

5. Would you suggest how he should be appointed?—We have thought of one or two ways of doing so. Some have suggested there should be a meeting of objectors, and that that meeting should elect a man. The other suggestion was that a meeting of ratepayers, not necessarily objectors, should suggest a man.

6. Which do you favour?—I think the fairest way would be selection by the greatest number: that would be by the ratepayers.

7. Have you considered whether the provision of the law that the valuation of the Department is deemed to be correct and the burden of proving otherwise thrown on the objector is a proper one?—I consider it is most unfair. I do not see that any one side should be deemed to be correct until the thing is finished.

*Mr. McVeagh* (to the Commission): I do not think I need elaborate that any further. Every objector here would give similar views. I now propose to deal with the question of excessive valuations. There is a good deal of feeling in this borough in regard to that. I may say there was a valuation made of the borough in the early part of this year. It was rendered necessary, no doubt, by the carrying of the poll for rating on unimproved value. In consequence of that valuation there were objections and feeling amongst a large section of the community became very pronounced, and a petition was circulated and sent to the House. I propose to call evidence regarding some typical cases. I appreciate that the Commission is not set up for the purpose of revising valuations, but with the object of seeing whether the objections were well founded.

WALTER BIRCH LLOYD re-examined.

1. *Mr. McVeagh.*] You have given consideration with respect to the valuations made under the Valuation of Land Act in this borough?—Yes.

2. Perhaps, in the first instance, we might have a general description of the character of the borough?—The business centre is grouped along the Main South Road, between the junction of the Panmure Road and the Railway-station Road to what is known as the Nixon Monument.

3. Outside of that, take the outlying portions of the borough: how would you describe it—agricultural, rural, pastoral, or what?—Some of the land is used for dairy-farming and some for fruit-growing. Near the station there are also nursery gardens.

4. There are golf-links in the borough?—Yes.

5. The favourite residential area is near the golf-links?—Yes. There has been a good deal of building going on in the neighbourhood of the golf-links, principally, I think, on account of its nearness to the railway-station.

6. A new station was built there recently, was there not?—Yes. It has caused a very big increase in the traffic on the railway-line.

7. Do you know whether or not there has been any dissatisfaction in regard to the valuation in this district recently?—There has been a great deal of dissatisfaction.

8. I think that came to a head in consequence of the carrying of the poll on rating on unimproved value at the beginning of the year?—That is so.

9. *The Chairman.*] What was the system before?—The borough has only been established about two years. Prior to that they were rated on the county system—on the capital value.

10. *Mr. McVeagh.*] What is the effect of the excessive valuation?—It comes very hard on the people with 5 acres to 25 acres situate a distance from the railway-station, who are using the land for agricultural purposes.

11. Would you mind referring to some cases which, in your opinion, are fairly typical of excessive valuation?—I refer first to the case of C. Hayward, who is about as far as any one from the railway-station—about a mile and a half. It must be classed as suburban property. Three years ago, I understand, it was valued at £55 per acre. There are 25 acres in the section, and at the last valuation it was valued at £102 per acre. The land is being used for grazing cows and growing tomatoes and small fruits.

12. Do you know of anything to justify such an increase in valuation in that period?—I do not.

13. What, in your opinion, is a fair value for that property of Hayward's?—I have put it down at £80 an acre.

*Mr. McVeagh* (to the Commission): Mr. Hayward, who is unable to be present, has left the following letter, addressed to Mr. Gray, who was actively concerned in formulating the petition: "I am sorry that I will not be able to be present to-morrow, as I have to leave for Paeroa to-night on urgent business. I should like to have had an opportunity to explain to the Commission why I consider the unimproved value on my property too high. Although I have spent over £100 on improvements since the valuation was made, I am prepared to take £3,000 for the property. Mr. McKenzie's valuation was £3,375 capital value, £108 per acre unimproved value. This property was valued by Mr. Morgan in 1911 at £55 per acre. Nothing has taken place in the district to justify a rise of nearly 100 per cent. in three years.—Yours truly, C. E. HAYWARD."

*Witness:* I think Hayward got the capital value reduced to £3,225—unimproved, £2,550; and improvements £675.

14. Do you know of any land in the borough of a similar character that has shown such an increase in the valuation?—Mrs. Jane Brady's is almost a similar case. It is at the extreme end of the road, and consists of 17½ acres. Three years ago it was valued at £870 unimproved value, and at the last valuation it was put down at £1,500.

15. For what purpose is that land used?—As a dairy farm.

16. Is that a suitable use for it?—It is not remarkably good land. It takes 2 acres to graze a cow, with a little bit of hand-feeding in the winter-time.