

latter respect, as far as your Commissioners could judge in the absence of personal knowledge as to the original conditions, their contentions seemed well founded.

LOCAL BODIES INTERESTED.

The controlling bodies interested consist of the Western Taieri Land Drainage Board, which controls all the land lying between the hills from Outram to the lakes; the Silverstream Commissioners, who deal with the portion which is known as East Taieri; and the Taieri County Council.

In the past there has been a multiplicity of bodies dealing with river matters, but in 1908 these bodies, who had been continually contending one against the other, were abolished, and a combined Taieri Drainage Board was formed. However, the inhabitants of East Taieri were dissatisfied and petitioned Parliament, with the result that the district was divided up, the West Taieri being placed under the Western Taieri Land Drainage Board, and the control of the Silverstream was taken over by two Commissioners appointed by the Government.

No body at the present time undertakes the flood protection of the eastern side of the plain. The Taieri County Council has no control over the river, its functions consisting practically of repairing the damage done when a flood occurs, without being in any way able to carry out works to prevent such damage occurring in the future.

Certain lands in the vicinity of the lakes come within the Bruce County Council's jurisdiction; and if the works recommended by your Commissioners are carried out a small portion of these lands should be included in the area controlled by the body charged with the duty of carrying out the protective works.

The Dunedin City Corporation, being responsible for the aggravation of the damage in the Waipori due to its system of weekly flushing of the pond at the back of its diversion weir, is also interested in this question.

LAND SETTLEMENT AND TENURE.

Within the area damaged by floods there is very little Crown land, but some of the land is held by large landowners who lease it to tenants with the proviso that the tenants must pay the drainage rates.

There is no doubt that were the menace of floods removed, a considerable amount of further settlement by the subdivision of the present large areas would take place, and the productivity of the plain would be much increased. Under present conditions the fear of damage by floods prevents much work being done which otherwise would be undertaken if the farmers could feel confident of being able to reap where they had sown. Furthermore, the adequate draining of the lower levels would result in their actual productivity, apart from their potential productivity, being greatly increased. At the present time the ground-water level is too near the surface to permit vegetation attaining its maximum development.

In addition to the productivity being diminished by the rise in the subsoil water, evidence showed that through the floods the land has been, of late years, frequently rendered entirely useless, being covered by water as long as six months at a time, with the result that the valuable vegetation is entirely destroyed. The fact that these settlers, though struggling, have been enabled to carry on despite their inability to use large areas of their sections for considerable periods shows that the plain has great potentialities.

SURVEYS.

Your Commissioners, having before them the result of the surveys made by the Commission of 1917 and those of other previous investigators, as well as the before-mentioned valuable plan of the Western Taieri Land Drainage Board, have been enabled to draw up their report without the necessity for further surveys. Accordingly, after taking evidence and making their inspections, your Commissioners proceeded at once to formulate their report, and now beg respectfully to submit their findings under the various headings in the order of reference, as follows :—