

not hastily, but the step backwards slowly and steadily made. We have constantly to amend and consolidate our general Acts. Should we not now consolidate a plethora of local governing bodies?

17. I see little reason to alter even "The Counties Act, 1876," and its amendments. It has been given, so let it stand. The schedule of counties alone requires amalgamation or reduction. Centralisation of local powers upon such a reduced number of counties should then become our policy. There would be no fear for the future solidity of this colony if that were done. At present our house is built upon sand, which may shift suddenly, to the surprise of all, and engulf much that rests upon it. We are running many dangers through the absence of any appreciated form of local self-government. Our House of Representatives should compel the people to administer local laws, if necessary, and should recoil from assuming powers which are every day thrust upon it.

18. I much regret that I am compelled to answer your inquiry in the manner I do. But there are no local by-laws in the colony. I attach the report of a local debating society. Strange to say, some of the speakers are among the oldest and best of our County Councillors. You will perceive that not even a conception of their true position apparently crosses their mind.

In conclusion, permit me to say that *upon an efficient form of local government depends the central Legislature*. I take that to be the maxim of the present age, and the corollary to the upheaval of the masses brought about by superior enlightenment. This applies to England fully as much as to New Zealand. With respect to ourselves, and summing up the remarks, permit me to say: Our municipalities are in a fair way. Our Road Boards require looking into, not disintegrating by county interference. Our counties require reducing in number from sixty-six to about twenty-six, and all true local powers consolidated into their hands. Our House of Representatives is fairly established. Our Upper House requires amendment in the shape of popularisation, which might be effected as follows: Such reduced number of counties (twenty-six) each to return one member from the county roll, and the Crown to appoint another member, fifty-two in all, with the usual power reserved to the Crown of increase upon emergency. The time may come when, perhaps, thirty or thirty-five counties may be required, but that time is far distant. For the true interest of the people of the colony, I would make every portion of government to depend upon the other, each fitting the other with exactitude, and all fitting the circumstances of the colony. I should recoil with alarm from allowing any small number of the people to interfere with such an arrangement as they do at present, here setting up a county, there abolishing a Road Board.

If I have been too positive in my statement I trust you will excuse me. Impartially as I can, and for the general good, I do but review our late legislation, and point out its weaknesses and the existing state of confusion. But this I know: that, whatever may be done by you or by your Government, I feel sure will be done for the best. And so

I remain, &c.,

COLEMAN PHILLIPS.

APPENDIX D.

RESOLUTIONS OF A JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE RANGITIKEI COUNTY COUNCIL AND RANGITIKEI HIGHWAY BOARD, ABOUT JULY, 1881.

1. THAT, in the opinion of this joint committee, the machinery provided by the Legislature to take the place of the abolished provincial system of government is utterly inadequate to carry out the functions of a good local government, rendering it absolutely necessary that a better system be provided; and this joint committee pledges itself to use all constitutional means of inducing the Government to bring down a Bill in the forthcoming session of Parliament dealing fully with the matter, and with that object invites the co-operation of all the local bodies in the colony.

2. That, in the opinion of the combined meeting of the committees appointed from the Rangitikei County Council and the Rangitikei Highway Board, the Government should use every endeavour to reduce taxation, instead of subsidising and endowing local bodies. Such local bodies may thus be enabled to tax themselves for their local requirements, which it is quite impossible for them to do under the present burden of taxation.

3. That, in the opinion of this joint committee, the existing constitution of the Waste Lands Boards should be amended so as to provide for the presence of an elective element at such Boards.

4. That, in order to relieve the more settled districts from the pressure upon their rates in opening up new country, the Government, in selling any new block of Crown land, should either make main roads through districts before sale of land to the public, or make provision out of the purchase-money to make roads in the district from whence the money was obtained.

5. That, in the opinion of this joint committee, valuations for all purposes of taxation should be made at the same time and by the same officer or officers, and at longer intervals than prescribed by "The Rating Act, 1876."

6. That the resolutions passed at this meeting be circulated throughout the colony, and that a copy of same be forwarded to the Premier.

APPENDIX E.

COUNTY AMALGAMATION.

To the Editor of the *Wairarapa Star*.

SIR,—My attention has been called to Major Smith's letter, of the 2nd instant, in the *Wairarapa Daily*. I wish to point out, in reply, that Major Smith is in error in supposing that legislative functions are demanded for the counties when amalgamated or reduced in number. One general Act for the colony with local administration is what appears to me to be required for any particular question. Matters of fencing, drainage, branding, licensing, dogs, rabbits, sheep, ear-marks, &c., are matters of purely local administration; but, at the same time, the central Government should