

the counties' powers to provide for the control of urban areas. In Christchurch there were two substantially urbanized areas in counties, one being the Fendalton Riding of the Waimairi County, and the other a portion of the Cashmere Riding of the Heathcote County.

In municipalities each resident is entitled to only one vote in municipal elections, but in the case of counties the ratepayer whose capital value is £1,000 or less receives one vote; those with over £1,000 capital value but not over £2,000 two votes, and those with more than £2,000 capital value three votes. While there may be justification for this in farming areas, where the rating potential is determined by the rateable areas, it can have no justification in urbanized areas.

The present statutory Government subsidy differs in counties and boroughs, the maximum subsidy to which a borough is entitled being £450, while in the case of a county it is £2,500. In the cases of the four counties in which adjustments of boundaries were considered by the Commission the combined capital values were very much smaller than those of the Christchurch City, but the annual subsidies received approximated £6,200. It appeared to us inequitable that such highly urbanized settlements as Fendalton and Cashmere should receive subsidies so much out of proportion to that received by the Christchurch City Council. There is no doubt that such subsidy was granted to provide for the roads used by county residents in purely rural areas, and not for urban streets such as in Cashmere and Fendalton. Urban authorities with populations exceeding 6,000, receive a proportion of 8 per cent of the motor-spirit taxation for the construction or maintenance of continuations of highways. Counties, on the other hand, have no liability in regard to State highways and, in general, receive a three-to-one subsidy on main highways in respect of construction and maintenance. This position, of course, applies even in urbanized areas such as Cashmere and Fendalton.

Where counties have large areas of rural country the riding system for electoral purposes could be defended on several logical grounds, whereas the system of wards for similar reasons in urban areas has long been considered unnecessary. In the latter case members of the local authorities have a sufficient knowledge of the problems in the whole area, and can, without much difficulty, inspect or discuss them on the spot. In the case of one of the counties concerned the witnesses who appeared at the inquiry knew little, and by implication were concerned little, with the problems of the other ridings in their county. We gained the impression that, although Cashmere and Fendalton formed the whole or major part of the riding in their respective counties, the people in these areas regarded themselves as self-contained units and were not greatly concerned with the rest of the county. It was indicated by one member of a County Council that, in his opinion, each riding was in effect a separate local authority, managed by a separate board of directors, and, although the county assumes general responsibility, the actual position in many cases is that the riding members frequently become governing authorities in their own ridings. In so far as riding finance is concerned, the majority of the counties in New Zealand, 81 in all, have abolished riding accounts, and in each instance the county as a whole has developed with the expenditure of funds where considered most necessary. No doubt access and modern transport have done much to obviate the necessity for the maintenance of the riding system, and it is now recognized that the richer portions of a county have some responsibility for the development of the poorer areas.

The membership of local authorities represented at the inquiry totalled 84, some of whom represented certain county areas not under consideration from the metropolitan point of view, but in comparison with a city such as Wellington it did appear to be an excessive number. In the case of the Wellington City Council, its affairs, including transport, drainage, electricity, and milk treatment and distribution, are administered by fifteen Councillors and the Mayor.