

12. What is the cause?—The bad years, and this is not much better. The land adjoining me was open at £4 an acre, and since then the owner has spent 10s. to £1 an acre, and it can be bought at less money. It was offered to my son at £3 10s. an acre.

13. Is it equal to yours?—Not taking it right through. There is better land in it than in mine, but there is more third-class land.

14. In the natural state what would be the value?—About equal, or at most 5s. an acre difference.

15. If your land was put up to-day it would not fetch the money?—I am quite sure it would not.

16. *The Valuer-General.*] The Assessment Court added £1,000 to your improvements?—Yes.

17. In the objection form you sent in to the Department you stated your unimproved value as £6,670 and improvements £2,250, and the Court gave you an advance upon that. It gave you, in addition to your own estimate of the improvements, nearly £700 more—£2,812?—It was a reduction of £900 odd.

18. The Court put a higher value on your improvements than you did yourself?—I only had a few days in which to put in my objection, and was not able to get all the details.

19. How is the Department to arrive at fair values if they do not get a fair estimate from the owners?—I could not get the full details.

20. The Court gave you £364 more than you valued your improvements at?—That is so, on the objection I put in.

21. Did you put all these figures before the Assessment Court?—I think I did.

22. How long have you had this land?—Four years next May. I paid £3 17s. 6d. per acre.

23. What do you value it at now?—Not more than £5 an acre.

24. Supposing the Crown wanted the property to-morrow, would you sell on the roll value?—Yes, if they would take the crops and pay for them and give me time to sell the stock.

25. *Mr. Campbell.*] You reckon the crops and turnips and other improvements are worth £1,500?—Yes.

JAMES PETERSON examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a carpenter, residing at North Invercargill. My wife and I have two Corporation leases of half an acre each. One is valued at £45 and the other at £80, and they are absolutely identical. They are in the same street, with a block between them. I consider both are overvalued, but £80 is outrageous. The rent of each is £2 per annum. There are buildings on each, a four-roomed house on one costing £420. I understand that the buildings have got nothing to do with the unimproved value.

2. They have in regard to a lease. Do you know how long the leases have to run?—So far as I know, both have ten years to run. My wife paid £85 for hers, and I paid £120 for mine. I put two rooms to the house on my section, and considerably improved it. The £80 section is valued the same as the section alongside of it.

3. *The Valuer-General.*] Did you put any improvements on these lands during the last twelve months?—Not on the land; only on the house on my wife's section.

4. What kind of an improvement was it?—An addition of two rooms in front.

5. When were the improvements finished?—They are not quite finished yet. They are not painted.

HENRY STEPHEN SHEAT examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, of Morton Mains. The first property I will take is my own, of 786 acres and 13 perches, and in comparison with that take the property of John Collins, of Morton Mains, of 772 acres 1 rood 17 perches. Every one who knows that district knows that in its native state all that land was of the same quality. My unimproved value is approximately £6 16s. an acre, whilst Mr. Collins's farm, just across the road from mine, and exactly the same distance from the railway-station—both places in their natural state identical, except that I have 38 acres of cut-out bush which is regarded as waste land—is valued approximately at £5 12s. an acre. We want to know why there should be this difference. Then, a little farther down the road, Alexander Calder's farm of 500 acres 3 roods 5 perches is valued at £5 18s. unimproved. His land is identical with Collins's, except that it is farther away from the railway. Across the road from Mr. Calder, my brother, E. G. Sheat, has 403 acres, and his unimproved value is approximately £7 5s. an acre, and his land is not of the same value as Mr. Calder's, not having the same amount of frontage. I could quote another case, but it would just be iterating the same thing. Mr. Blackmore, beyond these last-mentioned places, is valued at £6 an acre, and he has a frontage to two roads.

2. Did you, or any of the parties, appeal to the Assessment Court?—We objected to the valuations, and intended going to the Court, but none did. My own was arranged at my house. I was informed that all my neighbours had agreed to the revised value. All the figures I have given are the revised valuations.

3. Did you find that all your neighbours had accepted the valuation?—No, only my brother. The rest took a reduced valuation to keep out of Court.

4. £6 16s. was arranged between you and the valuer?—That is so, and all the others too.

5. Might I suggest that the disparity is due to bargains made with the different owners?—That is quite so.

6. *Mr. Campbell.*] Are you satisfied with your capital value now?—It is right enough, provided I had another thousand taken off the unimproved value.

7. *Mr. Rutherford.*] What was your valuation before it was reduced to £6 16s.?—I could not say on the spur of the moment. It makes a difference of £8 10s. in my rates,