

ALBERT JOHN SPEEDY re-examined.

Witness: When Mr. Souness came to my place to value the property I asked him if he had gone over the property, and he said "No." I asked him if he intended to go over it, and he said he had come from the Black Hill Road. A person going that way sees the best part of the property. Without further inspection he valued the place at that.

HAROLD BENNETT examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a sheep-farmer at Tinui, in the South Riding of Castlepoint County. I am not making any objection to my valuation, as it is the fair selling-value of the property to-day. It is quite as much as it would bring if put on the market. What I take exception to is the low value of other properties in other ridings, and some in the South Riding too. Properties that carry two sheep to the acre are valued down as low as £6 8s. and £6 4s. an acre. My property only carries about a sheep and three-quarters. The capital value at the previous assessment was £3,864, and by the last assessment it is £5,025—a jump of over £2 an acre. My area is 534 acres, and I am valued at practically £10 an acre, against other properties carrying two sheep to the acre, valued at a little over £6. The land-valuer never inspected the property. I admit he came to the house, but any one knows that the most highly improved spots are generally around the homestead. Where the land is poor he did not go.

2. Your grievance is not on account of your own valuation, but you are drawing the inference, I understand, that because he did not visit your property he did not visit the properties in the other ridings?—That is so.

3. *Mr. Campbell.*] But he made a correct valuation of your property?—The valuation is correct enough there, but it is not in the other ridings, and therefore the burden is put upon the few of us in our riding.

The Chairman: I understood on reading your petition that your riding was valued too much. It occurs to me, are there any representatives of the other riding here to say anything on this subject?

Mr. Ryder: I do not know. This has been known in the district, and it is their own fault if they are not here. We only represent the petitioners.

4. *The Valuer-General* (to witness).] Would you mind mentioning some of these properties carrying two sheep to the acre which are valued at less than yours?—Dr. Andrews's for one, in the South Riding. I believe Annedale comes very close to it, but I would not swear it. It should be, if it is not.

5. Although you accuse the valuer of not being over your property he made a fair valuation?—Yes, a fair selling-valuation.

6. Assuming for the present that the valuer was not on your property, but made a fair valuation, would not the inference be that he would make a fair valuation of the other properties too?—The valuations have proved that he has not.

7. Who has proved that?—His figures.

8. There is no proof that the values are wrong?—They must be when they are below what they should be.

DONALD JOHN CAMERON examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer, residing at Masterton.

2. *The Valuer-General.*] Are you a practical farmer?—Yes, I have been farming all my life.

3. Are you intimately associated with all business related to land and stock?—Yes.

4. Is it true you have made valuations of land for several years?—Yes.

5. For the Government Land Purchase Board, the Valuation of Land Department, and other lending institutions?—Yes.

6. Is it also true that you have been Chairman of the Masterton County Council?—Yes.

7. And have been a Government assessor for a number of years under the Valuation of Land Act?—Yes.

8. Have you ever known or heard of a case where a section of ratepayers in a riding of a county, while quite satisfied with the unimproved value put on their own land, yet, by reason of the bare fact that their valuations show an average increase, have urged that the valuations of the remaining portions of the county should be varied and a readjustment made?—No.

9. Do you consider that disparity of average increase in the valuation of a county is an evidence of unfair valuation?—No.

10. Would it be necessary to inspect the properties of a county before coming to a decision as to whether the values were fair or not?—Yes.

11. Would you require to examine each property?—Yes, otherwise you would not know what you were doing.

12. Have you a knowledge of the different classes of land in the Castlepoint County?—I have travelled over it and made valuations in it.

13. On many occasions?—On several occasions.

14. Is it not a fact that there is a considerable area of very poor land in the county?—Yes.

15. Is it not also a fact that the North, East, and West Ridings contain by far the highest portion of poor land?—Yes.

16. Is it not also a fact that this poor land has increased in value very slightly in recent years, and portions not at all?—The good land has increased in value in a greater ratio than the poor land.