

Question 16—continued.

Port Victoria—My opinions are already stated.

Ashburton—Restore 25 per cent. of the Land Fund, especially in those counties which have not as yet received their share in the past, either from Provincial or General Government.

Wakanui—None.

Mount Somers—That 25 per cent. of Land Fund be returned to local bodies.

Geraldine—That the property-tax be allocated (less expenses of collection) to the districts which contribute them.

Geraldine—(1) The Board suggest that the Geraldine County Council be suspended, and the various functions be handed over to the different Road Boards in the county. (2) Should the Counties Act remain in force as at present, then the main roads and bridges—viz., the Rangitata, Orari, and Temuka, &c., should be under the control and management of the County Council.

Mount Cook—We are of opinion that throughout the colony, unless perhaps in some very exceptional cases, there should be but one form of local county government—viz., the county. In many cases, notably in the case of this Geraldine County, the county boundaries are too large, and include tracts of country having entirely distinct and opposite interests. The Geraldine County is divided into two totally distinct districts—sea coast and inland, the two districts having interests entirely distinct from each other, and which could never be satisfactorily governed by the same body. We consider that Road Boards should, if they felt the necessity thereof, amalgamate and form a county, having such boundaries as they consider most beneficial. We think that counties and Road Boards can never exist happily together, nor while Road Boards are in existence and in the full exercise of their functions can the counties be of any use, but create a duplicate and unnecessary expenditure in every department, also vexatious and needless interference with each other. We certainly are of opinion that, if this country is to be opened for settlement by the construction of means of communication, it cannot possibly be done by the present colonists out of current revenue; but the construction of such works must be a permanent charge on the Crown estate which they benefit, until repaid by a future and more populous generation. The current revenue is, as a rule, but barely sufficient to pay for the maintenance of roads and works.

Mount Peel—No.

Temuka—No answer.

Westland—The Council desire to point out the reasons for exceptional legislation with regard to sources of revenue for County Councils on gold fields on this coast. The half of the whole revenue of £10,000 per annum is absorbed in maintaining 162 miles of main roads running, for the most part, through Crown lands. The total amount of rates on the present rateable property in the county is but £800, at a 1s. rate. Frequent floods necessitate almost every year unforeseen expenditure. Besides the main roads referred to above (162 miles in length), the Council maintains

22 miles of the Christchurch Road and 187 miles of by-roads and tracks. There are 62 bridges in the county, spanning from 20 to 900 feet, and 21 ferries across dangerous rivers are subsidized at an annual aggregate cost of £700. The Council think that the Government should maintain the main roads, through the Council, and leave some residue of the revenue for the new works from year to year so urgently required. If the Government or some other equally advantageous proposals with regard to rating Crown and Native lands are carried out, this will compensate for the loss of the gold duty.

Waitaki—As to the finances of local bodies, of course the greater part of their revenue must at all times be derived from rates. This county admits the soundness of the proposition laid down in the above sentence in your circular, and that it may be given effect to suggests—(1) That all rateable property be exempt from the operation of the property-tax; (2) That in the event of a land-tax being imposed, the proceeds be handed over to the local bodies, each county receiving the whole tax accruing from the lands in that county; (3) That in deferred-payment blocks and other newly-sold blocks, 25 per cent. of the land sales be handed to the county to open up roads in those blocks; (4) That counties be empowered to borrow to the extent only that one-third of their extreme rating power will provide interest and sinking fund for the loan; (5) That counties do their own valuation for rates, and that Road Boards shall rate on the county regulation, and pay a proportionate share of the cost of the valuation.

Kakanui—No answer.

Waiareka—No answer.

Waitaki—Would much prefer 20 per cent. of the Land Fund being restored to counties, and also the property-tax localized, as this Board is of opinion that these would be much more beneficial than the provisions of the two Bills referred to in Question 15.

Waikouaiti—Would much prefer 20 per cent. of the Land Fund being returned to the county, and also the property-tax localized, as this Council is of opinion that these would be more beneficial than the provisions of the two Bills referred to in Question 15.

Palmerston South—That the Licensing Committee be abolished and power vested in the several local bodies in each district.

Waikouaiti—With regard to the rating powers of County Councils and Road Boards, County Councils ought not to have the power of rating road districts which wish to retain their Road Boards, or at most it ought only to be a nominal rate. If the Act had not given them this power, very few of the road districts would have merged into the counties. It was more the dread of a double rate than any dissatisfaction with the Boards that caused so many to merge. Main roads and large bridges and such like works ought not to be maintained out of rates. It is surely too much to ask the settlers along a main line of road to keep it up for the general public. Government ought to find the money for that purpose.

Maniototo—We have not been able to

consider the matters dealt with so full as to entirely comprehend their effect and any suggestions that occurred to the Council are made in the answers to the foregoing questions.

Peninsula—No answer.

Peninsula—Would much prefer that a fixed sum of pound for pound on the rates raised should be annually granted to County Councils and to Road Boards.

Taiieri—That all subsidies be stopped; that 20 per cent. of the land fund be handed over to counties; and that the property-tax be abolished.

Waipori—No answer.

Bruce—No answer.

Crichton—That some provision be made to lessen the cost of advertising. The costs incurred in this are so great as to gravely mar the benefits of every Road Board in the Provincial District of Otago.

Glenledi—No answer.

Mataau—No answer.

Mount Stuart—No.

Tokomairiro—We would beg to suggest that a consolidating Road Board Act would do much to simplify the working of Road Boards.

Clutha—No answer.

Pomahaka—No answer.

Molyneux South—This Board considers that, if the property-tax was given to Road Boards on an equitable basis, and 20 per cent. of land revenue, including rents from Crown lands given to counties, would be a better way of subsidizing counties and Road Boards than the Government scheme. That all valuations be made by the General Government. That any county or Road Board requiring to borrow should do so from the Government, to be secured by special rate.

Tuapeka—That under the peculiar circumstances in which the Tuapeka County Council is placed financially said Council suggest that Government make provision for the expenditure of the sum of £1,500 on main arterial works within the County such as Beaumont, Teviot, and Waitahuna Bridges, &c.

Clydevale—No answer.

Southland—That the consideration by the Government of the financial position of this county, since the reduction of the subsidy, and the withdrawal of the 20 per cent. of the land revenue, is earnestly requested. While extension of settlement leads to largely-increased calls for works, the above reductions have caused a serious diminution of revenue, which renders it impossible for this Council to adequately cope with the position. That, therefore, this Council suggests to the Government—(1) the adoption of a system of substantial subsidy; (2) the granting of a fair proportion of the land revenue.

Knapdale—No answer.

Toitoto—The Board beg to suggest that the whole of the ordinances relating to Road Boards require consolidation and simplification to be brought into accordance with the Rating and Electoral Act, to be furnished with an index, and so arranged as to form a sure and simple guide to the Boards in the execution of their duties.

Tuturau—(1) That counties should receive back 20 per cent. of Land Fund as previously. (2) That a subsidy on general rates be paid to local bodies of pound for pound,