

69. Now, do you think the county members would be able to dispense with travelling-expenses?—No; I think the expense would be increased.

70. Then, you think it is better to have five representatives of a Road Board than to intrust the supervision of the works to one county representative?—Yes.

71. Do you expend any money on engineering?—Not any outside our own clerk and surveyor.

72. Does the clerk do any engineering work?—Any that is required.

73. I suppose all your works nearly are maintenance?—We have new works occasionally. The clerk draws up the plans and specifications. We employ no engineer to do that.

74. Have you a road staff?—Yes, daily men. There are four or five, but we let a good deal of our work by contract. Anything over about £5 we let by contract.

75. *Mr. Buddo.*] There is just the question of boundary bridges: have you any difficulty in maintaining these, or is the present legislation sufficient for your purposes without referring to the other local bodies?—The only bridge is Ashley Bridge. We pay a portion of the cost of the Upper Ashley Bridge.

76. Yes, but you find the legislation is sufficient to enable you to work amicably?—Yes.

77. *The Chairman.*] Do you believe in the extension of the franchise beyond ratepayers?—No. That was a question mentioned. I think under the present system it is possible to have half a dozen votes in one house. My Board is opposed to any extension of the franchise.

Mr. R. M. WRIGHT, West Eyreton Road Board, examined. (No. 5.)

Witness. I may say, gentlemen, that the West Eyreton District is about eight square miles. The total value of the land is £190,454; but I might explain that the south side of the River Eyre is composed of poor land, of which there is a large area, which keeps down the total valuation. The system of Road Boards has worked very well in that district. The main roads in the settled parts are made, and as regards the bridges we are fortunate in that district. There are none of any extent, and what there are are all made of concrete. Out of the Land Fund grant by the Government, about twenty-five years ago, the Road Board has been able to do its work. They have only levied one rate in the last ten years. That money is now exhausted, and I must say we have a very economical Board there, and consequently they have been able to live on the interest of the money which they received from the land-grant. Our management expenses do not exceed £50 per annum—that is, £40 for salaries, and £10 per year for other expenses in connection with the office. The members of the Board represent different parts of the district, and they bring any work they want done before the Board, and it is attended to. I may say that I have been acting as clerk and surveyor for the Eyreton and West Eyreton Boards for the last twenty-eight years, and during that time they have never employed other clerical or engineering assistance. My practical knowledge was obtained when I was a contractor, before I went on to the Board, and I give my practical knowledge in a way which enables me to carry out these works. I might say that in Eyreton District we have had a good deal of difficulty in dealing with the Waimakariri. This year the river is washing into the Main North Road, and we have spent a considerable amount now in protecting it, which we have been very successful in doing at a very small cost. The ratepayers in the West Eyreton District would, I am sure, be altogether against coming under the Counties Act.

78. *Mr. Hogg.*] You do not need to collect any rates?—No; only once in ten years, some four years ago. Our balance is getting down very small now.

79. What is about your annual revenue?—Our expenditure is about £500 per annum.

80. Is your expenditure greater than your revenue, or less?—We strike no rates. We are living on the interest and the principal. We have £400 on fixed deposit, which will be exhausted this year. Then we will have to strike a rate.

81. Are there any surrounding Road Boards in the same position—able to dispense with rates?—No, I do not think so.

82. About how many miles of roads have you to maintain?—We have about fifty miles formed and metalled. There is a large part of the district on the south side which does not require roads, except that we have to clear them to allow settlers access to their sections.

83. Have you many bridges?—About seventeen.

84. Do you ever require the services of an engineer?—Not outside myself.

85. *Mr. Flatman.*] Is your Road Board within the county?—Yes, Ashley.

86. And your opinion is that it would be better to remain as you are?—Decidedly so.

87. *Mr. Field.*] Then, there is a strong feeling throughout your district that things should remain as they are?—Yes.

88. *Mr. Lang.*] I understood this gentleman to say that their Board had only struck a rate in the last ten years; what was the amount of the rate, and where do you get the funds to carry on the work of the Road Board?—The amount of the rate struck was $\frac{1}{4}$ d., and we get our funds out of the land-grant.

89. *Mr. Rhodes.*] Would you be in favour of leaving this question to a poll of the ratepayers?—Yes.

90. *Mr. Hornsby.*] Can you tell me how it comes about that while in the West Eyreton district the proceeds from the land-grant are not exhausted, they are exhausted in the other road districts?—As I said, the West Eyreton Road Board is particularly favoured in this way. There are no hills; it is all flat country, and is not subject to floods in the way the eastern road district is. There is not the danger in time of flood as in the low-lying district. It is situated about 400 ft. above the level of the sea. There is no heavy traffic on the main roads, and we have no long bridges. We have done away with all wooden approaches.

91. Can you give me any idea how long it is since the other Boards ceased drawing from the Land Fund?—I should think at least fifteen years.