

HENRY DOUGLAS MORPETH examined. (No. 49.)

1. *Mr. McVeagh.*] You are Town Clerk of the Borough of Waihi?—Yes.
2. *The Chairman.*] You gave evidence before the Mines Committee?—Yes, on pages 37 to 41.
3. *Mr. McVeagh.*] The Borough of Waihi was incorporated, when?—1st March, 1902.
4. And you have been Town Clerk and Borough Treasurer during the whole period?—Yes.
5. What is the population at the present time?—I estimate it at about six thousand.
6. During what period has the place grown to that population?—I should say it did not amount to very much until about twelve years ago. The growth is principally within the last twelve years.
7. How long have you known the town?—I have known it intimately for eight years. I was in the town twelve years ago.
8. Generally speaking, what is the character of the buildings in Waihi?—Naturally, in accordance with the requirements of the population, which is almost entirely a working-man population, and the character of the buildings is very small.
9. Are they constructed with a view to permanence?—No; rather the other way.
10. From your knowledge of the population of the borough, what percentage would you say belongs to the working-class of the community?—I should say, 85 per cent.
11. *The Chairman.*] What do you mean by "working-class"?—The men engaged in manual labour in the mines. Mining is the only industry there.
12. Do you consider a clerk a working-man?—I refer to manual labourers in the mines.
13. *Mr. McVeagh.*] What is the class of their dwellings?—Very small, and of not much value. It stands to reason that men receiving such wages as they do—8s. to 10s. at the very outside—cannot afford a very big house, and they cannot borrow money on their property.
14. What is the nature of the titles all over the borough?—All the titles are under the Mining Act—residence licenses.
15. That is a title that endures from year to year on the payment of 5s.?—That is so, but as a matter of fact most of the residence-sites are secured by the payment of a rent of 10s. a year. It is a lease for forty-two years with a right of renewal.
16. I think a large portion of the population of Waihi live in boardinghouses?—There is a considerable element—young unmarried men—who live in boardinghouses.
17. Is there any industry in the place save gold-mining?—Practically none.
18. I think there is no such thing as a farming industry round about Waihi?—Not in the immediate neighbourhood.
19. I may take it, I suppose, that the place has not at present any of those elements that make for permanence and stability?—I am afraid not.
20. You told us what the nature of the titles was: can you say of your own knowledge whether there is any difficulty in obtaining money on the security of such titles?—Yes, I can say most positively that investors will not look at the title.
21. I think you made an estimate of the annual requirements of your borough, based on the average of the last three years?—Yes: it was £20,900.
22. *The Chairman.*] Can you give us the details of what that includes?—I have an abstract of accounts, which I presume will be sufficient for your purposes, as follows: 1908, £22,552 0s. 11d.; 1909, £26,226 7s. 11d.; 1910, £23,688 2s. 5d.: total, £72,466 11s. 3d. I will explain the apparent discrepancy. Last January twelvemonths our overdraft stood at £25,000, and the bank put the screw on and refused further advances. After attempting to negotiate a fresh loan, which was a failure, we came to an arrangement by which we were to reduce the amount of the overdraft by £500 per month. That is going on at the present time. Immediately on that we had to shorten sail very much. A large number of men were discharged, officials were discharged and salaries reduced, and retrenchment became the order of the day; so there is a marked decrease in the expenditure over last year as compared with the two previous years. Roughly speaking, it is about £8,000 less than in the previous year. This is a statement of the accounts for the same years [Exhibit No. 36]:—

Waihi Borough Council.

1910.

Receipts.			Expenditure.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
Gold duty	20,473	5 4	Roads and footpaths	8,346	18 10
Per Court	1,750	12 6	Ohinemuri County	1,056	3 2
Rates	£1,085	1 8	Administration and other charges	1,704	6 5
Other sources	379	2 11	Hospital and charitable aid	1,575	0 0
	1,464	4 7	Waterworks	314	13 4
			Street-lighting and other public utilities	786	1 11
			Expenditure in public institutions	354	1 8
			Recreation-ground and reserves	407	16 6
			Waihi Technical School	500	0 0
			Inquiry Main Road	173	17 5
			Bank interest	1,072	0 0
			Miscellaneous	381	19 2
	£23,688	2 5		£16,672	18 5

Gold duty paid at Customs prior to 31st March, 1910, but not received by Council until April, 1910, £2,408.—
H. D. MORPETH, Town Clerk.