

was said that, while there was dissatisfaction all round with the new valuations, they pressed more heavily on the owners of 5 acres and upwards.

59. The borough was described to us as having a business centre on the Great South Road from the junction of the Panmure Road and the Railway-station Road to the Nixon Monument. Outside of this centre the land was said to be used for dairy-farming and fruit-growing, with nursery gardens near the station. There are golf-links in the borough, near to which is the favourite residential area, where a good many buildings had been erected.

60. Particulars of the valuation of some dozen properties in this borough were given before us in evidence. The Government valuation to which the complaints referred was made between September and December, 1913, and came into force on the 31st March, 1914. The previous valuation had been made in 1911. We found that in the cases brought before us considerable increases had been made in the recent valuation upon the figures shown in the valuation of 1911. In several of the cases the increase was over 50 per cent., and in one or two cases it was not very far from 100 per cent.

61. In our opinion, the borough generally was overvalued in 1913. This we find to have been caused partly by the fact that farming-land had been subdivided into building sections far in advance of the demand for residential sites, and had been valued to a considerable extent on an allotment basis, and partly by the circumstance that the valuation was made on the basis of sales that had been effected during a short period in which there had been a brisk demand for building sections, but which demand had fallen off at the time the valuation was actually made. This can be explained as follows: The information as to the sales was obtained by the valuer from the conveyances and transfers registered in the Deeds Registration and Land Transfer offices respectively. These instruments do not disclose the actual date of the sale, and in practice are not executed until the purchase-money has been fully paid, or a sufficient part of it has been paid to enable the purchaser to raise the rest by way of mortgage. The evidence showed that there had been but few sales since the 31st March, 1914, and that the falling-off of the demand had taken place about the time the valuation was actually made.

62. We think these considerations justify us in respectfully recommending to Your Excellency that a new valuation be made of the Borough of Otahuhu in accordance with the values that existed before the declaration of war. And in making this valuation (should Your Excellency approve of the foregoing recommendation) we consider that land in the borough that is used for farming or fruit-growing purposes, and that has not actually acquired a residential or business site value, should be valued with reference to the purposes for which it is actually used at the time of valuation, notwithstanding that it may have been divided with a view to sale in allotments.

CASTLEPOINT PETITION.

63. We held a sitting at Tinui on 8th December last to hear evidence in support of the petition addressed to the Right Hon. the Minister of Lands. The petition reads as follows:—

“The memorial of the undersigned ratepayers of the South Riding of the County of Castlepoint sheweth:—

“Whereas an examination of the valuation rolls, giving the revaluations of properties in the four ridings of the Castlepoint County, as estimated by the Government valuer, for the year commencing 1st April, 1913, shows an average increase on the unimproved value in the North Riding of 30·3 per cent.; in the East Riding of 31·9 per cent.; in the West Riding of 35·9 per cent.; and in the South Riding of 79·2 per cent. on the previous valuations:

“And whereas, in our opinion, the increase in value in the South Riding should have shown but little difference from that in the other ridings in the county; and we are quite at a loss to discover any adequate