

92. With regard to metal; I suppose you have any amount of metal for your roads—you can get it almost anywhere?—Yes.

93. About the franchise; do you think the people there are in favour of retaining the dual vote?—That is a question I would not like to give an opinion on in my position.

94. By the way, with regard to engineering, are you a registered engineer?—I am not registered.

95. And are your plans certified to by a registered engineer?—We have never had any occasion. The Board has always been satisfied, and the work carried out satisfactorily.

96. *Mr. A. L. D. Fraser.*] You would be in favour of Road Boards continuing as they are; but if there is any question of the possibility of merging into a county you would be satisfied that the views of the people should be taken by a bare majority?—Yes. I can only speak from what I believe to be the feeling in my own district, and what I believe to be the feeling out of it. I do not believe the ratepayers of the Ashley County would have the Counties Bill at any price if they could help it.

97. *Mr. Hall.*] Now, do you think that the rate would be greater under the County Council than it would be under the present system?—We expect it would.

98. And would your objection to the county be on that score? And do you think the work would be done efficiently and cost more? Supposing you took the whole nine road districts comprising the Ashley County, on the same basis it would cost something like £1,500; do you not think it could be officered and conducted at less than £1,500?—I do not think it could be. The counties go in for a more elaborate system.

99. Can you tell me what is your revenue, independent of your land revenue?—Only the subsidies from the Government and the registration-fees. Out of the subsidies we pay hospital and charitable aid.

100. One other question: As the county has received such large grants from the Government in the past, would it not be fair that you should be called upon to help the poorer districts?—That is not a question I should like to express an opinion on.

101. *Mr. Stevens.*] What is your opinion about the present system of franchise?—I have never heard any complaints about it, and I think it is generally satisfactory.

102. Can you give any reasons why it is satisfactory?—I do not know that I can give any particular reason. I never knew ratepayers to make any particular objection.

103. Assuming, for example, there are ten holders of property who are entitled to three votes each, that is thirty votes amongst ten persons; assuming also there are thirty persons who are holders of land in the same locality, and who are quite as thrifty settlers, but have only one vote each: do you consider it right that ten persons should control twenty-nine?—That would only be my private opinion. Of course, ten with three votes each would represent property to ten times the amount of the thirty.

104. *The Chairman.*] Are there any works in your district at the present time want doing, or any bridges want erecting?—Yes, some bridges have been built for a number of years. It will cost about £300 for repairs.

105. But you have no roads not made?—The same thing applies to our roads. They have been made for some twenty or thirty years.

106. But outside of what you might call depreciation on your constructed roads, you have no roads you want made from a state of nature?—No, it has not been a pressing demand on the Board. We spent over £100 last year in repairs.

Mr. BANKS, Chairman of the Ashley Road Board, examined. (No. 6.)

Witness: My district is twenty miles long and fifteen miles broad. The income on a $\frac{3}{4}$ d. rate is £1,400; clerk's salary is about £178, while advertising and other expenses amount to about £15 per annum. We think it could not be done from a county office as efficiently as it is done by us, and I am here to enter my protest against the passing of the Counties Act, as representing the Ashley Road Board.

107. *Mr. Hogg.*] What is the area of your district?—Taking it that way, it would be over thirty miles, but I cannot say exactly.

108. What is the opinion of the ratepayers; do you think they would approve of it?—Decidedly opposed to it. They are quite satisfied with the present form of local government.

109. *Mr. Flatman.*] How many Road Boards were there originally in the district which the eight Boards now represent?—I cannot tell you. It was over thirty years ago, and I was only a boy then.

110. You think it would not cheapen matters for one local body to govern the same area as is now governed by the eight Road Boards?—The supervision would not be as satisfactory.

111. *Mr. Field.*] Do you think the same strong feeling prevails in your district with regard to the franchise?—We think it should never have been reduced from the five.

112. *Mr. Lang.*] How long has your Board been in existence?—About thirty years.

113. And you say you strike a general rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ d.; what did you usually strike?— $\frac{1}{2}$ d. is the usual practice.

114. Is that the only rate?—Yes, that is the only one. Last year we had £100 in hand, and we decided to revert to the $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

115. *Mr. Hornsby.*] How long is it since you ceased to get money from the land-grant?—Over thirty years ago.

116. I suppose you recognise that in Canterbury you stand in an exceptional position to the other Road Boards of the colony?—We do so, and want to remain so.

117. You have plenty of metal?—Metal is abundant everywhere.