

1895.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# COUNTY COUNCILS' CONFERENCE.

(HELD AT WELLINGTON, AUGUST, 1894.)

*Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.*

RECORD OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF A MEETING OF THE COUNTY COUNCILS' CONFERENCE, HELD AT THE HUTT COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICE, WELLINGTON.

TUESDAY, 7TH AUGUST.

A CONFERENCE of delegates representing various counties of New Zealand was held at the Hutt County Council Office, Wellington, on Tuesday, the 7th August, 1894, and the following days.

The counties represented, and the names of delegates, were as follows: Hutt, Messrs. Majendie, C. W. Brown, and H. A. Field; Horowhenua, the Chairman (Mr. Kebbell), and Mr. Engels; Manawatu, Mr. J. G. Wilson, M.H.R.; Stratford, the Chairman (Mr. Monkhouse); Lake, Mr. Fraser, M.H.R.; Wairarapa North, the Chairman (Mr. Von Reden); Wairarapa South, Mr. Coleman Phillips; Southland, Mr. McNab, M.H.R.; Waikato and Raglan, Mr. Lang, M.H.R.; Patea, Mr. Peat; Hawera, the Chairman (Mr. Forsyth); Pahiatua, the Chairman (Mr. Bolton); Waitotara, the Chairman (Mr. J. Laird); Wanganui, Mr. J. R. Sommerville; Kaikoura, the Chairman (Mr. A. S. Collins); Selwyn, the Chairman (Mr. McMillan); Inangahua, the Chairman (Mr. Trennery).

It was resolved that Mr. Majendie be elected Chairman of the Conference.

Proposed by Mr. Wilson, seconded by Mr. Von Reden, "That a County Council Association be formed on the same lines as the Municipal Association of New Zealand."

Amendment, proposed by Mr. Phillips, "That the Road Boards be included in the association with County Councils."—Lost.

Further amendment, proposed by Mr. Majendie, "That a County Council Association for the colony be established on the lines of the Municipal Association of New Zealand, and that Road Board delegates be invited to attend the Conference from districts where the Counties Act is not in force."—Lost.

Further amendment, proposed by Mr. McNab, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "And that the members of the association be elected by the Councils where the Counties Act is in operation, and by the Road Boards where the Counties Act is not in operation."

Mr. Wilson accepted the amendment, which was added to the resolution and carried.

Further amendment, proposed by Mr. Phillips, "That a local self-government association of New Zealand be formed of all local bodies outside the Municipal Association, with representatives from the old provincial centres."—Lost.

Proposed by Mr. Phillips, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That Mr. H. D. Atkinson be appointed secretary to the association."—Carried.

*Resolved*, "That the Conference do now go into committee of the whole for passing rules, &c."

## *Objects.*

Proposed by Mr. Engels, seconded by Mr. Von Reden, "That the objects of this association shall be to promote efficient local government in New Zealand."—Carried.

## *Interpretation.*

*Resolved*, "That in every county where 'The Counties Act, 1886,' is suspended, the combined Road Boards shall be deemed to be a County Council under this association."

## *Constitution.*

Proposed by Mr. Von Reden, seconded by Mr. Kebbell, "That all County Councils who subscribe to the funds of the association at the following rates—viz.: When the valuation is £1,000,000 or more, 5 guineas per annum; when the valuation is under £1,000,000, and more than £500,000, 3 guineas per annum; when the valuation is under £500,000, 2 guineas per annum—shall be deemed members of the association."

Amendment, proposed by Mr. Monkhouse, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That the words three, 'two,' and 'one,' be substituted for the 'five,' 'three,' and 'two' respectively."

The resolution was carried as amended.

Proposed by Mr. Bolton, seconded by Mr. Von Reden, "That each County Council shall appoint its representative to attend the meetings of the association, and each representative present at a meeting shall have one vote."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Von Reden, seconded by Mr. Phillips, "At the session to be held not later than the month of July in the years when the Conference shall be called, a president, two vice-presidents, a treasurer, and an auditor shall be elected, also a committee of seven members, who shall retain office until their successors are appointed. Should any member, however, be absent from three consecutive meetings without an apology satisfactory to the committee his seat may be declared vacant, and the committee shall have power to fill such vacancy. They shall also have similar power in case of resignation of any member."—Carried.

*Resolved*, "That the association shall meet for the transaction of business annually, but, should urgent business require it, the executive shall have power to call a special meeting at any time."

*Resolved*, "That the President shall have power to call meetings of the committee whenever matters of consequence require it, and he or the chairman shall have a deliberative as well as a casting vote at all meetings of the association and of the committee thereof. Four members of the committee shall form a quorum; and at the meetings of the committee all business brought forward by any member of the committee shall be considered."

Proposed by Mr. Von Reden, seconded by Mr. Forsyth, "The president, vice-presidents, and treasurer shall be *ex officio* members of the committee."—Carried.

"When any member desires to have a legal opinion on any point of local government, or other matter generally affecting local bodies, he shall forward a case stated to the committee. Should the committee think the case of sufficient importance, it shall be laid before the solicitor to the association for his opinion, and the case and opinion shall be printed, and a copy thereof forwarded to each of the members of the association, the cost of the opinion being borne by the general funds."

Proposed by Mr. Kebbell, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That this clause be not adopted."—Carried.

*Resolved*, "That the Chairman and Mr. Phillips form a committee to wait on Mr. Martin and ascertain from him on what terms he would act as solicitor to the association."

Proposed by Mr. Bolton, seconded by Mr. Engels, "That Mr. Von Reden take the chair during the absence of the chairman."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Monkhouse, seconded by Mr. Peat, "That the committee shall commence business as soon after the time stated in the summons calling the meeting as there is a sufficient number of members present to form a quorum; such quorum to be formed within half an hour of the time named for holding the meeting."—Carried.

"When any Corporation wishes to bring any matter before the meeting of the association for opinion or action, such Corporation shall forward a statement to the secretary, who shall place it on the business-paper along with any other subject which the president may require the committee to consider. If approved by the committee, it shall be placed upon the business-paper for consideration by the Conference."

Proposed by Mr. Forsyth, seconded by Mr. Kebbell, "That the words 'County Council' be substituted for the word 'Corporation.'"

"Two weeks before each meeting of the committee, the secretary shall forward to each member thereof a circular containing a list of the matters to be brought forward at such meeting."

*Resolved*, "That this clause be adopted."

"At the session of the association, it shall have power, should the majority of members present approve of such a course, to consider any business not introduced as provided by clause 10."

*Resolved*, "That this clause be adopted."

"Correspondence with the committee shall be conducted through the secretary, who in conjunction with the president shall have power, when a meeting of the committee cannot be arranged, to take the written opinion of each member thereof by means of correspondence, and to take action upon opinions expressed by the majority in the same manner as if a meeting had been held."

*Resolved*, "That this clause be adopted."

"The report of the proceedings at all meetings of the association shall be printed, and a copy forwarded to each member."

*Resolved*, "That this clause be adopted."

"The president's report of the proceedings, and an account of all expenditure by the committee in connection with its work, shall be, until otherwise ordered, placed before the committee at least one month before the holding of the annual Conference."

*Resolved*, "That this clause be adopted."

The Chairman and Mr. Phillips reported that Mr. Martin was willing to act as solicitor to the association, and recommended that he should be appointed.

Proposed by Mr. Engels, seconded by Mr. Von Reden, "That the report of the Chairman and Mr. Phillips be adopted."—Carried.

The Conference then resumed its sitting.

It was resolved that the business to be laid before the Conference on Wednesday, the 8th instant, should be taken in the following order—namely: (1.) Consideration of report of committee. (2.) Election of officers. (3.) Correspondence inwards and outwards. (4.) Reading of papers. (5.) Notices of motion in the following order—namely, (a) Constitutional; (b) Rating; (c) Miscellaneous. And that the order paper showing the aforesaid business should be printed.

Resolved, "That this Conference do now adjourn until 10 a.m. on Wednesday, the 8th instant.

WEDNESDAY, 8TH AUGUST, 1894.

The Conference resumed its sitting at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, the 8th August. Present: Mr. Majendie (Chairman), Messrs. Phillips, Von Reden, Bolton, Kebbell, Engels, Lang, Forsyth, Peat, Field, Monkhouse, Laird, Sommerville, McNab, Fraser, and Wilson.

Proposed by Mr. Phillips, seconded by Mr. McNab, "That the minutes of the first meeting of the Conference as read be confirmed."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Majendie, seconded by Mr. Phillips, "That the report of the committee be adopted, subject to Mr. Kebbell's notice of motion being incorporated therewith."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Kebbell, seconded by Mr. Von Reden, "That all notices of motion for the annual Conference be sent in to the secretary not later than the first day of May in each year, in order that the committee may distribute the order paper in time for the June meeting of the different Councils."—Carried.

The election of officers resulted as follows: President, Mr. Von Reden; Vice-Presidents, Messrs. W. Fraser, M.H.R., and F. W. Lang, M.H.R.; Treasurer, Mr. Majendie; Auditor, Mr. Field; Committee, Messrs. Wilson, M.H.R., McNab, M.H.R., Kebbell, Bolton, Laird, Monkhouse, and Coleman Phillips.

The newly-elected President then took the chair, and expressed the hope that the efforts of the association would result in an improved state of local government.

A vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Majendie for having occupied the chair, and to the Hutt County Council for granting the Conference the use of their building for meetings.

Mr. Lang asked the Chairman's ruling as to the number of votes exercisable by a delegate who represented more than one county, and the Chairman ruled that a delegate was entitled to one vote for each county he represented.

Proposed by Mr. Engels, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That notices of motion take precedence of correspondence."—Carried.

Resolved, "That Mr. Phillips's notice of motion be put down to the bottom of the order paper."

The President moved, "That, in the opinion of this Conference, the Counties Act should be so amended as to give counties power to make all roads in a merged district county roads, with a six-farthing rating-power."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Majendie *pro forma*, and, after a short debate, was lost.

The President moved, "That, in the opinion of this Conference, the law should be amended so that a Council could take action upon a resolution of a Road Board in favour of merging, provision being made to render the resolution inoperative upon a petition against the proposal, signed by a certain proportion of the ratepayers interested, being duly lodged with the Council."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bolton and carried.

The President also moved, "That, in the opinion of this Conference, the Counties Act should be so amended that the current rate-roll could be used for purposes of elections, and a voting-roll made up from that, including the names of those ratepayers in a riding who have then paid all rates lawfully demanded. Any ratepayer who pays on the day the election takes place, or who, voting at a distant booth, produces a receipt for all rates then due, should be allowed to vote."

Mr. Kebbell seconded the motion, which was carried.

On the motion of Mr. Coleman Phillips, on behalf of Mr. Fraser, seconded by Mr. Majendie, it was decided, "That this Conference requests the Government to take steps during this session of Parliament to empower local bodies to pay their respective shares of all expenses in connection with the meeting of this Conference."

Mr. G. N. Engels moved, "That this Conference is of opinion that all ratepayers should have the same voting-power—one ratepayer one vote."

Mr. Kebbell seconded the motion *pro forma*.

Mr. McNab moved, as an amendment, "That no ratepayer shall have more than three votes."

The amendment was seconded by Mr. Monkhouse, and was lost, and the original resolution was also lost.

Mr. Kebbell moved, "That the hospitals and charitable aid question is in such an unsatisfactory position that the Government be urged to deal with the subject this session as a matter of urgency; failing this, that no amendments be made in the present Act."

The motion found a seconder in Mr. Engels.

Mr. McNab proposed, as an amendment, and it was seconded by Mr. Phillips, "That all the words after 'urgency' be struck out, and the words 'this session.'

The amendment was carried.

Mr. S. Forsyth moved, "That the law be amended so as to enable local bodies to pay interest on loans under the Government Loans to Local Bodies Act out of general rate.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Kebbell, and carried.

Mr. S. Bolton moved, "That the Government be requested to amend the Land Act so that the 'thirds' derived from Crown lands sold or leased be paid in a lump sum instead of annually."

Mr. Majendie seconded the motion, which was lost.

Mr. Kebbell moved, "That charitable aid should be distributed by the local body which raises the rate, provided that a certain percentage of their rates shall be paid by the local bodies towards the charitable aid of towns."

This motion was seconded by Mr. Coleman Phillips.

Mr. Wilson moved, as an amendment, to strike out all the words after "rate," which was seconded by Mr. Peat and carried.

On the motion of Mr. Monkhouse, seconded by Mr. Sommerville, it was agreed, "That where, as under 'The Alcoholic Liquors Sale Control Act, 1893,' a local body has to pay officers and costs of administration, they shall have power to appoint such officers and control administration."

Mr. Wilson moved, "That the Loans to Local Bodies Act should be amended in the following direction (1.) Voting for loans: the loan shall be considered carried when the majority of those voting for it shall be in favour of the loan. (2.) That, in the case of a petition being presented asking for a loan, the local body should be permitted to pay the interest out of the general rate. (3.) That, in the case of bridges on a main road, the Government should subsidise the local body by pound for pound."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bolton, and at his suggestion clause 1 was amended to read that a majority of the votes cast, instead of a majority of voters on the roll, should be the number required to carry the poll.

Mr. Monkhouse moved, as an amendment, "That either a majority of votes exercisable, or two-thirds of those cast, be required to carry a poll."

The amendment was seconded by Mr. Sommerville, and carried by 6 to 4.

Mr. S. Forsyth moved, "That, in the opinion of this Conference, it is desirable that the number of local bodies in the colony be reduced, and that all be made elective."

Mr. Engels seconded the motion, which was carried.

Mr. Monkhouse moved, "That where all roads in a county, or part of a county, are under the control of the County Council, and a rate is, or rates are, levied in excess of three-farthings on capital value, the subsidy be the same as the aggregate receivable by both bodies had the control been under the Road Board and County Council respectively."

Mr. Bolton seconded the motion, and it was carried.

On the motion of Mr. Peat it was decided, "That, in every case where the rate levied is under 2s. 6d., that 2s. 6d. be deemed to be the amount due for collection."

The following resolutions were also carried:—

"That the Government be asked to promote a Bill in Parliament having for its object the simplification and consolidation of local government." (Mr. G. N. Engels.)

"That local bodies be allowed to take land for gravel-pits under the Public Works Act." (Mr. Kebbell.)

"That it is desirable that plans and information requisite for the administration of local bodies be supplied free of charge to local bodies by the General Government." (Mr. W. Monkhouse.)

"That the Government be asked to print the report of proceedings and balance-sheet." (Mr. Field.)

"That the necessity of despatch being used as regards audit of accounts be impressed upon the Government." (Mr. John Peat.)

[Messrs. McMillan (Selwyn) and Collins (Kaikoura) then took their seats at the Conference.]

The Conference adjourned for lunch, and resumed at 2.30 p.m., when the meeting went into committee of the whole to consider various resolutions relating to rating.

On the motion of Mr. Peat, seconded by Mr. Bolton, it was resolved, "That, in the opinion of this Conference, it is desirable that valuations for rating be carried out by and at the cost of the General Government."

Mr. S. Bolton moved, "That the Land Act be so amended that, where Crown land is leased by the Land Board on whatever tenure, and forfeited, the unpaid rates be a first charge on the land."

This was seconded by Mr. Majendie, and carried.

Mr. Monkhouse proposed, "That, in making all valuations for rating or other purposes, the increase in value due to improvements made by loans under Government Loans to Local Bodies Act should not be added to land-values."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Sommerville, and lost.

Mr. Monkhouse moved, "That where a special rating area, defined for loan purposes under the Government Loans to Local Bodies Act, or part of such area, is subsequently included within the boundaries of a new county, the new county shall have power to levy and collect the original special rate made as security for any loan, and pay amount so collected either to original body or direct to the Treasury, toward payment of interest on such loan. And that power be granted to make new rate-roll from original roll of area included in new county as evidence of new local authority's power to levy and collect the rate. Also power, where the whole of original area is in new county, to new county to take over all responsibility for original loan."

The motion found a seconder in Mr. Forsyth, and it was lost by 6 to 5.

Mr. Engels moved, "That this Conference is of opinion that all local rates should be levied on the unimproved values; this rule to be absolute, not optional."

Mr. Laird seconded the motion.

Mr. Lang moved, as an amendment, "That this Conference is of opinion that local bodies should be given power to levy rates on unimproved values."

This amendment was seconded by Mr. Phillips, and carried.

The President moved, "That, in the opinion of this Conference, power should be given the County Councils to levy (in addition to the maximum three-farthing rate) a general rate, not to exceed one-eighth of a penny in the pound, for the purpose of creating a fund for the restoration of bridges on the county roads: such funds to be invested by the Councils in the Public Trust funds or other Government securities."

Mr. Laird seconded the motion.

Mr. Kebbell moved, as an amendment, "That the consent of the ratepayers should be first obtained, and that the amount of the rate should be altered to one-farthing.

Mr. Engels seconded the amendment, which was lost.

Mr. Bolton proposed, "That County Councils should be given power to strike a rate of one-farthing in the pound for the restoration of bridges."

The amendment was seconded by Mr. Kebbell, and was lost by the casting-vote of the President.

The original resolution was then put, and lost.

The Conference then resumed, and adopted the resolutions passed in committee.

Mr. Coleman Phillips read a paper on the subject of the improvement of the system of local government. The consideration of the paper was adjourned.

The Council then adjourned until 10 a.m. of the 9th instant.

#### THURSDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 1894.

The Conference resumed at 10 a.m. on the 9th. Present: Mr. Von Reden (Chairman); Messrs. Collins, Phillips, McMillan, Bolton, Sommerville, Majendie, Field, Kebbell, Trennery, Engels, Forsyth, Monkhouse, Peat, Lang, J. G. Wilson, and Laird.

Mr. Bolton moved, "That clause 131, subsection (15), of the Public Works Bill be amended by the addition of the word 'pig,' after the word 'cattle,' in order to allow pigs to be impounded."

Mr. Monkhouse seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Mr. Peat, on behalf of Mr. Laird, moved, "That the question of adjusting the boundaries of counties, where such adjustment is necessary from the natural features of the country, be considered by this Conference, with a view to getting this done generally over the colony."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bolton, who remarked that endless trouble was caused to counties by the peculiarities of the boundaries.

Mr. Collins moved, as an amendment, "That Government be requested, during the recess, to take into consideration the question of adjusting the boundaries of counties and ridings, where such adjustment is necessary from the natural features of the country."

This was seconded by Mr. Engels, and carried.

Mr. Monkhouse moved, "That powers granted to several counties under 'The Counties Vehicle Licensing Act, 1893,' be extended to all counties."

Mr. Forsyth seconded the motion, the consideration of which was eventually adjourned.

Mr. A. Forsyth moved, "That, in the case of deferred-payment or perpetual-lease lands being paid for in land-scrip, the Government be asked to pay 'thirds' to the local bodies the same as if the land had been paid for in cash."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bolton, and agreed to.

Mr. H. A. Field moved, "That the Government be asked to introduce a measure providing for the rating of Native lands by County Councils and Road Boards, for the purpose and upon the same basis as that obtaining in respect of European lands."

Mr. Kebbell seconded the motion, which was carried.

Mr. Sommerville moved, "That the Government be asked to make provision in the Public Works Acts Amendment Act, now before the House, for the conveyance of metal on Government airways for use by local bodies at a nominal cost."

The motion found a seconder in Mr. Kebbell, and was carried.

Mr. Sommerville moved, "That the Legislature be asked to take into consideration the question of consolidating the different loans under the Loans to Local Bodies Act now current, with a view to their conversion into a 4-per-cent. loan instead of 5-per-cent."

Mr. Fraser seconded the motion *pro formâ*, and it was lost.

Mr. Sommerville moved, "That, in all cases of cash purchases of lands not fronting roads constructed by the Government previous to sale, one-third of the price be dealt with in the same manner as though sold under the lease in perpetuity."

Mr. Kebbell seconded the motion.

Mr. Bolton moved, as an amendment, the following addition: "That, where land is leased in perpetuity, and a deposit paid for survey-fees, and afterwards credited in payment of rent, one-third of the same shall be handed over to the local body interested."

Mr. Majendie seconded, and the words were added to the resolution, which was then put and carried.

Mr. McNab moved, "That, to enable County Councils to compel all owners of gorse fences from which gorse has spread over the road to clear such gorse to the full width of the road, section 6 of 'The Public Works Acts Amendment Act, 1889,' be amended by striking out the words 'up to the middle line of such road or street' from subsection (2)."

Mr. Sommerville seconded the motion, and it was carried.

On the motion of Mr. McNab, seconded by Mr. Bolton, it was resolved, "That a clause be added to the Counties Act enabling the County Councils to procure from Municipal Corporations such information as they may require, as in the case of Road Boards and Town Boards."

Mr. McNab moved, and it was seconded by Mr. Bolton, *pro formâ*, "That County Councils be exempt from the provisions of the Dog Registration Act requiring the issue of collars with the badges, as it simply adds to the cost of administration."

The motion was lost.

Mr. McNab moved, "That section 26 of 'The Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act, 1885,' be repealed."

Mr. McMillan seconded the motion, which was carried.

Mr. McNab moved, "That county licenses be issued to hawkers for £      and £      , according to the different classes, and that, for the further sums of £      and £      respectively, these hawkers be allowed to hawk within a borough."

Mr. Fraser seconded the motion, and it was carried.

Mr. McNab moved, "That this Conference approves of the clause in the Bill now before Parliament reviving 'The Town Districts Act, 1881,' extending the control of the town districts over the main roads, but considers the proposal to deny ratepayers of such districts the privilege of remaining electors of the county wrong."

Mr. Engels seconded the motion *pro forma*.

Mr. Kebbell moved, as an amendment, the insertion of the words, "the association does not approve" after the first word of the resolution.

The amendment was ruled out of order.

Mr. Monkhouse moved, as an amendment, to strike out all the words after "roads."

Mr. Forsyth seconded the amendment, which was lost.

Mr. Sommerville moved to strike out the words "extending the control of the town districts over the main roads," but the amendment was not seconded.

Mr. Bolton moved to strike out all the words after "1881," which was seconded by Mr. Engels, and lost.

The original resolution was then put, and lost.

Mr. Trennery moved, "That this Conference request the Government to reinstate the Crown Lands Rating Act, of three-halfpence in the pound, to enable the Councils to carry on their duties."

Mr. Engels seconded the motion *pro forma*, and it was lost.

The Conference then adjourned for lunch. On resuming at 2.30 p.m., the President was granted leave of absence, and Mr. Kebbell was voted to the chair.

Mr. Fraser moved, "That, with the view of affording immediate relief to local bodies, the Government be requested to amend during the present session of Parliament 'The Local Bodies' Loans Act, 1886,' 'The Government Loans to Local Bodies Act, 1886,' and 'The Counties Act, 1886,' so as to empower the following things to be done: (1.) That a local body shall be permitted to borrow money under 'The Government Loans to Local Bodies Act, 1886,' in order to pay off its overdraft. (2.) That, as soon as any local body shall have paid off its overdraft in the above manner, it shall not be lawful for such local body to incur new liabilities as overdraft which shall at any time exceed the amount of uncollected revenue at that particular date."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Laird, and carried.

Mr. Monkhouse moved, "That powers granted to several counties under 'The Counties Vehicle Licensing Act, 1893,' be extended to all counties."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Bolton, and carried.

On the motion of Mr. Sommerville, seconded by Mr. Collins, it was decided that the Government be requested to place this association on the same footing in the matter of privileges as the Municipal Association.

A letter was read from Mr. Kennedy, referring to the different modes of valuing for the purpose of levying special rates in special rating districts, and suggesting that the lands contained in such districts should be rated on the values as appearing on the rating-roll in force in the district for the time being.—Ordered to be received.

Mr. Monkhouse moved, "That, where in resolution No. 24 the term 'unimproved value' is used, it is to be interpreted as meaning the value of the property *minus* the value of all improvements made by the occupiers or owners."

The motion was seconded by Mr. Engels, and lost.

Proposed by Mr. Majendie, seconded by Mr. Peat, "That this Conference resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider the Noxious Weeds Bill."—Carried.

Mr. Collins desired to have recorded his opinion, that he thought the Noxious Weeds Bill would do a great deal of harm and cause a great deal of misery if it became law.

Proposed by Mr. Sommerville, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That clause 4 be struck out."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Sommerville, seconded by Mr. Engels, "That in clause 7 the words 'and burn all refuse therefrom' be struck out."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Sommerville, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That in clause 7, all the words after the words 'boundary-line,' in line 5, page 3, be struck out."—Carried.

Schedule A: Noxious Weeds.—*Resolved*, "That Bathurst burr, noogoora, blackberry, gorse, sweetbriar, Canadian thistle, and giant burdock be left in schedule; and that broom, star thistle, wild turnip, and mustard be struck out of schedule."

Schedule B: Noxious Seeds.—*Resolved*, "That burdock be left in schedule; and that thistles (all species) be left in schedule, except *Carduus pratensis* and *Carduus arvensis*."

Further consideration postponed.

Clause 8: Proposed by Mr. Lang, seconded by Mr. Monkhouse, "That in the first and second lines of section 8 the words 'hay, straw, chaff' be struck out."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Majendie, seconded by Mr. Collins, "That the whole of section 8 be struck out."—Lost.

Proposed by Mr. Bolton, seconded by Mr. Majendie, "That the second paragraph of section 8 be struck out."—Carried.

*Resolved*, "That section 9 remain as it now is."

Proposed by Mr. Collins, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That section 10 be struck out."—Lost.

Proposed by Mr. Majendie, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That, in section 18, all words after 'Government,' in the third line, be struck out."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Bolton, seconded by Mr. Majendie, "That the word 'may' shall be substituted for the word 'shall,' in line 4 of section 19."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Collins, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That section 20 be struck out."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Monkhouse, seconded by Mr. Forsyth, "That in the second and third lines of section 22 the words 'less than twenty shillings nor' be struck out, and the word 'fifty' be substituted for the words 'one hundred.'"—Carried.

Schedule A: Noxious Weeds.—Proposed by Mr. Majendie, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That 'tauhinau' be included in this schedule."—Carried.

Schedule B: Noxious Seeds.—Proposed by Mr. Majendie, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That Schedule B be struck out."

Proposed by Mr. Monkhouse, seconded by Mr. Lang, "That at the end of the word 'thistles,' the words 'except *Carduus pratensis* and *Carduus arvensis*' be added; and that 'broom, wild turnip, ergot, wild mustard,' be struck out."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Bolton, seconded by Mr. Engels, "That Schedule B be left as printed, with the addition of the words 'Cape weed and *Carduus pratensis*'; and that '*Carduus arvensis*' be not included in the species of thistles left in."

Mr. Kebell then vacated the chair, and the President took his seat.

Proposed by Mr. Kebell, seconded by Mr. Collins, "That the Conference resume its sitting,"

Proposed by Mr. McMillan, seconded by Mr. Majendie, "That the report of the committee on the Noxious Weeds Bill be adopted, with the exception of the amendment in Schedule A."—Lost.

Proposed by Mr. Peat, seconded by Mr. Bolton, "That the report be not adopted."

This was ruled out of order, and consequently not allowed by the Chairman.—Lost.

Mr. Majendie read his paper on "The Disintegration of Counties."

Proposed by Mr. McMillan, seconded by Mr. Majendie, "That the discussion on Mr. Majendie's paper be deferred until to-morrow."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. Von Reden, seconded by Mr. Peat, "That Messrs. Majendie, Kebell, and Bolton should prepare a list of resolutions requiring immediate attention, and should wait on the Premier with a copy of such resolutions at 3.30 p.m. to-morrow."—Carried.

Mr. Field was granted permission to withdraw his paper until the next meeting of the Conference.

It was resolved that the salary of the secretary be fixed at £20 for the first year.

Mr. Phillips gave notice of motion for next meeting of Conference, as follows: "That the County Councils administer the settled lands of the Crown, and also any lands to be acquired under the Land for Settlements Bill should it become law." (9th August for 10th August.)

*Resolved*, That this Conference do now adjourn, to meet at 10 a.m. to-morrow.

#### FRIDAY, 10TH AUGUST, 1894.

Present: President, Mr. Von Reden (Chairman); Messrs. Kebell, Majendie, McMillan, H. A. Field, C. W. Brown, Forsyth, Engels, and Collins.

Proposed by Mr. Von Reden, seconded by Mr. Field, "That the Vice-Presidents, Messrs. Lang and Fraser, with Messrs. McMillan, McNab, Majendie, Forsyth, Collins, Engels, Kebell, Trenery, and Brown, should form a deputation to wait on the Premier at 5 p.m. to-day, to lay before him a copy of the following resolutions which the committee was yesterday appointed to select for presentation."—Carried.

(1.) That charitable aid should be distributed by the local body which raises the rate.

(2.) That the hospital and charitable-aid question is in such an unsatisfactory position that the Government be urged to deal with the subject as a matter of urgency.

(3.) That no amount of rate demanded from any ratepayer shall be less than two shillings and sixpence.

(4.) That, with the view of affording immediate relief to local bodies, the Government be requested to amend during the present session of Parliament "The Local Bodies' Loans Act, 1886," "The Government Loans to Local Bodies Act, 1886," and "The Counties Act, 1886," so as to empower the following things to be done:—

1st. That a local body shall be permitted to borrow money under "The Government Loans to Local Bodies Act, 1886," in order to pay off its overdraft.

2nd. That, as soon as any local body shall have paid off its overdraft in the above manner, it shall not be lawful for it to incur new liabilities as overdraft which shall at any time exceed the amount of uncollected revenue at that particular date.

(5.) That this Conference requests the Government to take steps during this session of Parliament to empower local bodies to pay their respective shares of all expenses in connection with the meeting of this Association.

(6.) That the Government be asked to print the report of proceedings and balance-sheet.

(7.) That the Government be respectfully asked to place this Association on the same footing in the matter of privileges as the Municipal Association.

(8.) That clause 131, subsection (15), of the Public Works Bill be amended by the addition of the word "pigs" after the word "cattle."

(9.) That, to enable County Councils to compel all owners of gorse fences from which gorse has spread over to the road to clear such gorse to the full width of the road, section 6 of "The Public Works Acts Amendment Act, 1889," be amended by striking out the words "up to the middle line of such road or street" from subsection (2).

10. That county licenses be issued to hawkers for £      and £      , according to the different classes, and that for the further sums of £      and      respectively these hawkers be allowed to hawk within a borough.

(11.) That a clause be added to the Counties Act enabling the County Councils to procure from Municipal Corporations such information as they may require, as in the case of Road Boards and Town Boards.

(12.) That local bodies be allowed to take land for gravel-pits under the Public Works Act.

*Correspondence.*—Commissioner of Taxes, *re* loan of maps and valuations.—Received. Mr. Martin, five copies of each of the following documents: (1) Presidents' (Municipal Association) reports, from 10th June, 1892, to 30th June, 1894; (2) reports of proceedings at recent Municipal Association Conference.—Received.

Proposed by Mr. Majendie, seconded by Mr. C. W. Brown, "That the thanks of this Conference be accorded to the local Press for their full and accurate reports of the proceedings."—Carried.

Proposed by Mr. McMillan, seconded by Mr. Collins, "That a hearty vote of thanks be accorded to Mr. Von Reden for the able and courteous manner in which he has conducted the business of the Conference."—Carried unanimously.

The Conference then adjourned *sine die*.

A deputation consisting of the President, and Messrs. Collins, Kebbell, Majendie, and McMillan waited on the President of the Municipal Association, with the view of establishing friendly relations and affording mutual assistance, and were cordially received, the President warmly reciprocating the views expressed by the deputation.

#### DEPUTATION TO THE PREMIER, SATURDAY, 11TH AUGUST, 1894.

The Premier was interviewed, on 11th August, 1894, by a deputation from the New Zealand County Councils' Association, who laid before him the resolutions passed at the recent Conference. The deputation consisted of Messrs. McNab, M.H.R. (Southland), Lang, M.H.R. (Waikato), J. G. Wilson, M.H.R. (Manawatu), Fraser, M.H.R. (Lake), F. Majendie (Hutt), Kebbell (Horowhenua), J. McMillan (Selwyn), Collins (Kaikoura), and Forsyth (Hawera).

Mr. McNab referred to the important nature of the business transacted by the Association, and emphasized the necessity for early action with reference to some of the resolutions.

A list of the principal resolutions was handed to the Premier, who pointed out that the proposal of the Conference regarding the Hospitals and Charitable Institutions Act meant the abolition of the Charitable Aid Boards.

Mr. Kebbell said that all over the colony the system of charitable aid was in a most unsatisfactory state.

The Premier promised to consider the matter.

Mr. Kebbell, referring to the proposal that the rate to be collected from any one owner should not be less than 2s. 6d., explained that it was not worth while to trouble some small property-holders when the amount was only a few pence.

The Premier pointed out that the proposal to amend the Loans to Local Bodies Act and the Government Loans to Local Bodies Act would mean that Government would require to have at its disposal in one year as much as it was now allowed to lend in three years.

Mr. Fraser admitted the order was a large one, but thought it was the duty of the Government to give effect to the recommendations of the Conference.

The Premier promised to refer the matter to the Colonial Treasurer for consideration.

The deputation urged that it was very necessary that power should be given to pay the cost of sending delegates to the Conference.

The Premier said that a Chairman of a County Council was allowed to draw £100 a year.

Mr. Kebbell: Yes, but only for travelling-expenses.

Mr. Fraser said it could not be expected that many men would come to Wellington at their own expense.

The Premier said that it was impossible for the Government to bring in a Bill this session to give the power required. He was of opinion that when the Government altered the system of local government there would be no necessity for municipal or county bodies to hold conferences.

Mr. Fraser pointed out that such a Bill as the Conference desired to see passed could be brought in next session, and made retrospective.

The Premier said he did not think the request that the Association should be supplied with copies of Bills relating to County Councils was unreasonable. With regard to the request that the Government would print free of charge the proceedings of the Conference, he would undertake to recommend the Hon. Mr. Cadman, who was in charge of the Government Printing Office, to extend the same privileges to the Counties Association as had been extended to the Municipal Association. He recommended the deputation to lay the request for free railway-passes before the Railway Commissioners. The proposal to make provision for the impounding of pigs as well as of horses and cattle could be dealt with later on. The proposal to give counties power to take land for gravel-pits was, he thought, a reasonable one. With reference to the clearing of gorse, the Premier said the matter was one which required some consideration.

In regard to the question of having a county license for hawkers, Mr. Kebbell said that if the Bill were passed the boroughs would get the greater part of the license-fees.

The Premier promised to take the resolution of the Conference into consideration. He had no doubt that a compromise as regards the allocation of the money could be arrived at.

The interview then terminated.



THE NEW ZEALAND COUNTIES' ASSOCIATION RULES, AS PASSED BY THE  
CONFERENCE HELD IN AUGUST, 1894.

OBJECTS.

1. That the objects of this association shall be to promote efficient local government in New Zealand.

INTERPRETATION.

2. That, in every county where the Counties Act of 1886 is suspended, the combined Road Boards shall be deemed to be a County Council under this association.

CONSTITUTION.

3. All County Councils which subscribe to the funds of the association at the following rate—viz., when the valuation is £1,000,000 or more, three guineas per annum; when the valuation is under £1,000,000 and more than £500,000, two guineas per annum; when the valuation is under £500,000, one guinea per annum—shall be deemed members of the association.

4. Each County Council shall appoint its representative to attend the meetings of the association, and each representative present at any meeting shall have one vote for each county he represents.

5. At the session to be held not later than the month of July in the years when the Conference shall be called, a president, two vice-presidents, a treasurer, and an auditor shall be elected; also a committee of seven members, who shall retain office until their successors are appointed. Should any member, however, be absent from three consecutive meetings without an apology satisfactory to the committee, his seat may be declared vacant, and the committee shall have power to fill such vacancy. They shall also have similar power in case of resignation of any member.

6. The association shall meet for the transaction of business annually; but, should urgent business require it, the executive shall have power to call a special meeting at any time.

7. The president shall have power to call meetings of the committee whenever matters of consequence require it, and he, or the chairman, shall have a deliberative as well as a casting vote at all meetings of the association and of the committee thereof. Four members of the committee shall form a quorum, and at the meetings of the committee all business brought forward by any member of the committee shall be considered.

8. The president, vice-presidents, and treasurer shall be *ex-officio* members of the committee.

BUSINESS.

9. The committee shall commence business as soon after the time stated in the summons calling the meeting as there is a sufficient number of members present to form a quorum, such quorum to be formed within half an hour of the time named for holding the meeting. In the event of there being no quorum present at the end of the half-hour after the hour fixed for the meeting, the secretary shall have power to adjourn said meeting from time to time till a quorum is present, or until forty-eight hours shall have elapsed after the hour fixed for said meeting.

10. When any County Council wishes to bring any matter before the meeting of the association for opinion or action, such County Council shall forward a statement to the secretary, who shall place it on the business paper along with any other subject which the president may require the committee to consider; if approved by the committee, it shall be placed upon the business paper for consideration by the Conference.

11. Two weeks before each meeting of the committee the secretary shall forward to each member thereof a circular containing a list of the matters to be brought forward at such meeting.

12. At the session of the association it shall have power, should the majority of members present approve of such a course, to consider any business not introduced as provided by clause 10.

13. Correspondence with the committee shall be conducted through the secretary, who, in conjunction with the president, shall have power, when a meeting of the committee cannot be arranged, to take the written opinion of each member thereof by means of correspondence, and to take action upon opinions expressed by the majority, in the same manner as if a meeting had been held.

14. The report of the proceedings at all meetings of the association shall be printed, and a copy forwarded to each member.

15. The president's report of the proceedings, and an account of all expenditure by the committee in connection with its work, shall be, until otherwise ordered, placed before the committee at least one month before the holding of the annual Conference.

F. VON REDEN, President.

THE DISINTEGRATION OF COUNTIES.

[Read before the County Conference at Wellington, August, 1894.]

THE question to which I should like to ask your attention is the disintegration of counties:—

(1.) By the formation of boroughs throughout the country districts there are now no less than ninety boroughs and seventy-eight counties:

(2.) By the suspension of the Counties Act in some places—namely, in the Counties of Eden, Manukau, Rotorua, Oroua, Marlborough, Cheviot, Ashley, and Peninsula, where the whole Act is not now in force.

With respect to the latter it is not necessary to enlarge, because, so far as I know, the suspension of the Counties Act is working well, being, in fact, genuine county government under another name. In proof of this I would instance the excellent results obtained by the Kiwitea Road Board since the suspension of the Counties Act in the Oroua County.

But the operation of "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1886," is a different matter. It has proved most disastrous to county government in some places, and a real danger ahead. I will take the Hutt County as an example. A few years ago this county was compact, homogeneous, and in all respects workable. An epidemic of borough-making set in, which has to a very large extent emasculated it. Five boroughs have been cut out of it—namely, Petone, with a population of 2,175; Melrose, with a population of 1,275; Onslow, with a population of 2,000; Lower Hutt, with a population of 1,550; Karori, with a population of 966: total, 7,966; leaving the county with a population of 6,114. These figures are as at the date (1891) of last census. They would be today somewhat larger, and the ratio would be more in favour of the boroughs.

This remnant of a county is, however, still responsible for some 75 miles of main arterial roads—the eastern, to the top of the Rimutaka Hill, and the western, to the Waikanae River—roads which are practically as much colonial works as any railway in the country, but to whose maintenance neither the City of Wellington with its 35,000 of population or any of these boroughs contribute anything, except some half-dozen miles in Lower Hutt, Petone, and Onslow.

Looking at the area and rateable values we get some interesting figures:—

—	Area in Acres.	Rateable Property.			Total Income.		
		£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Petone ... ..	952	...	...	...	1,333	5	4
Melrose ... ..	3,962	201,746	0	0	1,147	14	4
Onslow ... ..	2,870	118,507	0	0	422	5	4
Lower Hutt ... ..	3,255	226,736	0	0	1,261	9	0
Karori ... ..	5,312	...	...	...	459	9	2
	16,351	546,986	0	0*	4,624	3	2
Hutt County (851 ratepayers)	362,000	875,460	0	0†	4,254	13	7

\* Three only.

† Including £36,000, unoccupied Crown and Native lands.

It is thus apparent that the cream of the rateable property has been taken from the county, and no extra provision made for the maintenance of those roads, which surely are of vital importance to the boroughs they feed. The complete *reductio ad absurdum* would be achieved by the establishment of two or three more boroughs, say, at Johnsonville, Pahautanui, and Upper Hutt, when the whole maintenance of the main arterial colonial roads would fall entirely on settlers of the more remote, and therefore less valuable, country.

This is only one instance. There are other counties in a similar, possibly worse, plight—*e.g.*, Eden, Selwyn, and Peninsula. I would suggest (1) in the first place, an amendment of "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1886," whereby proposed boroughs should have a minimum of three thousand inhabitants, and a rateable value of not less than £250,000 (there is no limit as to population or value now), boroughs to contribute to main roads leading to their boundaries; or (2) in the second place, the taking-over of main arterial—*i.e.*, county—roads by the colony, working through the local bodies by grant from the Consolidated or Land Fund, as is done in some parts of the United States of America. By some such scheme the incidence of taxation would fall more evenly and fairly on the whole population, and the local bodies insure a more satisfactory finance.

F. A. MAJENDIE,

Johnsonville, Hutt County.

6th August, 1894.

## UPON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NEW ZEALAND.

[Read before the County Conference at Wellington, August, 1894.]

I THINK it must have been in July, 1885, that I had the honour of attending a County Conference, sitting in Wellington. It was either that conference or a slightly earlier one. But in order to bring the results of conference work up to date I attach in Appendix A the resolutions then arrived at. Since 1885 I do not think there has been any great conference of County Councils—a matter to be deplored, as our Parliaments avoid grappling with the question. I extract from a late paper a discussion that took place in the House of Representatives about a fortnight ago upon the Pohangina County Bill. Similar discussions have taken place since 1885, but no useful result has followed. Different individual members admit the glaring evils resulting from the hurried abolition of the provinces in 1875 in order to carry out a mistaken policy of public works (which, in my opinion, has done vast harm to the colony, both in regard to wrecking its local-government system, and also in making it a Protective in place of a Free-trade colony), but no Government since 1875 appears to have sufficiently understood the principles upon which our Constitution Act was based to be able to introduce order into the chaos. I may explain that the proposed Pohangina County would contain an area of perhaps \_\_\_\_\_ acres. Delegates can now fully realise the absolute prostitution of the name of "local government" in the colony at the present time:—

"TOO MUCH GOVERNMENT.

"'Too much government' was the burden of the debate on the Pohangina County Bill yesterday.\* The Bill proposed to convert a road district into a county, and was promoted by Mr. Pirani. It was opposed by Sir Robert Stout, who said that the effect of turning these road

\* Parliamentary session of July, 1894.

districts into counties would be that counties would eventually be abolished; by Mr. Bell, who spoke in a similar strain; by Captain Russell, who declared that the measure would result in doubling the borrowing-powers of the district; by Mr. Mitchelson, who advocated increase instead of decrease of county areas; and by Mr. Tanner, who kept the debate going till the 5.30 adjournment, and shelved the Bill. In answer to inquiries the Premier said there was 'too much local government,' a statement which was received with a chorus of approval. He considered there should be a large reduction in the number of local bodies, which would mean a reduction of administrative expenses."

Notwithstanding these remarks, delegates will find that the Pohangina County Bill will become law.\*

I am hoping that a more frequent sitting of county conferences will bring forward delegates who understand the true principles of local government—country settlers who have studied and read the historical bearings and precedents of the important question at issue. For upon ourselves, dwellers in the country, rests the particular form of local government under which we choose to live. There is no necessity for us whatever to rest content with the mistaken legislation of 1875. Few town representatives will care one jot about the question unless we stir ourselves in the matter, make ourselves acquainted with what is required, and ask for what we want.

At the former conference I attended I saw very clearly that the delegates had not then grasped the position at all. I hope better things of this conference. For the consideration of delegates I attach in Appendix B a copy of a memorandum I had the honour of forwarding in June, 1883, to the Hon. Walter Johnston, then one of the Ministers of the Cabinet, at his own request. There is nothing in it I wish to retract now, or particularly amend. My repeated references to the money question in the memorandum were made for the purpose of emphasizing the vast difference that exists between local government based upon a "money" point of view (rates and taxes) and local government based upon area and population, the only true principle.

From a mere money point of view there can be no good form of local government at all. The question of rating should, of course, be considered in sketching the form of any local government, but it is really more a matter connected with revenue purposes. If the Crown or the central authority draws all the revenue and consolidates it, then, of course, there will be little local revenue. *Au contraire*, if the central authority reduces its expenditure, and throws the responsibility of taxing upon the local authorities, there will be plenty of local funds. At present our central authority in this colony draws four and a half millions of revenue out of a nine millions surplus of produce, so that it is almost impossible for the local authorities to spare much more for the great work of opening up the country.

In the memorandum I refer perhaps a little too strongly to the fact that I did not wish to see the provinces restored. I must have taken that view then because, having wrecked our Constitution by abolishing the provinces too quickly, it would be better to amend the Counties Act by reducing the number of counties than to repeal it and go back to the provinces. Personally, I think the provincial form of local government an excellent one. We still retain it in our Waste Land, Education, Charitable Aid, Cattle, and Harbour Boards, &c. It is, with the Municipalities, the only true form of local government we at present possess, the Road Boards being so much interfered with by the excessive number of counties, and made too much to depend upon the central Legislature for everything.

In Appendix D I attach a copy of resolutions arrived at by a joint committee of the Rangitikei County Council and the Rangitikei Highway Board about July, 1881. Resolution No. 2 points out the necessity of the central authority lessening its expenditure in place of increasing it.

About February or March, 1881, the following notice of motion was sent by me to the Wairarapa West County Council (now Wairarapa South). It was duly discussed, and, I think, referred to a conference of County Councils sitting in Wellington about 1882. It may have been that earlier conference I attended, and not the one in 1885:—

"That a respectful address be presented by the Council to Parliament, praying that Parliament in its wisdom will, for the efficient working of the county system, see fit to reduce the number of counties in the colony by about two-thirds of those at present in existence. That some portion of the legislative and administrative powers possessed and exercised by the late Provincial Councils be handed over to such a reduced number of counties. That a subsidy of £1 for £1 be contributed from the consolidated revenue upon all county rates levied for the purpose of maintaining and erecting important bridges and opening up main roads in districts not served by railways. That Road Boards alone see to and provide for the permanent roadways in districts served by railways. That special votes be made by Parliament for any works of colonial importance. That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the different County Councils in the colony, calling attention to the advisability of holding a general conference during the approaching session of Parliament, touching the matters herein contained."

I also find amongst my papers the following resolution, which may or may not have been passed by that conference: "That this conference, having considered the position of local government in the colony, is of opinion that various amendments in the law are urgently required. That in the opinion of the conference the present defects in the system, the wants of various local bodies, and the direction in which amendments of the law should be made and assistance given, would be best ascertained by an inquiry under the authority of Parliament. This conference therefore respectfully urges upon the Government the necessity of immediately appointing a Committee of

\* It has since become law, but the Act does not give the acreage of the new county, neither do the statistics of the colony, Part VI., Miscellaneous (being the portion relating to local governing bodies), give the areas of counties or road districts. I would ask our Registrar-General to amend this omission as quickly as possible. Let us see the areas and population of all our local governing bodies. I have great suspicion, too, regarding "The Levels County Act, 1894," creating that district a new county. Pohangina and Levels appear to me to stand much in a similar position.—C.P., 1894.

the House to consider the whole question, with a view to the requisite legislation at as early a date as possible."

Whether a Committee of the House, or a Royal Commission sitting during the recess, would be of most benefit, I cannot say. Personally I think it will be necessary for colonists to acquaint themselves more fully with the principle that any form of local government must be based upon area and population. Thus it was absolutely impossible for any State to be admitted into the Union of the United States of North America until it contained a certain area and a minimum population. The State would then be divided into so many counties; each county into so many town districts; each town district into so many road districts; each road district into so many wards, the ward being the unit of local government. It has been until quite lately the constant task of the central Legislature of the United States to throw back upon the people their own local legislation. Thus, if any Bridge, Drainage, or Road Bill is introduced into Congress, what happens? Congress refers it back to the State Legislature; the State Legislature refers it back to the County Council; the County Council refers it back to the Town District, which refers it to the Road Board, and the Road Board, if possible, to the private individuals directly interested,—unless, of course, the special matter happens to be of general importance, or to affect two road districts or two counties or two States, when the dual bodies must settle the question between them. In this manner the true spirit of local government and the independence of the people are preserved. The rule was in America, until quite lately, that the central authority should do nothing which the State could do for itself, the State nothing which the county could do for itself, and the county nothing which the township or Road Board could do. It was found that just in proportion as government receded from the people immediately interested it became liable to abuse. Therefore, whatever authority could be conveniently exercised in primary assemblies was placed there, for there it was certain to produce the best results. The American believes in Home Rule down to the smallest division, and has shown an admirable dislike of Centralisation.

Now let us see what happens in New Zealand. In consequence of removing the provincial barrier of local self-government in 1875 and setting up too many counties in its place, everything gravitates at once to the central Legislature. We have all been made to lean upon it, to depend upon it, and to look to it for everything; the consequence being that it has played ducks and drakes with our resources; in this instance the ducks and drakes meaning throwing millions of our money into the sea. And let it be understood that it is not the present Government I blame so much for this as all the Governments since 1869, when the borrowing policy was really commenced. On all sides Parliament sees open mouths asking for this, that, and the other. To meet these demands it readily plunges millions and millions into debt. I fancy the present Government is forced to take some such course as this, because there exists no proper barrier of local self-government to protect it from the local demands. It is no use saying that the Government is the chief sinner in leading the people, for the Government only represents the people. The leading financiers of the colony all say that another great loan must be ventured upon, and that the colony can stand further central taxation. If the people prefer to depend upon central administration and to have no local government there is no good setting up a Committee of the House to try and patch up our present wrecked Constitution. Whether any central set of Ministers will be sufficiently strong in physical health to meet the constant demands upon their time is very doubtful. They must eventually break down under the growing strain of central administration, and for their own protection erect the proper barriers of local government which alone can give them relief. Since 1875 in New Zealand, ever since the provinces were abolished, Ministers of the colony have been mere drudges and slaves.

I attach in Appendix E the copy of a letter written to one of the local papers in December, 1882, which points out subjects that required proper administration from a local point of view.

There can be little doubt that the central Legislature has plunged the colony most heavily into debt since 1882—practically ruined our finances and bankrupted the population. This could not possibly have happened under the provincial form of government. The provinces were swept away because they were £600,000 in debt, and some of them, like Auckland, objected to the central Legislature entering upon the maelstrom of debt which now encircles it.

My wish now is to see an amalgamation of the counties and a curtailment of the administrative power of the central Legislature. I should like the memorandum I had the honour of sending Sir John Hall in 1880 looked up, as I think I sketched or painted a plan for amalgamating the North Island counties.

Seventy-six million acres of land in the colony, divided into twenty-five counties, would give about three million acres for each county area. I would ask delegates to agree amongst themselves how their respective counties could coalesce or amalgamate according to their local wants and their carrying and shipping dependencies. Their mountain-ranges and rivers, formerly a bar to extension of local authority, need not be considered now so much, where a railway pierces or bridges them. For all practical purposes they are bound together by a level iron road. Districts not served by railways must, however, still consider such barriers.

The population of the colony is now about 600,000 people, exclusive of the four chief towns of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, which should be towns and counties in themselves. This number, divided by 25, gives 24,000 people: this to be the minimum population; and for the next half-century of time any seaport town growing into a large population to be created a town and county of itself.

A properly-constituted county, to meet present requirements, should contain about 3,000,000 acres and 24,000 of a population, inclusive of the Maoris; or I will grant a 20,000-population minimum. The County of Westland, the old Province of Hawke's Bay, or the two Wairarapa Valley counties amalgamated are examples of my meaning. Upon such counties should be thrown the whole administration, by proper by-laws, of all local Acts,

Now as to Road Boards. I think, if we allow 200 Road Boards to the colony for the present, that would give an area of 380,000 acres to each Board and a population of 3,000 people as a minimum. Hereafter (say in 1920) I would rather see only 100 Road Boards, with an area of 760,000 acres and a population of 6,000 people. The medium number would be 150 Road Boards with an area of 500,000 acres and 4,000 of a population. We need not be so strict as to the population being in exact proportion to the area in the Road Board form of local government as we should be in the amalgamated counties, but it must fairly approach the principle. Thirty miles by thirty miles would in my opinion be as much roadwork as one road engineer could look after, and there should always be one duly-qualified road engineer (a licensed surveyor) to each of our Road Boards; for I have seen the greatest waste of money in many Highway Boards in the colony owing to there not being a properly-qualified officer to fill this post. I believe that almost every single district road around Mount Egmont has its own Road Board, their revenue varying from £40 to £100 a year. Most of this money goes in paying for advertisements, postage, and clerical work. Some of the warden work of construction, too, is simply lamentable, as many as three different grades being observed—two, of course, being abandoned—in one piece of road round a hill. In Appendix F I attach an extract from the *Taranaki Herald*, of November, 1883, showing the terrible folly of the eight Chairmen of Road Boards in the Taranaki District at that time.

In the Forty-mile Bush, in the Wellington Province, and near Auckland as well, the Road Districts are altogether too small in area. In Appendix G I attach a letter written in June, 1883, warning the Masterton Road Board, which then embraced the Forty-mile Bush, not to allow itself to be cut up into too many Boards. The warning was unattended to, and now there are eight or nine Road Boards where there should be but one. The waste of money in clerical work, advertising, furnishing returns to the Government, stamps, &c., is simply enormous. But the chief waste, as I have said, is the overseership in construction by the wardens themselves—good enough country settlers, well-intentioned men, but nine-tenths of them unacquainted with the proper way of making roads and bridges.

These two examples will prove the error of Sir F. Whitaker's and Sir Harry Atkinson's idea of throwing a Constitution to the people and telling them to adopt it or not as they liked; also that a Constitution grows and is not made. These good people who set up so many Road Boards in Taranaki and the Forty-mile Bush had no idea whatever of the harm they were doing. And the eight Taranaki Road Board Chairmen, who thought that a committee of themselves could look after the bridges, and so abolished their county—their names should be engraven on brass, and handed down to posterity as a dreadful example of early colonists who understood so little the principles of true local self-government.

On the other hand, I have witnessed small County Councils in the South Island abolishing all the Road Boards within their area. This I thought a proper step, as the special County Council then fitted itself by area and population to the proper form of Road Board government—it became a mere Road Board. I think the Pahiataua County Council should follow suit in this, and, when done, change its name into the Pahiataua or Forty-mile Bush Road Board, merging all its county functions into a new amalgamated Wairarapa County extending from the Manawatu River to Palliser Bay. There is power, of course, to merge, and it is this power I propose to take advantage of in reducing the number of local bodies.

I think the idea of throwing a Constitution to half a million people, as was done in 1875, and telling them to rend and tear it as they pleased, deserves the utmost condemnation at our hands. The result proves the mistake. We are all at sixes and sevens with each other, and the central Legislature is free to run riot with our resources, as it has done for twenty years past.

I attach in Appendix H a letter written by me, 26th February, 1884, explaining how our Constitution Act was originally drafted, and telling the names of the gentlemen who did it. I say also that the Constitution of the United States was not thrown to the American people to rend and tear and patch as they pleased, but drafted by a few eminently educated men—chiefly by one Algernon Sidney, in a coffee-house in the Strand about 1681–82; the great English Republican aristocrat amending the draft afterwards at his charming home at Penshurst, in Kent. It was Mr. Penn, after whom Pennsylvania was named,—then emigrating to America,—who met Algernon Sidney, in the Strand, in London, and asked him under what form of government should the colonies live. Sidney thereupon roughly drafted the present celebrated American Constitution. Therefore I now say that it is always a terrible blunder to throw any form of Constitution to a people and tell them to rend and tear it as they please.

With respect to rating. Dual rating for road-construction should of course be abolished. The counties should not interfere with the Road Boards in this respect at all. All that the counties should do would be to look after the bridges and certain roads of colonial importance.

As to the wards in the Road Board and ridings in the counties, I should increase their area, but otherwise leave their constitution much as it is now—five to nine wards in each Road Board, and a similar number of ridings in each county, but each county riding to return two members to the Councils.\* The boundaries of wards, Road Boards, and ridings to be coterminous. The ward unit of local government comes down to us through the long vista of fifteen hundred years of time. I have for it the highest respect. Base it only rightly, fit it only fairly to the area of population of any Anglo-Saxon country, and I warrant you, sir, that any superstructure you build upon it will come out free and independent. At present there can be nine wardens to a couple of miles of road in Taranaki. Is it any wonder that these petty wards struggle with each other most bitterly, and in the end lose their independence, the central Legislature mopping it up? For where there is so much division there cannot possibly be any true ruling. The ward unit must be rightly fitted.

\* I understand since from the Premier that he prefers the name of "District Councils" for any such reduced number of counties. I hope Mr. Seddon will retain the good old-fashioned name of "County," but I will not insist upon the point, so long as the principle of reduction is conceded by Parliament.

I think it would be as well, also, for Chairmen of Road Boards to be *ex officio* members of the County Council—my aim being to obtain a Council composed of eighteen to twenty-two members, bound together in unity as to their local requirements; the executive of the Council being the chairman, treasurer, clerk, commissioner of settled lands, bridge engineer, police, sheep and rabbit inspectors, and other such officers.

I think the experiment should be tried of the county maintaining its own police, the great object being to decentralise from Wellington. There are grave dangers now from the central authority having charge of the local police.

The present area of the municipalities is altogether too large for the population qualification within the counties, and it should be reduced. On the other hand, the population qualification for town districts is too large for any given area, and it requires lowering about 33 per cent. The manner in which these things have been ignored by the framers of our late Acts appears to me to be inexplicable. Many growing villages require to be town districts, but have not the necessary hundred houses.

With regard to charitable aid and lunatic asylums, I think the counties will look after these two things better than the irresponsible Boards which now have the looking after them. In making the chief towns of the colony counties in themselves, I leave the great lunatic asylums to them. Otherwise—that is, in charitable-aid matters—I think the twenty-nine counties I sketch out—twenty-five country and four town—might arrange this more amicably than at present.

With regard to lands, I would advise the separation of the settled lands of the Crown from the waste lands; the County Councils to administer the settled lands, and to have all dealings with settled lands in any shape or form.

With regard to finance in road-construction, I think the Road Boards should only be able to rate and to borrow up to a certain limit. But I have never been a great admirer of the Roads and Bridges Construction Acts, although I have been compelled to make use of them. I do not like throwing the cost of new work upon the localities, leaving the central Legislature free to squander millions of money as it pleases. What we should aim at is the absolute cessation of this wasteful expenditure, and the reduction of taxation upon the part of the central Legislature. This is what Canada is doing—reducing taxation by the Dominion Parliament—which will allow the localities then a greater spending-power.

The making of new roads and bridges is one of the *trinoda necessitas*, the second duty of the State after the defence of life and property. When there has been no necessity to defend, as in this colony, then the making of new roads and bridges became the first duty of the State, and it was a complete blunder to throw the whole cost of the work upon the localities. This blunder alone assisted chiefly to wreck our county and Road Board system. The argument that the State had all its work to do to maintain the railways does not apply. These costly iron roads have proved of little more advantage to the individual settler than our old metalled roads, New Zealand being a long narrow strip of land with a double seaboard. But thirty millions of money have been spent in running railroads alongside our old metalled roads, leaving settlers ten miles away from the railway as badly off as if there were no railways at all—more, indeed, because they cannot now expect any assistance from the extravagant central finance in constructing their new roads in the great work of settling the country.

There are a few arguments I have noted amongst others *re* the amalgamation of the counties which I wish now to record. In 1886 the Commissioner of Crown Lands in Wellington wished *himself* to inspect the Kaiwata Bridle-track, and declined to allow the County Council I sat in to do so. If a County Council is unfit to construct a bridle-track properly within its area, I cannot see the use of local government at all. The same remark applies to a properly-formed Road Board. I hope delegates will clearly understand what I say. If they are incompetent to be intrusted with the making of a bridle-track, then it is perfectly useless their meeting in conference at all.

In 1887 I saw a Minister of the Cabinet, an Under-Secretary, and a Rabbit Inspector going to inspect a run upon which it was difficult to get the rabbits down. Could anything be more absurd than that? So far I think I am justified in saying that the one central rabbit Act has done little good in suppressing the rabbit nuisance in this colony.

In 1887 I remember another Minister of the Crown telling the Woodville people that the Government had had such a bad experience of county work that he did not like to hand over such an important and costly work as the Manawatu Bridge to the local bodies. I think that Minister was quite justified in his remarks. The manner in which the bridges of the colony are being neglected by the counties and Road Boards deserves the severest condemnation. I hope a reduced number of counties will appoint good bridge engineers amongst them, and strike a small rate for the proper maintenance of the bridges. But all small bridges within the Road Board areas should be left to the Road Boards, the counties to take charge of all road bridges separating Road Board districts or counties.

There is no difficulty whatever for the counties to engage amongst themselves any of the engineers who constructed the great railway bridges, so that, personally, I advise no dependence upon the central Legislature for anything.

These three examples are sufficient illustration of what I mean.

A constitutional blunder has also been made, I think, in separating the population of the small municipalities and town districts within the counties from the local rating-areas.\* I can quite understand a town and county of itself being so separated, but not any smaller population. Tolls are now very properly abolished where possible, and the dwellers in any of the small townships use the roads of a Road Board fully as much as any of the landowners, and they are quite as much entitled to subscribe to their support. Roads are for the use of a people first, then for a people's goods and chattels; so it is the people generally who must first subscribe to their support. Of late

\* The United States town district embraces a much larger area than our town districts. The reader must not confuse the two.

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.

## APPENDICES.

## APPENDIX A.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE CONFERENCE OF DELEGATES FROM COUNTY COUNCILS, HELD IN WELLINGTON, JULY, 1885.

1. THAT the proposals now before the House as to local government are not calculated to develop a permanent system of effective local government in the colony.

2. That this Conference is of opinion that local government should remain *in statu quo* during the present year, and that funds should be provided to meet the demands of the counties and Road Boards, under the Roads and Bridges Construction Act; and that, meantime, a Royal Commission should issue to inquire into the question, with a view to facilitate legislation.

3. That the European ratepayers are suffering considerable injustice under the administration of the Crown and Native Lands Rating Act, and that this Conference is of opinion that there are large districts in which all land owned by Natives should be liable to the same responsibilities as those imposed upon land owned by Europeans.

4. That the money for the construction of all roads to open up particular blocks of Crown lands be handed over to the County Councils, who shall have an authority to settle the grades and location of roads, subject to the approval of the Government to general line and termini of road.

5. That, if a Royal Commission is appointed to inquire into local government, the question of location of roads to open up Crown land be also within the power of the Commission.

6. That the Hospital and Charitable Aid Bill appears to deal with the matter in a way that may be made satisfactory, and may be amended so as to make it a useful measure. That the amendments that are essential are that the interposition of the District Boards should cease to exist when once a local institution is constituted.

7. That any local authority contributing to the expenses of any hospital or charitable institution should be represented on the governing body of trustees in proportion to its contribution.

8. That it is desirable that power be given to County Councils to alter their boundaries in cases where the necessities of communication make such an alteration desirable; and also to remove one or more properties from one road district to another, on the application of the owner or owners, and with the consent of the Boards interested.

9. That the suggestion from the Rodney County Council that compensation for lands taken for roads under the Public Works Act should be based on the value assessed under the property-tax, with 50 per cent. added, be agreed to.

In addition to the matters referred to in the several resolutions, the Conference considered other questions, notably the proposal to make County Chairmen elected by popular vote. The Conference were unanimously of opinion that such an alteration was not desirable.

It was also considered that any alteration in the way of providing funds for local bodies should take the form of allowing them to raise the whole of their revenue, and thus bring about a complete separation of local and general finance.

The Conference waited upon the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer and submitted their resolutions and views upon the several matters referred to. The deputation was most cordially received, and consideration of the suggestions was promised.

11th July, 1885.

F. SUTTON,  
Chairman, County Conference.

## APPENDIX B.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HON. WALTER JOHNSTON UPON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN THE COLONY OF NEW ZEALAND.

SIR,—

Dry River, Wairarapa, 11th June, 1883.

You desired me to incorporate in a memorandum a list of subjects of local government which it may be advisable to grant to local governing bodies other than those at present enjoyed by them. I have the honour to reply as follows:—

1. That with the exception of the small Municipalities and Road Boards the people of this colony exercise no control over such purely local questions as matters connected with sheep, cattle, fencing, draining, dog-registration, rabbits, and the like. In proof thereof I refer you to the local by-laws, rules, and regulations. There are few, if any. The counties possess no by-laws worthy of the name. All Acts, therefore, conferring powers of local government are almost inoperative. There is scarcely any efficient local government in the colony.

2. The counties as at present constituted appear to be incapable of realising their true position. This can only be expected. For if it is difficult to find ninety good members for the House of Representatives, it must be surely more difficult to find five hundred Councillors to frame local laws. The most enlightened of the counties very properly consider themselves road districts, and either act as Highway Boards, and abolish the smaller road bodies, entailing great confusion thereby, or abandon their functions to existing road bodies. The people do not care for a dual highway rate.

3. The Municipalities, when not erected in too small centres, and the Road Boards, when not interfered with, fairly enough comply with the wants of local government expected from them, although the administration of the latter may be expensive. A slightly expensive administration is preferable, however, to the existing state of confusion between Road Boards and counties. I fancy that nearly every branch of local government in the colony is in a state of confusion, excepting the Education Boards and the large Municipalities. Even the town local Boards scarcely know their functions. The Harbour Boards work fairly well, but I am unacquainted with their operations.



4. There appears to have been an entire misconception of the principles that underlie questions of local government by our politicians. Proper consideration does not appear to have been given to the suiting or the fitting of the population to the area. This appears to me to have been the fundamental mistake. The words "money" and "rating" have been bandied about, and these appear to have formed the bases of the questions at issue, whereas they have little to do with the question of efficient local government. The English statesman who drafted and advised upon our original Constitution Act treated these two questions as side-issues, but paid particular attention to the question of area and growing population. It is to be regretted that, whilst in the United States the people cherish and preserve their original Constitution, and amend it with the greatest reluctance, we in New Zealand alter with the utmost readiness one of the wisest forms of constitutional government ever granted to a country or to a community. I take it that our Constitution Act was a purely impartial Act, based upon the experience of ages.

5. I should suppose that the framers of that Constitution had a fairly simple task before them. Given an insular country within the temperate zone, possessing a certain geographical configuration, lying at stated distances from the continents, occupied by a small tribe of savages whom a century of time would cause to disappear, what form of government was most suitable to the area and growing population, that population belonging to the Anglo-Saxon race?

6. The question was admirably answered in our Constitution Act, whose wreck may still be seen in the efficiency of our Waste Lands Boards. The mistakes we have made appear to be two: (1) in violently abolishing, in place of gradually and cautiously amending; (2) in setting up too many forms of local government.

7. There was ample provision made in the Act (our Constitution Act) for dividing the provinces into counties, as witness the erection of the County of Westland. All that the colony required was the erection of a few more such counties. But the Act was sacrificed to a question of money (public works), and those who did so quite overlooked the fact that questions of area and population and local government stand upon immutable principles, whose roots run deep into the centuries, and that it is as impossible to prune these roots from a money point of view as it would be to evolve a perfectly new form of Constitution suitable to money. Those who abolished the provinces appear to have been clumsy workmen, unacquainted with their work. I would suggest no more violent changes, but a gradual rectification into the proper path. Violence of any kind is certain to recoil upon itself.

8. In a colony like this; undergoing the heated process of development, it is impossible to centralise government completely. One portion of the colony will not have that which is suitable to another portion because it is unsuitable for itself. The people of Auckland may be olive-growers and eaters of the lotus, when the people of Otago will be energetic shipbuilders and the navigators of the seas; although the people of Auckland, like the people of Greece, must become a maritime people, fond of adventure and prizing local independence. Herein the question arises of running a mountainous country, with a vast seaboard, some £20,000,000 into debt for the purpose of building railways. A maritime people will always find out their own markets. Might it not have been better and far more economical to have encouraged the maritime spirit and saved the debt? Our ports then would have been free to trade anywhere. They are not so now. The railways would have been built as they were wanted. Any Government therefore desirous of carrying out a policy of centralisation will build its house upon sand, for nothing but local independence will ever control a maritime people. There is as much difference between the two ends of this colony as between northern Scotland and southern England.

9. I should therefore wish to see a wise form of local government provided, acting hand-in-hand with the central authority. At present there is nothing but confusion. Our Acts should be general, but our administration local—that is to say, the executive officers should report to and work with efficient administrative local bodies. These bodies must exactly suit the area and population, changing only as the latter preponderates, and changing slowly. There must not be one county all population and another county all area. There should not be so many licensing bodies that their cost of administration is absurd. One Fence-viewer (or Act) cannot supervise all the fences in the colony and settle the disputes constantly arising between settlers, leading often-times to heartburnings, jealousy, and crime. Nor can one Rabbit Act perform the work expected from it. How greatly would the settlers of the colony from north to south thank the Legislature for devising some means of settling the constant disputes arising over the one question of draining!

10. Our politicians must recognise one thing—namely, that the laws of constitutional and local government do not depend on questions of railroad-making. Far better had we doubled the number of our provinces and taken away their money functions than abolished them and set up sixty-six counties in order to carry out a railway policy. We must go back now and correct the false steps we have taken.

11. The question of money must be separated from that of local government. It is sufficient if the General Government and the Road Boards tax us for the *trinoda necessitas*: (1) Keeping the fortresses in repair; (2) maintaining the naval and military forces; (3) keeping the roads and bridges in repair. Other principal dues of the Crown have long since been converted into Custom duties. We pay for justice, postal and railroad service, and the like. It is not generally considered a statesmanlike act to impose too much taxation in too many ways upon a people. Our Constitution Act has been broken in upon in order to carry out a particular money policy. Those who committed this error did not perhaps think that the colony might rock to and fro, the impetus having once been given, between provinces and counties, between unity and separation, until the North Island stood arrayed against the South Island upon this very question of local government. But these dangers are yet to come: hitherto they have only been hinted at. Those who abolished, in place of gradually and cautiously amending, have stirred up monsters concerning whose existence they perhaps did not even dream. They never considered that the area of this colony is divided into two parts by a narrow strip of sea, which is of more importance to the

constitutional student than all the money of even England's national debt. (The narrow strip that separates Ireland from England, or England from France, is a sufficient example of what I mean.)

12. I therefore suggest a step backwards, and that a cautious one. It is sad to see the haste of modern legislation, when we think of the centuries of legislative error that have passed away. The minds of a community of people move but slowly. But already the existing state of confusion concerning the local government of our roads, and the want of local by-laws touching drainage, fencing, rabbits, sheep, cattle, brands, dogs, and the like, are setting the minds of the community slowly but surely back to the desirability of restoring the provinces, which I think would be a mistake. Such is the effect of late Acts of Parliament. Everything is in confusion; there is no simplicity.

13. It appears as if too hurried a system of legislation has been determined upon with regard to questions of local government. The agricultural improvement of the land of a community does not move so fast as our politicians suppose. It takes time more than money to convert a swamp into pasturage. Herein the aiming at one valuation roll, say, for the whole colony is nearly a quarter of a century before its time. Greater elasticity, during the progress of development, is required than the one roll can furnish, and it may be found to be a mistake to have centralised this valuation. I have served a fair apprenticeship upon the Boards of the various local bodies, in order to acquire a knowledge of their method of working, and I trust you will excuse me for venturing to express the opinion that three different valuations are required in the colony in place of one: (1) for the property-tax; (2) for the Road Board; and (3) for some of the objects contemplated by the Hon. Major Atkinson's Roads and Bridges Construction Act.

14. It is quite clear that the sixty-six counties do not fulfil, nor do they understand, the work expected from them, which work is principally referred to in clause 12. On the other hand, we shall always be a weak State if one central authority attempts to perform that work. We can only then act by force, and not by voluntary wish. But it is impossible to compel settlers to do everything from the steps of the Resident Magistrate's Court—the present practice. A time must soon come when settlers will grow tired of these constant threats, if that time is not already. In many cases Government officers dare not put the laws into effect. When the people are thoroughly aroused against what they consider the oppression of Government officials, no consideration of money, or unity of the colony, or county government withholds them. At the present time many a man is being driven into the position of a bad citizen by the working of the sheep and rabbit laws. A few more years, and so many will have been disappointed that the provinces will be restored to put a stop to this system of centralisation. Herein the local Justices of the Peace might be found of great assistance; but these gentlemen are not trusted. The Resident Magistrate is preferred to administer such questions of local government, and his hands are tied, perhaps, by the simple desire of retaining his position. Those who deem that the errors of the country Justices are bad for the community at large wrongly read the problem. Their errors may harm the private individual for a time, but the Justices of the colony fairly and fully, and perhaps in the best degree, represent the voluntary wish of the community. If they administer an Act badly, and persistently continue in so doing, we may rest assured that the Act is faulty. Their other errors are usually held up to scorn, and right themselves. We cannot expect perfect Acts in a young colony. The constant amendments of our late general Acts of Parliament point out the necessity of good local by-laws.

15. I separate the land question from that of local government, although a properly-constituted county might act as a Waste Lands Board (I have before observed that the present existence of our Waste Lands Boards shows how impossible it was to do away with the provincial system of government entirely). In questions of education, licensing, charitable aid, &c., a properly-constituted county might be found of great use, strength, and service. The elasticity of local by-laws subject to one general Act will best represent the voluntary wish of any community, especially such a community as ours, stretching through so many parallels of latitude. In abolishing the provinces we have run to the other extreme, and set up so many bodies that the colony has no local by-laws. Without the local by-laws we cannot have local government. I see no objection to plead them in our Courts of law. Our aim should be to provide this colony with such a form of local government that its by-laws are fitted to the circumstances of each particular district, and represent the voluntary wish of the community. This might have been done by conserving some of the powers granted to the provinces. The people then would have valued and defended their Constitution. At present they are only too ready to attack it. It is a bad plan to throw a Constitution to the multitude and tell them to form one for themselves. During the whole of the French Revolution of 1788-98, M. Sieyès was the one man who, like a power behind the throne, watched that vast upheaval and sketched out its different Constitutions—that one man and he alone. The Greeks always intrusted their wisest citizens with framing the laws or amending their Constitution. Our eight or nine provinces were like a tight-fitting coat, not room enough across our expanding chest. The sixty-six counties, numerous Licensing Boards, and other such bodies, are miles and miles too big for us. We have not even the population sufficient to find representatives. It is customary for the same gentlemen to be chosen members of Parliament, County Councillors, members of Education Boards, and members of Waste Lands Boards. With, say, twenty-six counties in place of sixty-six, Commissioners of Waste Lands, Education, &c., might report to these same gentlemen, whose time thereby would be much economized. The Hon. Frederick Whitaker would, however, be far better qualified than myself to sketch out a consolidating measure of local government. In the Premier's office may be found a plan of present North Island counties roughly amalgamated, which I had the honour of submitting through Mr. George Beetham three years since to Sir John Hall.

16. I much doubt whether it is advisable to leave this question to right itself. It may be so left, but there is a danger then of the provinces being restored. Or the *vis inertiae* of the great centres, at some moment of trouble, may carry the two Islands into separation. Such things have arisen upon a sudden. I would much rather see a proper form of local government at once provided:

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

appoint an official staff of inspectors or officers to work with the local bodies. The existing system of administration appears to me quite incomplete, and must necessarily be so until the settlers join with the Government officers in carrying the laws into effect. For instance, in the matter of fencing, I ask whether fence-viewers are not required to settle differences arising between settlers. Such local officers could best report to local bodies all over the colony, who could best determine what kind of fencing was required in particular localities. Next as to drainage. Constant disputes are arising over this particular question; yet there is no local administration to settle differences. I can refer Major Smith to more than a score of settlers—possessors of both large and small areas—who would be glad of some general system by which they could properly drain their lands. . . . What applies to this particular district equally applies all over the colony, although there are one or two districts in Canterbury which are drainage districts under a Provincial (Canterbury) Act. It is a farce to suppose that the Public Works Act meets this local want. Next as to sheep ear-marks. This matter is simply in a state of confusion. Settlers send in a return of their sheep ear-marks, and these returns are filed; but what local authority is there to say that, to prevent confusion and annoyance, A shall have one ear-mark, B another, and C another? The Sheep Inspectors might see to this, but the fact is patent that they do not do so.\* Then, as to scab and other matters connected with sheep. Surely Major Smith must remember that one of the most influential and representative meetings ever held in Carterton took place over this very question about a year or so since—a sufficient token that the settlers would be glad to work with the Government officials if they were allowed to do so. Next as to cattle-branding. I believe that the Government officers are taking a little more interest in this matter than formerly; yet the interest even now is of the very slightest. And so of many other matters I might refer to were it not that it would make this letter too long. The following items of administration I select for local administration: (1) Waste lands (Chairmen of Counties to sit upon the Waste Lands Boards); (2) fencing; (3) drainage; (4) sheep matters; (5) cattle- and horse-branding; (6) main roads, bridges, and ferries; (7) impounding; (8) charitable aid (exclusive of lunatic asylums for the present); (9) licensing (Is not the present enormous number of Licensing Boards unsuitable to the circumstances of the colony?); (10) rabbits; (11) slaughterhouses; (12) cemeteries; (13) forest-conservation; (14) harbours (under special Harbour Boards). I might extend the list, but it will be at once seen that two sets of local administration in the Wairarapa Valley upon the above subjects would be practically cumbrous and unnecessary.† Of one thing I feel certain: that the settlers of the colony will never rest content whilst all these matters are attempted to be administered from one centre. A young colony cannot possibly develop itself under one set of central rigid rules. I therefore ask for a reduced number of counties, but I have no wish to return to provincialism.

Greytown, 6th December, 1882.

I am, &c.,  
COLEMAN PHILLIPS.

#### APPENDIX F.

##### THE COUNTY QUESTION AT TARANAKI.

EIGHT Chairmen of Road Boards in the Taranaki District met on Saturday to consider the advisability of suspending the county. Mr. Marsh, who was voted to the chair, submitted that the Chairmen of the road districts could undertake the management of the roads and bridges in their various districts, and they could meet at stated times to consult together as to what was required for the different roads, just as the County Council did at present. He considered the present system of maintaining both County Councils and Road Boards was very expensive. Mr. Faull was of a similar opinion. They were overgoverned and overtaxed. He thought the Boards should have a general bridge fund. As far as the main roads were concerned, they would be far more economically managed under the Boards separately than by the County Council. •

Several of the other members having spoken to the same effect, Mr. Chapman moved, "That this meeting is of opinion that the Counties Act should be suspended in the County of Taranaki, and the necessary steps be at once taken to carry out the object." In speaking to the resolution, he said the matter was very important, as money had been squandered by the County Council, and a change was required. There would be little difficulty in suspending the County Council; and the Chairmen of the various road districts could take upon themselves all the liabilities of the Council, and also all the revenue.

Mr. Faull seconded the motion. He was certain that, were a committee of the Road Boards formed, local interests would be better looked after than they were at present by the County Council.‡ He did not expect to see the taxes reduced by the proposed change, but he did expect to see more work done for the money. It was certain that a change in local government was wanted in the county, but the first thing to do was to take steps to have the County Council abolished, and they could settle details afterwards.

Mr. J. Hill moved, and Mr. George seconded, "That a petition be drawn up in proper form *re* abolishing the County Council, and a copy thereof sent to each Road Board." The motion was carried unanimously.—*Taranaki Herald*, November, 1883.

\* The Stock Inspectors see to this matter now; but the area of the branding districts, strange to say, is far too large. Very few settlers trust to ear-marks now for positive identification.—C. P., 1894.

† This refers to the absolute folly of having two counties in the one Wairarapa Valley.—C. P., 1894.

‡ Any such committee of Road Boards means a more extensive area of local government, equivalent, in fact, to a county.—C. P., 1894.

## 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

their tails (as the members of the different provinces were called) stood in the way of carrying out a certain line of policy the provinces were sacrificed, and sixty-six useless counties, as we now find them, given in their places. Strange to say, had the provinces been properly amended, or even left as they were, the colony would never have run into debt to the extent it has done; for after the first madness of the public-works expenditure had passed away some of the provinces would have pulled up and refused to plunge the colony further into debt. Otago, under such a man as Mr. Macandrew, might have gone on building railways until its debentures were unsaleable.\* It would only then have occupied a position similar to the Manawatu and West Coast railway trying to sell its debentures. But the abolition of the provinces removed the people's safeguard, and the colony has been plunged headlong into debt, until we find the weight of taxation keeps us all poor and struggling, or drives us into the Bankruptcy Court.

Of course the abolition of the provinces was a hasty measure, and a surprise to the country; but the country districts were complaining of the manner in which the great townships were spending the money, and many persons thought nine little Parliaments a farce. The constitutional step would have been to have divided each province into two, and lessened the number of Councilors forming the new subdivisions (like Southland and Westland). In place of that, sixty-six counties were given, which the people do not require, and too much of anything is often as great a mistake as too little. We do not require so many for half a century or probably a century to come. Therefore I have always maintained that these two counties of the Wairarapa should be amalgamated into one.

Secondly, as to who brought about this state of affairs. [Delegates will excuse me for deleting this portion of my letter, as I do not think any good will be done by naming any person.]

### Letter III.

SIR,—And now as to the remedy. I have in my last letter shown your readers why our forms of local government are in a state of ruin, and the men who brought this about, with its great resulting evil. I have now to point out the remedy, although there is no remedy for the excessive taxation which the abolition of the provinces has brought upon us. That has to be borne, and we and our children must bear it as best we can. True, it has crippled our energies, and in many cases ruined us; but we must bear with it as best we can. Our House of Representatives has hurried us into a state of enormous indebtedness, and it yearly adds one million to the burden. If your readers only knew as well as I know how harmful a Parliament can be to the people of a country they would not be surprised at the harm our late Parliaments have brought upon us. But they will do far more harm yet, and that shortly too.

I propose then, sir, to step backwards some ten years, and, in place of abolishing the provinces, to divide them, and suit them to the wants of the people. The country districts complained formerly of the great towns neglecting "country" interests, and expending far too much of the provincial funds. The complaints were perfectly justified, I believe. The remedy was to have granted the country districts so complaining their own powers of local government. That was duly provided for in the Constitution Act, and is shown in the instance of the County of Westland being cut off from the Province of Canterbury because the people of Hokitika objected to be ruled from Christchurch. In a similar manner the district of the Wairarapa should have been cut off from Wellington, and granted a county government, and the same with the people living upon the other side of the Tararua Range. The Wellington Province might have been cut up into three great counties, of which the whole district of the Wairarapa would have formed one, because our interests, as a district, are identical. On the other hand the interests of the West Coast people and our interests are not identical. Different fencing-laws, different drainage-laws, are required there from what are here required. The same with the whole colony. Had eighteen or even twenty-seven substantial counties with efficient powers of local government replaced the eight or nine provinces, then there would never have happened the state of ruin and wreck which we see around us. All this was duly provided for in the Constitution Act. But the provinces were swept away, and sixty-six counties given to us. What, sir, are we to do with them? Of what use are they to us? Have they been any use? I think not; only harm. They have interfered with the Road Boards in every way they could, until at last the people in all parts of the colony are moving for their suspension or abolition. And the worst feature of this mistake has yet to come. People are beginning to take a positive dislike to the very name of county government; whereas county government has been prized by the people of England for more than a thousand years—prized to that extent that the Shire Council was oftentimes the only government the country districts had when the Crown was in dispute or revolution shook the State. I ask my fellow-settlers not to despise that which their ancestors valued for so many centuries. Properly applied, county government is the best form of local government we can have. County government keeps things together and makes us independent of the central authorities. It is the only true check to insular separation.

Therefore I wish to see these two counties of the Wairarapa amalgamated into one, and the Road Boards not interfered with. The County Council could then look after all those affairs, and pass by-laws for those things which it is evident half a dozen Road Boards could not do. Waste lands, roads, education, licensing matters, sheep, cattle, branding, fencing, drainage, rabbits, and the score of things which require looking after under good local by-laws, and which are not being looked after in any way, could then be attended to, and the evils of a central Administration avoided. I ask those whom this letter may reach to distrust central Administration and prize local government. In the course of a few years our House of Representatives has run us twenty millions into debt, and it will do worse than this unless the people impose some check. I warn your readers to look to the consolidation of their forms of local government, and that is why I propose county amalgamation.

I have, &c.,

COLEMAN PHILLIPS.

Dry River, 27th February, 1884.

\* A most desirable thing to have come to pass. All I wish now is that New Zealand debentures were absolutely unsaleable.—C. P., 1894.