

WILLIAM EDWARD LANE examined. (No. 45.)

1. *To the Chairman.*] I am a cordial-manufacturer. I hold several Corporation leases from the Dunedin City. I have been asked to say a few words on behalf of some other dissatisfied tenants alongside of me. I also appear on my own behalf. What I have to complain about is that the Corporation has increased my rent although I am unable to get any increased rent from my tenants. The land is on the Quarry Reserve. The houses are not altogether out-of-date. The upset rental was increased by 20 per cent. My valuer dissented from that, and the value was fixed practically by the umpire. When the lease was submitted to auction there was no bid. I suggest that in cases like that the lease should lapse and the Corporation should pay valuation. What I maintain is that if the Corporation value a place at a certain increased price which they are to get the benefit of, and if the tenant is dissatisfied, he should have the right to demand that the Corporation should take it over at 10 or 20 per cent. below the valuation. That would make the valuer more careful not to put exorbitant ground-rents on places. It would not have paid me to pull down the houses and put up new ones. Although there was no value put upon the houses they were not bad enough to pull down. At any rate, the Corporation are getting rates and taxes on the property. There is another tenant, Mr. Saunders, who took up his lease fourteen or twenty-one years ago, and now they have put his ground-rent up 125 per cent.

GEORGE BRADNEY NEALE examined. (No. 46.)

1. *To the Chairman.*] I have been coaching foreman on the railways, Dunedin. I am a tenant of the Presbyterian Church Board. I took over a lease of land in Roslyn from another tenant. The rent was £7 10s. a year. When the revaluation was coming round I expected I should have to pay some increased rental, but to my surprise the rental was raised to £20 a year. I thought at the most it would have been £10. I do not consider the street—Michie Street—in which the sections are has become more fashionable, as there is no building going on there. We went to arbitration, but I got no redress. The Board's own valuer was on the arbitration, and, of course, he worked hard to maintain his valuation as correct. I do not know whether the terms of the lease provided for an independent valuer, but we were most dissatisfied with the constitution of the tribunal. That is practically the only point I feel aggrieved about.

JAMES RENNIE examined. (No. 47.)

1. *To the Chairman.*] I am headmaster of the Albany Street School, and I am a Corporation tenant. The conditions of the lease appear to me in one respect to be very inequitable. I live on the banks of the Leith. The Corporation have guarded themselves very well in their conditions. They have no liability at all with regard to the eccentricity of that river. If the ground higher up is in danger of being carried away they can take whatever steps they please in the way of putting up walls to divert the current, and so forth. Now, it is well known that if you interfere with the river in one place it is likely to affect the attack by the river in another. So far I have not been personally affected by it, though I may be, since the last great flood, but my neighbour has been affected by it. For the want of attention in parts the river tends to run in and undermine the retaining-walls. I maintain that the Corporation is more concerned in seeing that these walls are retained than I am, because it only wants a little more force in the flood and the Corporation will be in danger of having no section where my place is. I cannot say that those sites are let very cheaply. I am paying £18 a year for a quarter-acre. I consider it inequitable that they should guard themselves against any liability in a matter of that kind. Equitably they are concerned and financially they are concerned, because it is their property. It may be that they want to guard themselves against liability for any houses that may be washed away, but they are always interfering with the course of the river—that is the point. There are four sections liable to that trouble. The other point I wish to refer to is this: I have not had a revaluation yet, but I notice that Mr. Lewin has stated in evidence that the cost of valuation comes to something like £25. If it will come to only, say, £8 or £9, as I now understand, or say 10s. a year over the whole period, I am quite satisfied.

JOHN THOMAS HARRIS examined. (No. 48.)

1. *To the Chairman.*] I have retired from business. I am the holder of a Corporation lease. My point is that the rents are too high, being based on the level of freehold property, and a Corporation lease is not marketable in the same way as freehold is. As to the rent of the section I occupy, I was expecting a reduction instead of an advance. I spent £500 in putting the place in up-to-date order, but it has not made any improvement in my return. I am not getting more than 4 per cent. on my money. My place is on the Quarry Reserve. It is a large section, but very steep and rough, and it cannot be used to proper advantage. I should be better off on a smaller section. My old rental was £12, and my new rental is £14 10s. We did not call in an extra man to decide this, as we wished to save the three guineas, especially as the result would probably have been the same.

2. *To Mr. Lewin.*] I have had some experience of rent of freehold property. If an ordinary freehold with a residence upon it does not give 10 per cent. it is not a profitable investment—