

law relating to the financing of bodies in gold-mining districts in the North Island of New Zealand. I propose now to leave these considerations, and refer to another class of evidence which I intend to submit to the Commission. A good deal of evidence was placed before the Commission regarding floods. Much was said about the nature of the flood of the present year, and a good deal was also said about the flood in 1907. By this time I think it is very evident that the flood of 1907 was one of a special character. It was one that was very general all over the Province of Auckland. It brought destruction not merely in the Ohinemuri district, but also in other parts of the province, extending from the North Cape down to Lake Taupo. It is in the minds of every one here that bridges were washed away in very large numbers, and a great deal of damage done to railway and roads. The Waikato line for a distance extending between Huntly and Pokeno was under water for nearly a month, and railway communication was interrupted. That circumstance shows that the flood was one not special to the Ohinemuri, and not referable to any of the peculiar conditions affecting this river. With regard to the flood of 1910—of a few weeks ago—we had certainly a most extraordinary state of affairs. We had a state of affairs that is certainly without parallel in the records of New Zealand—a state of affairs that is only paralleled in the records of rainfall in two instances. There fell at Waihi during a period of fourteen consecutive hours 14 in. of rain. That accounted for the flood of the year 1910. I would invite your attention to the peculiar topographical features of Waihi. You have been there, and you have seen that it is a huge basin surrounded on all sides by hills. It is, as it were, a very large bottle with an extremely narrow neck through the Karangahake Gorge. I cannot recall what the acreage of the plains is, but I intend to call the evidence of witnesses who will show the quantity of water that fell upon these plains, represented by the 14 in. of rain, and then you will be in a position to imagine for yourself how tremendous a volume of water poured down that rift between the mountains and scattered itself over the surrounding plains. There was nothing extraordinary in its doing so: it is what one would have expected in the circumstances. Now, in regard to a remedy, it is not in the province of the Waihi Borough Council to suggest a remedy. The Waihi Borough Council does not cause the evils, and yet the suggestion made is that it should pay for them. It does not cause the evils, and remedies will be suggested, I take it, from other quarters. What does appear to be a very obvious partial cause of the trouble consists, no doubt, in the accumulation of willows. I have been fortunate enough to have had placed before me a statement by gentlemen who have had some experience as to the effect of willows upon the flood-waters of streams, as to the quantity of land that was placed under water by these willows, as to the steps that were taken to remedy the nuisance, and as to the very satisfactory results obtained in consequence of it. That evidence relates to a district in the Waikato—a portion of the Waipa County. There are two streams there—the Mangapiko and the Mangahoe. In one of these—I cannot recall which it was at the present time—there was a very large growth of willows on both banks of the stream, with the consequence that when the waters rose their course was impeded, and they overflowed their banks, and that left under water a very large area of the surrounding country. This became such a serious trouble that steps were taken to get rid of the nuisance. The willows were ringed and some injection was put into the trees, with the result that all the trees died. Men were employed to take up the rotten branches as they fell from time to time. The consequence of that is that the flood-waters ceased to overflow the surrounding country, and all that area—I think it amounts to 1,500 or 2,000 acres—is now land under cultivation, and forms some of the finest dairying country in the Waikato. There was a somewhat similar experience in the case of the Mangapiko. It was found that the willows retarded the flow of water; and the removal of the willows has had the result of removing to a very large extent the mischiefs that arose through the water overflowing the banks of the stream. I pass on from that, and I wish to refer to the question of the alleged deposit of silt in that portion of the Waihou below the Junction. I propose to call witnesses who will prove that they took samples from the river at various points below the Junction, and for the purpose of comparison they also took samples in the upper Waihou as far back as above Te Aroha. These samples have been examined, and the evidence that will be placed before you will be that there have been samples so fine taken above Te Aroha, where no tailings are discharged, where no tailings ever have been discharged—that they are as fine as the samples that were taken from the lower Waihou.

*Mr. Mitchelson:* Tailings have been discharged into the upper Waihou above Te Aroha.

*Mr. McVeagh:* Yes, at Waiorongomai; but these samples were taken above there, at the Gordon Settlement, at a place where, I am informed, no tailings ever were discharged, and they are as fine as the samples that were taken in the lower Waihou. The method by which these tailings were taken will be described by the engineer, who made a special appliance for the purpose. It does not consist of a jam-tin on the end of a pole; he had a tube, of which he has prepared a diagram, which will illustrate the special method that he adopted for the purpose of securing fair samples of the tailings; and a gentleman who is connected with the Mines Department at Waihi—the Director of the School of Mines—will advise what the result of his examination was. That is an outline of the case I intend to put before you on behalf of the Waihi Borough Council. I would therefore ask—as I know it will—that it receive very grave consideration. I would ask that this Commission should not overlook the special demands and the special requirements of a large community of rapid growth in a goldfields township. I would ask the Commission to bear in mind the special conditions that apply to that that do not apply to the case of other townships of a permanent character, where you have all the elements of stability, where the community does not rest for its very existence upon merely one industry, as Waihi does, but where they have other things upon which they may rest. These are considerations which are proper to be borne in mind, and these are considerations which ought to influence the Commission in coming to its conclusions upon the evidence which I propose to place before it.