

on that account. The Borough Council objected to the whole of the valuations. On account of the borough objecting a number of individuals thought it was not necessary to object in the ordinary way. As a result of a conference between the officers of the Valuation Department and representatives of the borough an understanding was arrived at by which the valuations were to stand over for two years, and the Council and the people were under the impression that an adjustment or a revision of the values would be made within the two years from that date. That revision should have taken place about a year ago. The result is that those who did not object on their own account are very much dissatisfied. What is really necessary is that a revision of the valuation of Mosgiel should take place as soon as possible, so as to bring people into uniformity. The great point is that a person with a similar section to another does not bear a relative value, and I respectfully request you to consider the matter with a view to getting a revision of values of the borough, if possible. I appreciate the difficulties a valuer has in a borough like Mosgiel. It is a difficult place to value. It is a long strung-out town, and then a great portion of the borough is composed of farms. The valuer is misled on many occasions by people who buy at fancy prices. A business man will buy a section in a particular locality because he wants it for his business, and very often an inflated value for that area is in consequence brought about. A great improvement could be effected if the Department had the assistance in the different districts of competent people with local knowledge. I am quite satisfied with regard to Mosgiel that if local knowledge had been possessed by the valuer the actual values would have been more nearly arrived at.

2. What system of rating was in force in Mosgiel prior to adopting rating on unimproved value?—The annual value.

3. You complain of a disparity of values: do you mean that the Government valuations were originally different, or that the disparity arises through compromises having been made with the individual ratepayers who objected?—Mosgiel as a town had not been valued for many years until this valuation took place three years ago. Apart from the variations caused by the objectors, the valuations were inconsistent. When a person objected and a compromise was arrived at, the result was that the neighbour who did not object, and perhaps had a section which was not so good, was more highly valued than the other. That was because of the adjustment, of course.

4. What you particularly ask is that this revision of Mosgiel, which you think was understood to be agreed to three years ago, should now take place?—Yes. The Council are distinctly of the opinion that that was the understanding. It was publicly stated from the Council table that a revaluation would take place within two years, and it has not been done.

5. You are asking this on behalf of the Borough Council, and in a sense the Borough Council represents the ratepayers, because the ratepayers did not object because the Council objected to the whole valuation?—That is so. I think that one of the things that induced the Council to agree that a revision should not take place for two years was because they were anxious to get their rate notices out for that particular year. The rate notices that year did not come out till October.

6. Why was the Council willing that the assessment should stand over for still another year. That would not be affected by the rate notices going out?—As far as I can make out, it was purely a matter of compromise.

7. *Mr. Campbell.*] What is the size of the borough?—900 acres.

8. What is the population?—Between fifteen and sixteen hundred.

9. It is a straggling borough?—Yes, it is a difficult borough. Two-thirds, roughly speaking, of the area would be farms or land used for farming purposes.

10. Is there any rural-value area under the assessment?—Put on by the Department.

11. Is that right or wrong?—The general impression is that the farming area is rather low. The valuation of the large areas is on the low side.

12. Rated low as a farm?—Rated low as to its capital value.

13. Is it valued low as farming land?—Yes.

14. *The Valuer-General.*] Did the Borough Council press their objection to the valuation?—The matter was arranged between representatives of the Council and the Department.

15. Are you aware that the Council withdrew the objection to the valuations?—No.

16. Well, they did so?—My Council inform me otherwise.

17. Are you speaking with direct personal knowledge with respect to what you have stated about inconsistency in the valuations?—From my own knowledge.

18. Inconsistency of what?—The relative values of the properties.

19. Did the objections come from the property-owners themselves, or were they supplied with data by experts to show that they existed?—The inconsistency was obvious to the Council. I think the property-owners knew of the inconsistency themselves without any expert advice.

20. The valuation rating roll was on exhibition in Mosgiel for some time?—That is so.

21. And the ratepayers had access to it, and I presume they availed themselves of the opportunity?—I suppose so.

22. In spite of that the valuer was enabled to arrange with all the objectors, and so obviate the necessity of holding a Court. Does not that prove that the valuer generally made a valuation that was accepted by the Mosgiel ratepapers?—That is the inference so far as those particular people are concerned, but those who did not object because the Council was objecting are still in their same position, and are rated on a different valuation basis from the others who objected.

23. The Borough Council withdrew their objection when they had ascertained that the valuer had fixed up with certain owners?—I would not say that. Mr. Clothier can tell you.

24. With regard to the promise to revise the valuation, was it a specific understanding accepted by the Council?—The Council say it was so. I have to take it as told to me.