

29. In cases of revision and on other occasions?—Yes.

30. Have you found the valuers disposed to fight for high values?—I must say, to be quite honest about it, that I regard Mr. Mackenzie as the man in Auckland who has the best knowledge of local values. He is a clever man, and I find him essentially fair. I must also admit that he fights well for his own Department; but it is only proper he should do so, and he is only doing his duty when he keeps values as high as he reasonably can. I have always assumed that that is his business. I have had many a tussle with him, and always found him a hard row to hoe.

31. You always found him a reasonable man?—Yes.

32. With regard to the method of valuation, you said that the procedure of the Department is to depend solely on sales effected?—Not solely, but very largely. They very often quote the highest sale. It is a very common thing for them to say that So-and-so's property sold for so much.

33. I suppose they would quote the highest sale in cases where a conference took place, and the objector had one valuation and the valuer had another. Have you known that in fixing values they take the highest sales?—I do not say invariably, but very often they do.

34. Do you know that the practice of the Department is to take sales extending over a period of years, and strike an average?—I know they do that sometimes, but unfortunately there are many cases where property has sold well two or three years ago, and that is one of my points. They are not particular as to the moment of the highest sale they take out, even if two or three years ago. As a general rule, however, I find that they will generally quote the highest sale, whether it was made quite recently or two or three years ago.

35. That is quite a different thing from taking it as a basis for assessing value?—That is so.

36. Are you aware that valuations now are lower than they were when land has been sold?—I have many instances where the Government valuation is less than the sale price.

37. Have you instances where the Department has regarded exchanges as factors in fixing the values of land?—Not after it was pointed out to them. I know of cases where they have searched the title and found the consideration expressed, but when the surrounding circumstances were known it could not be described as a genuine sale; and when that has been pointed out to the Department they have decided reasonably.

38. It is not necessary for it to be pointed out. Here is my instruction to valuers: "To arrive at the ordinary selling-value in a district, all the sales that have taken place in that district of a recent date are tabulated, and it is not as a rule a difficult matter to ascertain from the prices actually realized—covering an extended period—what is the ordinary selling-value, and whether the tendency is to increase or diminish. The prices involved in exchange of properties are to be entirely ignored?"—Those are confidential instructions.

39. No, they are not. They are in the hands of every Government valuer. You made a statement to the effect that on representations being made to the Department with regard to leases the value on the roll could be altered?—You must be mistaken. What I said in regard to the valuation of leases was that the Government method of valuing leases was according to the Act, and that in some cases it worked out unfairly to the tenant, where the lease had almost expired.

40. It is the English system applied to New Zealand, with the addition of the 5 per cent. If we were to decrease the value to the lessee it would have to be put on to the lessor?—Or else be dropped altogether. That is what I should do.

41. You made a statement that when a valuation was required for the purpose of loans we made a special valuation. For what purpose do you think we made a special valuation?—Presumably to make quite sure it is absolutely correct. I do not blame you.

42. But your inference is that in making the special valuation for mortgage purposes we exercise more care, and therefore the valuation is probably less than a valuation for taxing purposes?—I made no inference; I stated a fact.

43. The inference arises from the statement of the fact, and the inference on an intelligent audience would be that if two valuations are made there is something peculiar to the owner in that?—Is it not a fact that there is an Act which provides that under certain circumstances the Government may take a man's land for public works or for settlement at the Government's valuation. I understand that under that Act a man, to protect himself, might have his valuation raised.

44. That is a section of the Land Laws Amendment Act, and has nothing to do with this matter of land valuation at all.

45. *Mr. Campbell.*] Is it your experience that, as a rule, properties sell at under or over the valuations made?—I think they generally sell round about the Government valuation, and, if you were to take the general experience, properties sell for more than the Government valuation.

46. Therefore, on the whole, the Government valuation would be very close to the selling-value?—Exactly.

ANDREW GRAHAM examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—I am a resident of Birkenhead. I simply desire to say that what has fallen from Mr. Vaile has been very largely my experience. I can endorse every word he has said. There does seem to be some need for a friend in Court for the poor objectors. I would not say that the Bench is hostile, but inexperienced persons going to the Assessment Court, and not familiar with the forms of the Court, are at a great disadvantage. The assessor is there, and, of course, he is there to sustain his own assessment. In many cases he has had an altercation with the objector, and is hostile. Whether the Court is altogether hostile or not it is not for me to say; but the objector feels that with no one to speak for him he is in a hostile atmosphere. Unless he is prepared to say "That is the price I will sell at" he has absolutely no chance at all. That is how it was in my case. I have