We have much pleasure in placing on record our appreciation of the valuable information and assistance given us by counsel; by the witnesses; by officers of the Government, of the local bodies, and of the mining companies respectively; and by those private individuals and professional men who tendered their evidence.

A great amount of interest has been taken by the local public in the inquiry, and a large number of persons attended every sitting. Full and accurate reports have appeared in the Auckland newspapers and the local Press.

Personal investigation by Commission.

The Commissioners, as far as was practicable, personally visited every locality and farm mentioned by the witnesses, and satisfied themselves as to the accuracy or otherwise of the statements volunteered by the farming representatives as to the damage incurred through the floods, and they had conversations with numerous persons who did not give formal evidence. They desire to place on record their appreciation of the accuracy with which the evidence as a whole was given, and to point out that, although the evidence was not given on oath, there did not appear to the Commissioners to be any desire to overstate grievances.

Prior inquiry.

The Commissioners had before them the evidence given in 1907 before the Goldfields and Mines Committee of the House of Representatives (published as Parliamentary Paper I.–4A), as well as various departmental reports bearing on the subject of their commission and cognate questions.

River characteristics.

The following are the characteristics of the Rivers Waihou and Ohinemuri. The main river, the Upper Waihou, has a northerly course, rising near Lichfield, some sixty miles to the south of its junction with the Ohinemuri. It drains the western side of the main Te Aroha and Tauranga range of mountains and the flats adjacent to the river—in all, about 280,000 acres. The rainfall on this area is moderate, amounting to about 40 inches yearly. Floods in this river, before the bush was cleared off and drains were made through the flats and swampy lands of its basin, used to take three or more days to reach the Junction. Since settlement has taken place on these upper areas the bush has been cut down, and the swamps and the low-lying grounds drained to a considerable extent by very many miles (possibly amounting in all to hundreds of miles) of drains. The rain-waters, instead of taking weeks to gradually soak out of the bush, swamps, and lagoons, now come down more quickly and in much greater volume, and therefore more rapidly fill the river-bed than formerly. The sectional area and inclination of the river, which may or may not have been sufficient in a state of nature to unwater the district without serious flooding, is now quite insufficient to provide for the more rapid discharge caused by these operations of man in deforesting and draining the country. Not only have the works of settlement caused the rain-waters to come off more quickly, but the cutting of drains in the light soil existing in a large portion of the basin of the Upper Waihou has tended to rapidly carry into the river large quantities of light volcanic and pumiceous sands and silt, which have tended to block this watercourse, and raise its ordinary level in relation to the surrounding lands.

Willow-planting.

As Nature tried to reproduce a section of sufficient area to carry off the flood-waters by the erosion of the river-banks, the settlers, seeing their lands on the river-banks being cut away, tried to protect their losses by the planting of large masses of willows. These willow plantations have not been kept within any reasonable bounds, and have resulted in a reduction of the naturally too small cross-section of the river. The river is choked, both on the banks and in places in the bed, by masses of willow trunks and branches, with the result that