is the effect of it?—It forces the water on to my property.

7. You are in the drainage district?—Yes, and rated for it.

8. What do you think would be the proper thing to do?—Well, take me out of the district—it does not benefit me. The rates are being spent to repair this embankment. With every flood it has been broken down as long as I remember. The water always overflows those embankments, but before it does my property is covered with water.

9. Is it possible for the Board to do you any good in your opinion?—No, not that I am aware of.

10. Not with any works they may do?—No.

11. Are your lands classified?—Yes, in Class "B."

12. That is the second highest?—Yes.

13. What rating per acre are you subjected to under that class?—I think 6d. per acre.

14. And you get rated up to 4s.?—Yes.