

was reduced to £650. If the first valuation had been anything like near the thing they could not have made a reduction like that. I impress on the Commission that the man entrusted with making valuations should be a man of some experience, and if an inexperienced man is put on to value an experienced man should go with him for a time and check over the valuations and see that they are something like correct. Another course adopted by the Department is that sometimes the valuation of a district is let by contract. I think that is very unsatisfactory. A man who has a contract for the valuation of a district takes the course of least resistance, and gets through the work as quickly as possible.

2. *Mr. Campbell.*] Do the Government let valuing-work by contract?—I do not know whether it is done to any large extent now, but it is done.

3. *The Valuer-General.*] How long were you valuing for the Government?—From 1882 until about five years ago.

4. Were you in one district all the time?—No. First I was in Waihemo, then in Waikouaiti. Then I had large portions of Maniototo and the whole of Peninsula, the whole of Taieri and large portions of Bruce, portion of the Molyneux Riding, and part of Vincent. Generally, I have been all over Otago. Besides that, whilst in the Department I valued such estates as Wai-kakahi, Barnego, and Elderslie for the Land Purchase Board.

5. Your experience has been confined to the Province of Otago principally?—Yes, while in the Department; but during the last five years I have been valuing Canterbury and Southland very largely as well.

6. Do you allege that the Maori Hill valuer never inspected the properties at all?—He did not inspect mine, and from inquiries I know he did not inspect others.

7. Did he come to terms with you?—I saw him in his office. I said, "How can we discuss it when you never inspected the property."

8. But you came to an agreement in regard to improvements?—We came to an adjustment in his office, and I think the valuation of Maori Hill was largely done by adjustment in the office.

9. Did he have his field-book showing all the details?—No.

10. What did he work on, then?—On the figures I gave him. He simply put a lump sum in his book.

11. Do you mean to say he did not have the details of each matter?—No. I did not see it.

12. Do you allege he did not have it?—The book I saw simply had two items—a vinery and a stable. It was not a stable.

13. In estimating the cost of the improvements he underestimated the cost of the vinery?—Yes.

14. He must have seen the vinery, and if he saw the vinery he must have seen the property?—It might have been in the previous valuer's book. Of course, the vinery could be seen from the road.

15. Do you think it would be possible to revalue the whole of Otago in one season?—No, but I think it would be possible to do it oftener than once in seven years—that is, the good land.

16. What do you mean by contract work in regard to valuing?—Letting out the valuation of a district at so-much.

17. On what terms is a contract of that nature let?—You give so-much for doing a county.

18. Do you know the system in operation now?—Not within the last five years, of course.

19. The system you are referring to is not in operation to-day. A local man is employed and paid a certain sum of money, but the district valuer must endorse that work. So that such a thing as independent contract work is not in operation to-day. Then, with regard to inexperienced men, no man is employed to do rural work who has not had farming experience?—I am glad to hear it. A case came under my notice where a man had bought a property in Southland at £20 an acre, and when he got his valuation notice from the Government it was £5 an acre.

20. Will you give me the name of that case?—I can get it for you. I did not ask the name from the man who told me.

GORE, 17TH DECEMBER, 1914.

JOSEPH WRIGHT examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your position?—I am a farmer and a resident of Croydon Siding. I have a property at Wainumu, which I do not consider is properly valued. It comprises 403 acres, and a house and stable insured for £300 in the Government office. The valuation for improvements allowed me is £395. The whole property is fenced, and the land broken up, and 165 acres are drained and ploughed, and it is all in English grass, with the exception of 40 or 50 acres in turnips and oats.

2. Do you give us your estimate of what the improvements are worth?—I did not think of that. I thought the Commission would do so.

3. Do you object to the unimproved value?—Yes.

4. And to the capital value?—I think it is a bit stiff. I bought the 403 acres at £3 5s. an acre, and last year's capital valuation was £1,604, unimproved value £1,209, and improvements £395. I have had the property six or seven years.

5. Did you object?—I wrote to the office, and there was a misunderstanding, and I missed the opportunity of appearing at the Court through not having got the notice.

6. *Mr. Campbell.*] Has the property risen in value in the last seven years?—I do not think my property is as salable to-day as it was then. In the meantime the value might have gone up a little, but at the present the conditions are too depressed.