

years the idea has been to throw the cost of the roads upon the landowners, but this is a constitutional mistake. As I have said before, roads are one of the *trinoda necessitas*. There are many countries where there is little stock—China and Japan, for instance; but the people there generally have to maintain their roads all the same.

On the other hand, the general population of a Road Board district should contribute towards the cost of the main roads through the town district or small municipality, leaving the by-roads to be solely maintained by the local Town Council. That is a matter for a local municipal or town district separate rate. The constitutional blunder is to *entirely* separate any portion of the county population from any given local area.

I remember when I first settled in the Wairarapa, in 1877, finding two counties—County East and County West—all the large runs in County East, and all the small towns in County West. The runholders had carefully cut themselves off from the local population, as a *precautionary measure*, so little did they understand the question at issue. They feared the population of the small towns rating their lands, quite forgetting that area and population must always go together. Is it surprising that we now have a wrecked Constitution, when our chief settlers twenty years ago thought like that?

I must say that I blame the great runholders of this country for its past policy of debt, for the abolition of the provinces, and for our wrecked Constitution. They have in consequence lost influence with the population, who are now turning round and taking their lands from them. I trust these few words will cause them now to realise the weight of the great principle that area and population must go together. Only in this instance the population is going to take what areas it pleases. (This is a dangerous plan, for fifty years hence the population then may dispossess the dispossessors.)

I see no particular difficulty in amending the schedule of the Counties Act, and reducing the number of counties to twenty-five. The Road Board Acts can also stay much as they are at present, both County Councils and Road Boards being given the opportunity of voluntarily amalgamating and merging into suitable areas; if not, Parliament to amalgamate them. (We went to the printing-office before for a Constitution, and we must go again.) All local legislation by good by-laws (chiefly meaning administration) then to be gradually handed over to the County Councils as the Councils fit themselves for taking up their duties. I should suppose the County Councils would hold quarterly sessions such as the Justices of the Peace used to hold for so many centuries in England, and still hold, I believe.

The large municipalities work fairly well. But the area of the small county municipalities is too large for the population, and the Act too cumbrous to work.

The expense of administering the Licensing Act is very considerable. I think this work should be left more to the counties.

I should like to see our best settlers take up the duties of County Councillors. Given twenty-five counties, with an average of fourteen Councillors, whose yearly expenses attending the Council sessions would amount to, say, £10 per head, or £3,500 per annum, and whose Chairmen's salaries come to £100 per annum, or £2,500 a year—£6,000 in all. I think this money would be admirably expended in curbing the power of the central Legislature, and stopping it from doing further harm. I should propose, indeed, that the £6,000 per annum be reduced from the estimates of the cost of the central Legislature. And let it be noted that I blame the present Government no more than I blame past Governments. Every one of our Parliaments since 1869 has done its utmost to plunge this colony into debt, and ruin our system of local government. Time it is to check this in the only way it can be checked—viz., by decentralising its powers.

Nor have I any sympathy to see the increasing number of Civil servants in the colony. Personally I should not regret to see the "biggest wooden building in the world" devoted to some other purpose, and many of its occupants employed by the County Councils. I am told that the whole service as at present conducted is becoming so unwieldy that papers and records are getting into the greatest confusion. This is only to be expected. Department is being piled on department; audit upon audit, until our nine Ministers find the work of management beyond their human capabilities. This is the inherent weakness of all proposals tending to destroy local independence of action. The human frame is not possessed of power to do more than a certain amount of brain-work; so that our Governments and Parliaments for the future must strive their utmost to throw back upon the localities their own self-governing powers. If the State tries to do everything, the work of management means ill-health, perhaps death, to the managers. For if the number of our Cabinet Ministers were increased to eighteen to carry out all our local wants, then it would be better for the Premier to sweep the crossing in front of the Government Buildings for a livelihood than attempt to guide the managers of eighteen portfolios. So that the necessity for Parliament to revert to local self-government becomes more apparent every day. There were not, I verily believe, one-fifth the number of Civil servants we have now in New Zealand to a seven hundred thousand population that there were in the United States in 1787–88, when Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Jay promulgated its present Constitution to a population of three million people. I therefore trust delegates will support me in reducing the number of counties in the colony, so that such a reduced number of local bodies may take up the work of looking after the public service a little more closely, and employing what we require directly ourselves, as was the practice in the old provincial days. The Civil servants required by the central Legislature should be paid well, and rendered more independent than at present, as I would rather see the chief Civil servants of the colony act as a check upon our constantly-changing Ministers. There is always constant change in a democracy, as the people veer so quickly from side to side. It would be far better for us, too, if the local bodies of the colony insisted upon every member of Parliament possessing a Civil Service certificate.

I therefore beg to move the motions standing in my name.

The Knoll, Wairarapa, 4th August, 1894.

COLEMAN PHILLIPS.