

DAWSON DONALDSON examined. (No. 51.)

1. *Mr. McVeagh.*] You are a member of the Borough Council of Waihi?—Yes.
2. You have held that position for, how long?—Since the borough started, with the exception of a few months.
3. You have given some consideration to this question of diverting the gold duty?—Yes, a good deal.
4. Were you present when Mr. Morpeth gave his evidence?—Yes.
5. Are you prepared to indorse Mr. Morpeth's views?—Very largely, yes.
6. Do you wish to add to them or modify them?—I would like to make one correction, and that is with regard to the liability of the borough for hospital construction and maintenance. Mr. Morpeth was asked what the present demands on the borough were from the Hospital Board, and I think he gave it as £1,600. As a matter of fact, it is £4,000. The new wing of the Hospital will cost £2,600. Mr. Morpeth was speaking of the proposed lesser extension. The Health authorities considered it imperative that we should have an infectious ward.
7. *The Chairman.*] What do you do with infectious diseases now?—At the present time they are put in a building adjoining the main building, which violates all the principles of hospital-management. The additional building would cost £1,500 to £1,600.
8. Is that to be built this year?—The medical authorities are pressing it on very urgently, and at the present moment the infectious-diseases ward is filled, and they have to accommodate patients on the verandah, porches, &c. It was built to accommodate thirty-five patients in the first place, and now there are fifty there, with the result I have indicated. Dr. Valentine and other medical men are pressing that adequate accommodation should be provided.
9. How many beds do the present side wards accommodate?—Only five beds each. We have four main wards and two small rooms built off the main corridor.
10. You have an infectious ward, but it is not big enough or is unsuitable?—It is unsuitable, and is a menace to the main Hospital.
11. Do you wish to add anything further?—I may say that our hospital accommodation is taxed very largely by patients outside the borough. We treat patients from Karangahake and Waikino. I think, roughly speaking, that one-fourth of the patients we treat are from outside the hospital district.
12. I think the nearest hospital is at the Thames?—Yes. In regard to the question of abattoirs, we tried to borrow the money from the Government to build an abattoir, but they refused us. I think they thought we had got quite enough as it was. We were given to understand that the Government could not entertain any application for further loans; that we were thrown upon our own resources and must paddle our own canoe. As to the gold duty, my investigation of the conditions in both Islands has caused me to come to this conclusion: that the mining in the South Island is largely on the surface, and not much capital is required to embark in mining there.
13. *Mr. Mitchelson.*] There is a great deal of quartz-crushing in the Inangahua district?—What we thought in Waihi is this: that the nature of the mining is such that an enormous amount of capital is required to reach the reefs. We think the development of the big mine shows us that adjacent mines will have to be sunk even lower than the big mine in order that they may reach the reefs. If that is so, I think it most unjust and unfair to tax or suggest the taxing of investors who have to incur such an outlay before they can hope for any return. And then there is the small rate—if I may call it so—that the law places upon the gold. We look upon the gold duty as a duty in lieu of a rate, and as much fairer than a rate, because it does not unduly oppress anybody. Capital is sought to be made out of the expenditure on our Beach Road, which I think is very unfair.
14. *The Chairman.*] Tell us your opinion about the Beach Road?—I think it is a very fair and correct thing for the borough to undertake, because we are without access to any pleasure or health resorts. I think the health of the town justifies the expenditure of £500 or £1,000.
15. How many miles long is this road?—Five miles.
16. *Mr. McVeagh.*] Before the borough was formed, what was its general condition?—The condition of the place was very bad. It was very bad from a sanitary point of view.
17. What was the method of sanitation adopted by the local governing body then?—It was simply horrible. The bulk of the places were not visited at all, with the result that the nightsoil was buried in the town.
18. There was a population of four thousand: was there any provision made for supplying them with water?—No.
19. Or light?—None whatsoever.
20. Do you recollect anything about the condition of the roads?—The roads were largely impassable. The Main Road was fairly decent, but the request of local residents to the County Council for expenditure within the limits of the town received only a very cool reception. That was really the primary cause of the people feeling that they were unjustly treated.
21. *The Chairman.*] You gave evidence before the House?—Yes.
22. You confirm that evidence?—Yes; I think it is correct.
23. *Mr. Cotter.*] What annual rates do you pay in the borough? We have been told that it is 6d. in the pound?—That is the first general rate. Then there is the sanitary rate, 4s. 3d. per quarter.
24. You say you were in the borough when it was formed into a borough?—Yes.
25. Is it not a fact that the whole reason for applying to have it formed into a borough was to obtain the gold duty?—Absolutely not. That was one of the reasons, but that it was the sole reason I absolutely deny.
26. Up to the period of the formation of the Waihi Borough, is it not a fact that the greater part of the gold duty was spent practically in roading the district, and, so far as it would enable them to do so, improving the various townships of the district?—I do not think so.