

52. *The Chairman.*] Is there any matter you would like to touch upon?—I think we pay too much commission. We have been trying to get a wholesale market. We do not recognize that a public fish-market would be of any use to us. Fish must be dealt with right away, especially in the summer-time, and if they were sent to a public market they might lie there and be rotten before they were sold. What we want is a wholesale market. We have interviewed the Dunedin City Council, and they have it in view at the present time. If we could get such a market we might get an auctioneer of our own. We pay 10 per cent. on the auction prices and also have to pay railage. We have to pay a watchman to watch the fish when it is put on the trucks at Port Chalmers. If we do not do that a considerable number of fish go astray before they get to the market. We have to buy locks for the railway-wagons as well. We think the Government should do more for us than they do at present. We have to pay a yearly license of 5s. There is a Government Inspector to see that we do not catch undersized fish. That, I think, might be done away with, because practically no undersized fish are caught outside the Heads. The matter of watching for undersized fish might well be left to the police.

53. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Have you ever made any attempt to improve the present method of distribution of fish, such as having your own salesmen and sending it round from door to door?—We have not done it yet, but that was our object in forming this society. We wanted to create a fund and have a wholesale business and keep a salesman of our own.

54. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Would this reduce the cost of fish to the public?—I believe it would, because we would be able to sell our fish cheaper. This 10-per-cent. commission takes away a lot of money.

55. Would the public get the benefit of this 10 per cent. or would it go to the association, or would you halve it?—I dare say we would halve it. I also think that the freight on fish on the railway might be reduced.

THOMAS SCURR, Land and Estate Agent, &c., examined on oath. (No. 8.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you, Mr. Scurr?—An auctioneer and land-salesman, Dunedin.

2. How many years' experience have you had?—I have been in business two and a half years in the auctioneering line.

3. Have you a pretty wide scope in your business?—Yes, very wide.

4. You know land-values pretty well in the district?—Yes.

5. Is it within your knowledge that land-values have gone up within the last ten years?—Yes.

6. Mostly in the country or in the town?—In the city and suburbs.

7. To what do you mainly attribute that rise?—That is a very hard thing to get at. Of course, there has been a demand for land. A number of houses have been pulled down in the city, and people have gone to the suburbs to live, and city property has been utilized for business purposes. That happening in many cases has tended to increase the value of land in the suburbs. New sections are difficult to get.

8. The building societies help people?—There has been a tendency for years for people to own their own houses.

9. Would you say that the growth of the city was the main factor?—Old houses have been condemned by the Inspector and demolished. That has happened, and the vacant sections have not been utilized. You talk of the values of houses going up. Hot and cold water are now installed in houses, and even four- or five-roomed houses are not complete without them.

10. The Government has built houses and let them at low rentals?—Yes; but the Government did not select a good quarter. You refer to the Windle Settlement?

11. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] What is the objection to that quarter?—It is not easily got at from the tram. It is a penny fare, but it is on the hill. If the Government had gone to St. Kilda or to some of those places on the flat the houses would never have been empty.

12. *The Chairman.*] Is it not a fact that desirable sites were at such high prices that it was impossible for the Government to buy them and erect cheap houses on such land?—Yes, I believe that is the case. As regards the renting of houses, there is no doubt about it that people are continually coming to us asking for four- and five-roomed houses and we have not got them. They want them at 12s.; and they have to take five- or six-roomed houses at 15s. or 16s. a week. There is a scarcity of small houses.

13. So you think that is a great addition to the cost of living?—Yes, a working-man having to pay so much for a larger house than he can afford to keep. The rent of a modern four- or five-roomed house in the city with hot and cold water and drainage is about 12s. a week.

14. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] What would be the rent of a four-roomed house in a similar locality—a house thirty or thirty-five years old—with none of those conveniences?—About 9s. a week.

15. *Mr. Macdonald.*] Your figures do not quite agree with the figures compiled by the Department of Labour in 1911. They say that the rent of a four-roomed house in Dunedin is 10s. 6d.?—I say you could not get a modern four-roomed house in Dunedin at 10s. 6d. a week, with hot and cold water and bathroom. You can get houses for 8s. and 9s. a week—very old houses which lots of people would not care to live in.

16. *The Chairman.*] I suppose in the two years and a half you have been here you have had examples of land rising rapidly in value?—At St. Kilda, Musselburgh, and St. Clair rents have risen very rapidly, but in Roslyn, North-east Valley, and Mornington, I do not think they have altered at all.

17. *Mr. Hall.*] Do you think that is partially due to the extension of the trams?—Yes, and surf-bathing. It became a fashionable neighbourhood.

18. *Mr. Fairbairn.*] Generally, favourite localities command the highest rents?—Yes, Musselburgh is one of the finest localities in Dunedin.