

“(c.) To report your opinion as to what matters, if any, should be adjusted by legislation; and

“(d.) Generally, to report your opinion on all matters arising out of or touching the premises, including the question as to whether or not one or more competent authorities shall be appointed to control the whole or any portion of the said river and what statutory powers should be possessed by such authority.”

Your Commission also required us to report separately in respect of each river.

INVESTIGATIONS MADE.

Sittings, Evidence, and Inspections.—Your Commissioners met in Dunedin, and proceeded to Oamaru on the 30th June, 1919, where a duly advertised sitting was held the same evening, at which sworn evidence was received from six witnesses representing the Oamaru Borough Council and the Waitaki County Council. On the following day the Commission proceeded to Duntroon, and inspected the river from its confluence with the Waitaki River to a point above Livingstone.

In addition to examining the river and its general surroundings, the Commission inspected and examined the sluicing claims on the Livingstone and Maere-whenua diggings, and that portion of the Oamaru Borough Council's water-race affected by the questions submitted to us.

On the same evening the Commission held a sitting in the Duntroon School-house and examined a further nine witnesses, representative of the mining interests, the lands affected, the Oamaru Borough water-race management, and the Waitaki County Council.

Mining.—Your Commissioners found that the mining operations in the district, although fairly extensive in the past, have now become considerably reduced. Nevertheless it is clear that mining operations of greater or less magnitude are likely to be carried on for a further twenty-five years. The detritus from the mining claims has filled up many of the side gullies, and comes down the Maere-whenua to its confluence with the Waitaki River, filling up its bed to a considerable extent. The prejudicial effects of this detritus are particularly noticeable near the town of Duntroon, where the waterway is considerably restricted by the present road-and-railway bridge, the piers of which are also not placed in such a way as to be favourable to the free flow of the water.

As regards the mining operations, your Commissioners are of opinion that nothing can be done to stop the gradual travel down the river of the mining detritus, and that, even though the mining operations were to be immediately suspended, this would not mitigate the trouble for very many years to come. Further, a certain number of miners are at present making their livelihood on the goldfield in this locality, to whom it would be a very great hardship if future mining operations were vetoed. The amount of gold being won is, however, not sufficient in quantity to justify our recommending any contribution towards the cost of remedial measures being demanded from this source; but the General Government, having been responsible for the proclamation of the river as a sludge-channel for the deposit of mining-tailings under the Mining Act, cannot escape liability to provide a substantial sum towards the cost of the works recommended hereinafter by your Commissioners.

Damage above Duntroon.—Although a certain amount of damage is being done to the lands abutting on the river above Duntroon, your Commissioners do not consider that the interests involved are of sufficient importance to justify them in recommending the provision of special remedial works. The endeavours of the County Council to protect their roads in the vicinity are all that can reasonably be expected.

Surveys.—Your Commissioners had the necessary surveys made, and met at a later date in Wellington to complete their investigations and formulate their report, and now beg respectfully to submit their findings on the various heads in the order of reference, as follows:—