

49. I think you made representations to Mr. Ranson about it, and representations were made to the County Council?—Yes.

50. Was that in consequence of the silt?—Yes.

51. Is this the letter sent in by the manager of your company: "N.S.S. Company, Auckland, 26th November, 1901.—The Chairman, Ohinemuri County Council, Paeroa.—DEAR SIR,—I have to call your attention to the difficulties of navigation in the Thames River with which our captains have had to contend for some time past. The silting-up at different points between the Puke and Junction wharves is obstructing the navigation of our steamers, and if something is not done very soon to remove the obstructions it is a question of only a short time when their passage to the Junction Wharf will be stopped altogether. As this is a very serious matter to the district, and may involve business people in extra charges on their consignments, it is of importance that steps with that object in view should be taken without delay in the interests of all concerned. I shall be glad to hear from you as early as convenient.—Yours faithfully, For the Northern S.S. Company, CHARLES RANSON, Manager"—Yes.

52. That was written at your instigation?—Yes.

53. Is this also another letter written at your instigation: "N.S.S. Company, Auckland, 18th December, 1902.—Secretary, Ohinemuri County Council, Paeroa.—DEAR SIR,—I have to call your attention to the fact that, owing to the shallowness of the Ohinemuri River, our steamers have for some time discharged and loaded at the Puke Wharf. As this will lead to constant heavy traffic on the road leading from the Puke Wharf to Paeroa, my Board respectfully request that your Council will give special attention to this road and keep it in good order and repair.—Yours faithfully, For the N.S.S. Company, CHARLES RANSON, Manager"—Yes.

54. So we may take it that between these dates, in consequence of the river shallowing up between the Junction and the Puke, you had to go down to Te Puke?—Yes.

55. Now, a good deal of sand has come down lately between the Junction and Te Puke; this last flood made a bit of a difference?—I suppose it has, but I have not been up. It has been reported to me that it has been shallow for some time.

56. The captains of the small steamers have to report these matters to you?—Yes.

57. And when obstructions occur in the Ohinemuri they are reported to you in the ordinary course of duty?—Yes.

58. It has been reported to you that this portion of the river has been shallowing up?—Yes, by both captains. It was a question of the tide going up. If the tide was low they could not get through.

59. You have a small steamer called the "Rotokohu" which tows the goods you bring to Te Aroha; and I understand that boat cannot go from Te Puke to the Junction at low tide, or half-tide either?—No, I do not think so.

60. From that fact you conclude that this portion of the river is shallowing up rapidly?—Yes.

61. Did you notice if this last flood made any difference at all to the river?—No.

62. Captain Bettis seemed to notice that it had had an effect on the banks of the river?—Always after a fresh there must be more sand on the edge of the banks.

63. *The Chairman.*] So in your opinion it is gradually accumulating?—Yes.

64. *Mr. Moresby.*] I believe your boat has twin screws, and was built specially for this trade?—Yes.

65. Supposing that Te Puke got shoaled up, and you were compelled to go to Kopu, do you think the fact of your steamers not running regularly would have any effect on the channel?—Yes.

66. What effect do you think it would have?—The channel would shallow. The action of the steamers, I think, is keeping it open. They are keeping the river stirred up. That is my opinion.

67. *The Chairman.*] Do you consult from time to time when any changes take place in the river?—Yes. In a fresh the current seems to divert sand from the banks into the channel, and then it gradually goes back to the banks.

68. You do not think there is any decrease in depth in the whole over the bottom of the channel?—There may be a trifle, but not enough to affect the vessel.

69. Do you think that the action of your propellers muddies the water more now than a few years ago?—I do not think so. It was always muddy and slushy.

70. There is no difference in the colour of the trail you leave after you?—Yes, in the upper part of the river. Years ago the water was very clear and bright.

71. How many miles down do you notice that?—The water is really discoloured all the way.

72. *Mr. Mueller.*] Do you remember Mr. Stewart, C.E., making inquiries from you about three years ago as regards the navigation of the river?—Yes, I think I do.

73. Did you not tell him then that you thought there may have been a difference of 6 in. or less?—Yes.

74. Do you think that from 1907, when you told him that, up to the present time the river has been getting, not better, but worse?—It would not improve.

75. As you now leave Te Puke instead of the Junction, you get down to the mouth of the river earlier on the tide than used to be the case?—Yes.

76. I suppose when you were running from the Junction you very often used to scrape across the bar from Kopu out?—Yes.

77. You do not do that so much now?—At times. It all depends on our passage down, because every call means a quarter of an hour.

78. But, having a shorter distance to go, you have a better chance of getting over the mouth earlier on the tide?—Yes.

79. You only go up with the tide and down with the tide, so you never see the river actually at low water?—No.