

the Hawke's Bay Rivers Board. As these represent conflicting interests and ideals, it can be readily understood that they tend to complicate the reclamation problem; whilst, as if there were not sufficient complications in the matter, it was made perfectly clear to us that the feelings and interests raised by the Harbour Board dispute lay athwart the whole question.

One point of view which we have ascribed to the Harbour Board relates only to those areas which are close to the proposed Inner Harbour basin—namely, the North and South Ponds and the West Quay reclamation block. The fate of these blocks has been bound up with that of the Inner Harbour scheme; for the adoption of that scheme meant as a natural corollary that these areas could be most advantageously and economically reclaimed by using the spoil from the Inner Harbour basin; and, further, when they were reclaimed they would have a special value by being adjacent to the Inner Harbour wharves. With these considerations governing the matter the position has arisen that although the Harbour Board agrees that these areas are crying out for reclamation, and that more land is sadly needed to supply the needs of a growing population in Napier, nothing has been done for many years. The presence of these areas near the proposed inner basin and their high potential value when reclaimed have been used as arguments in favour of the Inner Harbour scheme. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the Harbour Board as at present constituted, with a majority in favour of Inner Harbour construction, has placed the reclamation of these three areas in the very forefront of its programme, and hence we find the power to reclaim them included in the 1926 Bill. It may also be described as good tactics to be able to say to Napier, as the Harbour Board has said, in effect, "You need land, do you? Very well; support our Inner Harbour policy and you will immediately and cheaply obtain the benefit of the reclamation of the North and South Ponds, which can be used for residential purposes."

There is a second point of view, which on some of the evidence tendered to us we may well ascribe to the Harbour Board. It is that it has valuable endowments in these sites capable of being made into habitable lands, and it looks to the income from these, first to assist in the financing of the harbour, and ultimately to provide what has been promised to the district—namely, a free harbour. This policy carried out in accordance with ordinary commercial instincts would require that the Harbour Board should be careful not to glut the market, and it should therefore keep behind rather than in advance of the requirements of Napier, and so keep up the high price of land, and consequently the high rents obtained for small building allotments. The result of this policy, whether it has been consciously pursued or more or less passively taken advantage of, is shown in evidence tendered to us, which proved that Napier is the most densely populated borough or town in the Dominion. Mr. O. N. Campbell's report to the Minister of Lands dated 1925, which we have already called attention to, shows the population statistics relating to the fourteen largest towns and boroughs in New Zealand, and disclosed that Napier, with 977 persons per 100 acres, was from point of density second only to Auckland, the figures being—Auckland, 1,003; Napier, 977; the next highest being Christchurch, 763. Later figures along the same lines were put before us at the hearing by Mr. J. A. Oldham, president of the Real Estate Institute of Napier, and his figures show that Napier now enjoys the unenviable reputation of being the most densely populated town; its relation to Auckland in this respect being disclosed in the respective figures 1,100 and 1,055 persons per 100 acres. In concluding his evidence on this point Mr. Oldham said: "The area made available for residential purposes by reclamation during the last twenty-five years is 213 acres adjoining the borough and 3 acres at the port, or an average of $8\frac{3}{4}$ acres per annum. Since 1912 only 10 acres have been provided by the Harbour Board for residential purposes, or an average of less than $\frac{3}{4}$ acre per annum." The evidence submitted to us on this point by a number of witnesses confirmed what we could see whenever we walked through the residential parts of Napier—namely, that the average allotment is less than $\frac{1}{2}$ acre; and, furthermore, we learned that the ground-rent paid for a section of 18 to 20 perches at the most recent auctioning of residential blocks by the Harbour Board is about £6 or £7 per annum. These prices are paid for sections without borough facilities, left in a comparatively rough state, just as they were on the completion of the filling operations. We visited one such site, the history of which had been related to us. A small house was being built on this allotment by the lessee who had taken over from the successful bidder at the Harbour Board's auction sale and had paid £100 premium for the privilege. These facts show the extreme land-hunger that exists in Napier. We consider that the evidence given by several witnesses to the effect that Napier had been starved for land, and had been deprived of population which was driven to Hastings and other surrounding towns, amply proved their assertions, whilst Mr. J. A. Oldham's statement that the Harbour Board had put only 10 acres of residential land on the market in fifteen years was uncontradicted.

EFFECT ON HOUSING CONDITIONS.

The effect of this on housing conditions in the poorer parts of Napier is shocking. Mr. G. F. Clapcott, the Borough Engineer, in his evidence (see page 491) gives some striking figures. He takes, for instance, an area facing Hardinge Road, in the strip between the North Pond and the sea (see Map A, Commission's Exhibit No. 3). Dealing with forty-four houses, he submits the following: Average frontage of section, 33·35 ft.; average size of section, 2,864 square feet, or 10·5 perches (Napier Boroughs limit is now 5,445 square feet, or 20·4 perches). The average size of these residential allotments is therefore $\frac{1}{16}$ acre. On this area stand forty-four houses, containing 197 rooms in all. A census of these houses revealed 191 occupants—approximately one occupant per room.

Mr. Clapcott referred to two other areas in the same locality presenting the same features. In one of them the figures relate to an aggregate frontage of 21 chains, and the average size of the allotments was $\frac{1}{32}$ acre, and the average number of occupants in the residences erected thereon was 3·47 persons.