

capital value was reduced to £486,844, the unimproved value to £340,143, and improvements to £146,701; a reduction of £118,802 in the capital value, of £97,922 in the unimproved value, and of £20,880 in the value of improvements. That is the effect of section 31. In one borough I can mention, that of Karori Borough, the local body's finances are thoroughly crippled. Karori was the scene of a land-boom. Syndicates took up properties there and subdivided them, and induced the residents to extend the tramway and load themselves with debt, telling the people that they would remain there and bear their part of the burden. What was the result? As soon as the Assessment Court sat every syndicate offered me its land, and I had, willy-nilly, to accept reductions. Section 31 has not worked to the benefit of the people. Further, I say there is no Act in operation in Australasia to-day in which there is a similar section to section 31. Part of the duty of the Commission is to take into account the strengthening of the Assessment Court, and, if that is the case, section 31 should be deleted from the Act. Or this should be done: Allow section 31 to remain, and I do not say it is inequitable. In the case where property is offered to the Department it should be allowed to remain in the Department's hands for three months, to give outside people an opportunity of buying at the owner's valuation. I have a case in my mind where the objector objected to the valuation fixed by the Assessment Court, and he offered the property to me under section 31. I had to take it, but the Government did not want it. A gentleman was in town in search of land, and we sent him down to the solicitor who was acting in the matter of this particular property, and the prospective buyer was informed that the property was not for sale. It had been sold at a higher price than that placed on it by the Government valuation.

GEORGE ROBERT NICOL WRIGHT examined

[A series of letters put in by Mr. Wright were read by the Secretary.]

*Mr. Myers:* I notice, sir, that the letters raise matters of law. Mr. Wright says that unless an objector is represented before the Court, or appears personally, he is not entitled to take advantage of section 31. Mr. Wright appears to think that that is wrong. Section 16 provides that the onus of proof shall rest on the objector. Then, section 31 provides that "if the owner of any land (other than the owner of a leasehold interest therein) is not satisfied with the value of such land as fixed by the Assessment Court" he may take advantage of that section. If, however, the owner does not appear, and is not represented, his objection is not heard. It is simply struck out, and consequently the valuation stands and no valuation has been fixed by the Assessment Court at all. Then Mr. Wright's letter seems to imply that the Valuation Department is not satisfied with its own valuations, because in cases—

*The Chairman:* You are going too far. Mr. Wright has the right to state his opinion.

*Mr. Myers:* I am simply pointing to the statute. It may help Mr. Wright. His letter seems to imply that the Valuation Department is sometimes not satisfied with its own valuations, because it makes new valuations for the purpose of Government loans.

*Witness:* I do not imply that at all.

*Mr. Myers:* In any case, that is essential under section 34 subsection (4) of the State Advances Act.

*The Chairman:* Section 28 of the Valuation of Land Act says that valuations appearing in the valuation roll shall be used for the purposes of the Stamp Duties Act, the Death Duties Act, and for advances by the Post Office, Government Insurance Office, Public Trust Office, Government Advances to Settlers Office, and the Commissioner of Public Debts Sinking Funds Office, but that has been overridden by direct legislation in regard to the Advances to Settlers Office, Public Trust Office, and the Stamp Duties Act, each of which require a separate valuation to be made.

*Mr. Myers:* Speaking generally, unless something important transpires the valuation on the district valuation roll stands.

*Witness:* I merely brought this matter under the notice of the Government because I noticed that in the valuers' evidence they said it was not necessary for them for assessment purposes to go through the improvements. They "just took a casual look round"; those are the actual words used. The Act says that the value for improvements for assessment purposes shall be the correct value. In one case Mr. Myers ventured to say that they were not compelled to value the improvements at all.

*Mr. Myers:* You must have misunderstood me.

*Witness:* No. I was in Court at the time, and thought it was a most venturesome thing to say. I am sorry that Mr. Neave is not here, for he occupied a considerable time in proving that Mr. Myers was wrong. The valuers proved over and over again that they did not value the improvements as I would value them. They did not go through the buildings, and one valuer said it was not necessary, because he could tell generally from the outside of a building how it was finished off inside, but for the purpose of a mortgage he had to value the building properly and get the true value. That brought me to the point of asking the witness whether it was not possible that he might make two valuations in the same day under the same Act for two different purposes, and they would not necessarily be the same valuation, although the Act said that the valuations were to be the correct valuations. That appeared to me to be an anomaly that should be put a stop to. If you are going to pay on a recorded valuation which any one can use against you, and it is not the true value but only the result of a casual look round, it is not worth the paper it is written on. I do not imply that the Valuation Department was not satisfied with its own valuations. With regard to the section in Nikau Street, Muritai,