

55. Have you ever appealed against that?—No. There are paddocks that are let for grazing at the rate of £4 per acre a year. There is the land that has been let for gardening purposes. That was previous to the floods. When they saw the floods they backed out of their agreement. The agreement was not signed. The Chinese have already given notice to leave the garden. They cannot keep on any longer, although they have been fifteen years there.

56. It would be worth how much?—An average of about £1 5s. an acre.

57. *Mr. Mitchelson.*] That is for rental purposes?—Yes. Some of the land was sold at £60 a half-acre for building-sites.

58. *The Chairman.*] On terms or cash?—Cash. The greater part of those flats would be equally valuable for building-sites if the tailings had never been put into the river.

59. Is there much demand for building-sites: the town is not growing very rapidly?—It would have grown very much more rapidly if it had not been for the tailings.

60. What would have made the town grow?—If the tailings had been stacked.

61. Apart from the tailings, what would have made it grow?—The mining industry and the farming industry.

62. *Mr. Mueller.*] Is there any unoccupied land about Paeroa?—Yes, any amount.

63. Could that be utilized if there had been no tailings at all?—The whole of the land would not be utilized for agricultural purposes, but plots were very much sought after.

64. What do you reckon the present capital value of that property is?—Not more than £1,000, owing to the damage. We shall not get the rental value for more than that out of it.

65. *The Chairman.*] You will practically get half?—That is only since the last flood. Had there been no tailings in the river the land would not have been so much damaged; the land would have been of very much more value for building-sites.

66. You say that, apart from being agricultural land, it was suburban land, and as suburban land you might have been able to get a higher rental than £104: what rental?—I think the great majority of it would have been sold by this time at corresponding prices with Porritt's.

67. How many new houses have been built in Paeroa during the last five years, apart from business premises?—I should think about forty or fifty. It is impossible almost to sell township sections, owing to the floods.

68. *Mr. Mueller.*] Where has the building taken place?—On the high ground and hills near the Thames Railway. Four new houses have been built there practically within the last few months.

69. You are chairman of this Silting Association?—Yes.

70. What are the objects of the association: what does your association want as regards this silting matter?—We want the tailings not put in the river, or a remedy that will be equally as good. We want the present condition of the rivers relieved at the earliest possible date.

71. If something is not done, what do you think will be the result?—All the low-lying lands adjacent to the river will be practically useless in a very few years' time—it will be of very little, if any, use.

72. Do you produce a letter received by one of the previous chairmen of the Silting Association—a letter in connection with the deposit of silt?—Yes; it is a letter from Mr. Montgomery, mining inspector, Western Australia. [Exhibit No. 6.]

73. You have described the result of the last flood on the land that you are trustee of. Has that land been previously flooded, and to what extent?—During our residence here of eighteen years, we were here nine years before there was one flood, which came after three days of very heavy rain. The water from that flood covered about 10 acres of that land—that is, the lowest of it—about 18 in. deep. That would be about nine years ago.

74. *The Chairman.*] You do not know whether that rain was local?—No, I could not say. It covered about 10 acres to a depth of about 18 in., except at the lowest place, where the creek runs. It was about 4 ft. deep there. The last flood completely covered the whole land.

75. What was the date?—About the 30th March. It completely covered the whole of those flats—the whole of the 40 acres mentioned.

76. *Mr. Mueller.*] The last flood was considerably higher than the one of nine years ago?—Yes, there were two floods last year, one within a week of the other, which covered the whole of the property except a strip of about half a chain wide on the highest part of the river-bank.

77. *Mr. Tunks.*] Could the steamers get to Paeroa at the places you have spoken of except on the tide?—I could not say.

*The Chairman:* We understand that they came up with the tide; the Commission understand that.

78. *Mr. Tunks.*] Can they now get to the Railway Wharf on the tide?—I do not think it would be possible.

79. You have been here about eighteen years. During that time has there been any considerable clearing of the country, felling of bush, and so forth?—Yes, to a certain extent.

80. There has been a good deal cleared during the last eighteen years?—Not much cleared for agricultural purposes: simply for mining purposes as far as the Ohinemuri is concerned.

81. That, of course, is the watershed?—Yes.

82. Will not that have a considerable effect in increasing the amount of water that is brought into the river?—It would to a small degree, but only a limited area has been cleared of bush.

83. Would it not have the effect of bringing the water more quickly into the river?—

*The Chairman:* Do you not think you might bring such evidence direct? Is there any object in asking such questions of this witness, when the question can be dealt with directly by expert evidence? You will be able to produce certain direct evidence that there has been a certain acreage cut down. There is no object in producing indirect evidence.