

APPENDIX G.

THE PAHIATUA ROAD BOARD PETITION.

To the Editor of the *Wairarapa Star*.

SIR,—I notice with satisfaction that the settlers in the Forty-mile Bush are agitating for the erection of their district into a Road Board, and that the Pahiatua people have presented a petition thereupon to the County Council.

I wish to point out that the only useful form of local body in the shape of a Road Board for the Forty-mile Bush would be one Board, stretching from the Camp to the Manawatu, south to north, and from the Tararua Range to the other side of Alfredton, east to west; Eketahuna, Alfredton, and Pahiatua being, as it were, the heart of such new district; the chief centre or office of the Board changing its position as any particular portion of the district advanced in importance.

Too small an area for a Road Board is as much a mistake as too small an area for a county. It is the efficiency of local self-governing bodies at which we should aim, not their numerical excess. I trust therefore that the settlers in the Forty-mile Bush, from south to north, will unite in petitioning for one Road Board. That Board would be a useful local body for many a score of years. Two or three smaller Boards would scarcely be so. The Masterton Board would then be able to look after its own portion of the district.

I would further suggest that such new Board be named the Forty-mile Bush Road Board.

Given the two Boards in the north, and that of the Castlepoint Board, together with the Taratahi-Carterton and Featherston Highway Boards, in the south, and I do not see any reason for the counties interfering with the Road Board systems of the whole Wairarapa Valley, or imposing a double rate for Road Board purposes. I have never wished for county interference, except in the case of the Forty-mile Bush Board (when the Masterton Highway Board people said they could not look after it), the Rimutaka Hill, and the great bridges. The erection of a Road Board in the Forty-mile Bush will do away with county interference in that direction. There will then only remain the Rimutaka Hill and the great bridges to call for county interference. I exceedingly regret to see the existing state of confusion brought about by late Acts of Parliament. I trust that the Forty-mile Bush settlers will not render matters worse by erecting two or three small Road Boards where one alone is necessary.

I am, &c.,

COLEMAN PHILLIPS.

Dry River, 18th June, 1883.

[The Forty-mile Bush settlers did not accept this advice, but erected a large number of Road Boards. The resulting evil has been so great that their county representatives are now wishing to sweep away the Road Board form of local government altogether. This, of course, would be as great a constitutional blunder as originally erecting too many Road Boards.—C. P., 1894.]

APPENDIX H.

COUNTY AMALGAMATION.—A UNITED WAIRARAPA.

*Letter II.*To the Editor of the *Observer*.

SIR,—In my last letter I concluded by stating that I would inquire into the reasons why our forms of local government are in a complete state of ruin and wreck; secondly, who brought this about; and thirdly, the remedy.

The first point can be perhaps briefly replied to by saying that the violent abolition of the provinces has ended in wrecking our system of local government, and nothing good ever came from violence in anything. On one side we see Road Boards splitting up, or counties absorbing them. On the other we see counties suspended partly, or their entire abolition voted: here a Municipality where there should be but a local Board; there a local Board which should be a Municipality. Here three or four licensing bodies where there should be but one; there one branding district where there should be three or four. The whole thing is in a terrible muddle, and has been brought about because clumsy workmen violently abolished the provinces, in place of gradually amending them, and suiting them to the advancing requirements of the country. I am sorry to say foolish politicians, calling themselves statesmen, took up the Constitution Act of New Zealand (an Act which I do not think they ever understood) and cut it to pieces.

Let us, sir, go into the history of that Act, so that your readers may see the base, the very foundation, of the whole of this wretched business; so that they may turn to their members of Parliament, and indignantly ask how it has happened that they have been so played with and deceived—whether from design or from ignorance. And this not of one or two men, but of the whole Parliaments which have done it.

When the people of this colony, about 1852–53, demanded Responsible Government, Sir George Grey went Home, and the Imperial Parliament in 1854 passed the Act which we call our Constitution Act. Sir George Grey drafted the measure, but he himself has told me that he consulted Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, Mr. Carlyle, and other eminent men about it. Indeed, the whole House of Commons fairly considered the measure; and as a student of history I think the result of their consideration one of the grandest measures of government ever granted to any community. It was the experience of all time, embraced in a brief compass. There was to be a central Parliament, and a certain number of provinces according to area and population; and these provinces could be divided into counties as population increased—just as the County of Westland was cut off from the Province of Canterbury or Southland from Otago. There were to be Highway Boards and Municipalities, ridings and wards, hundreds and Local Boards. Everything which the experience of local-government questions for centuries in England had testified as good for a people was contained in that Act. All was given, forming a homogeneous whole. Then ensued the public-works policy, and our admirable Act was ruthlessly sacrificed. Because the Superintendents and