

104. *The Chairman.*] Can you tell the ridings by reason of the sales that have come under your notice?—They do not always give the riding.

105. *Mr. Ryder.*] Are you aware of this fact, that the small settlers in the South Riding have been spending large sums of money in improving their properties?—They would be very foolish if they did not.

106. Are you aware that some of the bigger properties in the other ridings have been allowed to go to wreck and ruin because of no money being spent on them?—No.

107. Has the Castlepoint property been improved?—It is a property that will not stand improving. You can cut the scrub down, and that is about all.

108. That does not apply to the Langdale property?—No. You have ridges on which scrub may come.

109. Would you believe that scrub was a constant source of worry to other properties in Langdale?—No.

110. Not if you saw it with your own eyes?—No. There may be patches, but there is no considerable extent of it.

111. Would you believe that there are sections of considerable extent that have to be continually burned to keep down the scrub—two-thirds of the section, and big sections, too?—I would like to see them before I believed it.

112. You would believe it if you saw it?—Yes.

113. You say that the Castlepoint country is not capable of being improved?—Not like Langdale.

114. *Mr. Campbell.*] Would you take it as any guide to value that a riding carries a certain number of sheep?—You might get one riding with double the acreage of the other one, and the comparison would not be fair. The smaller riding that carried the same number of sheep would be the better of the two.

115. Would it be a guide or no guide?—It would be a guide.

116. *The Valuer-General.*] Reference was made to the distance of Annedale from the market, and the object of the question was to show that it was not dearer to ship from there than from other parts of the county: in driving fat lambs from Annedale would you not allow for wastage?—Certainly. That would also have to be done in the matter of driving from Langdale, but not in the same proportion.

117. What is the proportion from Annedale?—Buyers tell me they allow 4 lb. per head.

118. That would mean 1s. per head?—More, at present.

119. That would be a minimum of £1 per acre, at 5 per cent.?—That is so.

120. *Mr. Ryder.*] Is the wastage on wethers as big as on lambs?—No.

121. Or ewes?—No. The wastage on older sheep is not so great as on lambs.

WILLIAM SOUNESS examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer and land-valuer, residing at Pongaroa.

2. *The Valuer-General.*] How long have you been valuing land?—It is thirty-five years since I first did any.

3. How long have you been valuing for the Government?—Twelve years.

4. In what parts of the Dominion have you been valuing?—I valued Akitio County for the Government, but I made valuations in Southland before I came up here.

5. Were you employed to make valuations for the Government in the Castlepoint County?—Yes; I made the 1912 valuation, the last revision.

6. How long did it take?—I started about the beginning of October, 1912, and finished with the work all through in April, 1913.

7. Did you examine the properties in the county?—I examined every property.

8. You are quite sure?—Yes.

9. In estimating the unimproved value of the land in the county, are you guided solely by the alleged carrying-capacity?—No. I take into consideration the position, means of access, the quality of the land, and the nature of the land. The value has to be altered according to the kind of land being valued. The unimproved value cannot be fixed by any definite rule.

10. In the definition of "unimproved value" in the Valuation of Land Act is the price of the land based on the carrying-capacity?—I never read it that way.

11. What is the definition?—The sale price, or what it would require for a man to make a living off.

12. Are you guided at all by sales?—As a guide it helps to fix the value of the land. It shows that a man can make a living off it at the price, or he would not give it.

13. Do you assume that the price given indicates the carrying-capacity?—It might, but position might make a difference. A man might want his children to go to school, and give more for a block of land on that account. I have known of cases like that.

14. Have you read the memorial which states that the percentage of increase in the Castlepoint County was 79 per cent.?—Yes.

15. Does that not mean that every property in the country has been increased by 79 per cent.?—No. That was the average increase.

16. Do you know of properties in the South Riding where the increase was not 40 per cent.?—Yes. I have here a schedule showing, with regard to each of the four ridings in the Castlepoint County—(1) the area, (2) the unimproved value assessed in 1907, (3) the unimproved value assessed in 1912, (4) the percentage of increase, (5) the total unimproved value for each riding