

J.C. MP.

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## 100,000 rebel at new rates

Almost 100,000 people have objected to paying the Government's new rates demand.

Out of a total of 740,000 assessments, it means 13.5 per cent of ratepayers are angry at the Government's latest revaluations.

That compares to 10 per cent in 1977 when 46,000 ratepayers from 450,000 assessments objected.

The Commissioner of Rating and Valuation, Mr Raymond Fry, yesterday told a Rotary Club of Kowloon lunch meeting that professional valuers would be looking at these objections over the next few months.

In many cases the valuers would be inspecting the premises to check particulars and make further inquiries, he added.

Forty per cent were for premises on Hongkong Island, 30 per cent in Kowloon, 16 per cent in New Kowloon — north of Boundary Street — and the remainder in the New Territories, he said.

Eighty per cent of the total objections concerned domestic premises.

It would take some time to deal with the large number of objections and not many notices of decision were likely to be sent out before next month, he said.

"If it is thought that the rateable value is too high, the valuer will prepare a fresh valuation for approval by his district valuer."

Mr Fry pointed out that a ratepayer still had the right of appeal to the Lands Tribunal following the notice of decision.

But he added that from

preliminary-analysis, his department was "reasonably satisfied that most of the new rateable values have been fairly assessed and do not warrant alteration."

Mr Fry reported there were about 100 cases where ratepayers had asked for their assessments to be increased.

Nearly all of these were due to incorrect completion of forms, but at least one might have been submitted by the landlord on the mistaken assumption that it would affect the position of his premises with regard to rent control.

"However, as has been explained on a number of occasions recently, the rateable values employed for this purpose are those in the old valuation list as at June 10, 1983, so that a change in the current rateable value will not affect the position of protected tenants."

"Interestingly, the reason in the other few genuine cases where owners proposed increases appears to be the fear that their tenants might try to use the new rateable values as a basis for obtaining reductions in rent."

Mr Fry stressed that if the rating system was to continue to provide a sound indirect tax base, it was important that rateable values were updated periodically.

He said that planning would now proceed on the basis of a three-year cycle though it might not be possible to achieve this for the next revaluation exercise.

"Thus, I hope, ratepayers will not in future years have to face the very high increases in rateable values experienced on this occasion."