

effect, as, when recently seen after a fresh, the bulk of the water was running down the South Branch and the groyne was partly wrecked.

From time to time small works have been erected by individual settlers along their own frontages, but little effect has been produced by them.

LOCAL BODIES INTERESTED.

The boundary-line between the Ashburton and Geraldine Counties runs down the middle of the river to the head of Rangitata Island, and from that point to the sea the line runs down the middle of the North Branch. Rangitata Island comes within the Geraldine County, but it is controlled by the Rangitata Island River and Road Board.

The Ashburton County Council takes no interest in the question of river-protection, because the left bank of the river is high and has not been eroded to any appreciable extent for a great many years.

No direct evidence was tendered of any damage on the north side, but settlers on the south side pointed out one locality near the mouth where considerable erosion had taken place on the north bank many years ago.

LAND SETTLEMENT AND TENURE.

The greater part of the land affected by this river is freehold. The largest exception to this is the part of Rangitata Island above the railway, this being a railway reserve.

The rateable value of Rangitata Island is £73,000, and the population about one hundred.

A decided opinion was expressed that if it were not for the fear of floods and the damage they cause there would be a considerably larger population on the island. It was also stated that the development of the island was being retarded by the absence of a road-bridge, as settlers cannot go to and fro at will. Although not within the order of reference, your Commissioners feel bound to endorse the opinion of settlers as to the urgent necessity for a traffic-bridge crossing the South Branch of the river.

SURVEYS.

As no recent plans of the river existed from which its present condition could be arrived at, your Commissioners found it necessary to adjourn their deliberations for some months in order to have fresh surveys made. These surveys were made with the object of ascertaining what land had actually been washed away, and, if possible, what was the ordinary discharging-capacity of the various channels.

It had been suggested by more than one witness that the South Branch might be closed up altogether, and all the water sent through the North Branch. It was further stated that the closing of the middle channel by the shortening of the South Branch railway-bridge was sending more water into the South Branch than it could reasonably carry.

A considerable amount of levelling over the countryside was also necessary to see whether there was any real ground for the belief that the river, if once it got over its banks on the south side, might change its course permanently.

Your Commissioners perused all the plans to which they were able to obtain access, including some accompanying a report made by Sir Julius von Haast at the time that he was Provincial Geologist.

REFERENCE No. 1.

To inquire into the cause or causes of the silting-up of the channels, the flooding of the adjacent lands by the said rivers, the erosion of their banks, and the damage to the surrounding country.

Your Commissioners found no definite evidence that silting-up of the channels as a whole had occurred in this river. Many channels had become completely filled up, but simultaneously an equal cross-section would be eroded by the river somewhere else within the limits of the river-bed, so that on the average it may be taken that no great alteration has taken place within historic times other than could be accounted for by the action of gorse, broom,