

118. With regard to this dual voting, what is the opinion of the people down there about this giving one man three votes, and one man one vote?—We have a community of interest. My opinion is that the man who has the greater property has the greater interest.

119. *Mr. Hall.*] Could there be any objection to taking a single vote in regard to the election of Councils?—From what I have just said, I am not in favour of that. I think the man with the greater property should have the greater number of votes.

120. *Mr. Rhodes.*] I notice one of the chief Road Boards in your county is not represented here—the Waipara Road Board; is it because they are of a different opinion?—No, they are quite in accord with our views.

*The Chairman:* I may say that about one hundred and eighty Road Boards have replied to the circular sent to them, and only four are in favour of amalgamation with the County Councils.

A deputation from the Selwyn County Council was introduced by Mr. G. W. Russell, M.H.R.

Mr. ARTHUR B. MORGAN examined. (No. 7.)

121. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I think you are the Chairman of the Road Board, and you were also chairman of a conference of Road Boards held recently in Christchurch to consider the provisions of this Bill. I think the conference passed a series of resolutions. You, as chairman of the conference, wish to put these in for the consideration of the Committee, as the list of suggestions you desire to make [resolutions handed in]. Can you tell the Committee what the feeling of the people in Canterbury is as to the desirability of abolishing Road Boards?—At the conference mentioned by Mr. Russell, every Road Board in the county was represented, and there can be no question that every one was unanimous that if any local authority had to be abolished under this Act, it ought to be the County Councils. Of course, we are only stating as the county system affects our districts, but we feel that the Road Board system is the most economical, and the County Council could never give the supervision over the districts we have at present. There are generally about five members on the Road Boards, who are practically all clerks of works. We know all the local requirements, and give our services without any cost to the district. We do not even get travelling-expenses; and I am perfectly certain that, as far as the County of Selwyn is concerned, the Road Boards could carry out their functions without the aid of County Councils at all. Indeed, if the Councils were abolished, we could carry out their administration far better. Of course, there might be separate Boards set up to undertake the water-supply. There is power given in the Bill, under the head of "Committees," by Order in Council, whether they are members of a Council or not. That is a thing we do not want to see. Any committees set up should be composed of members of either a Council or some other local body. If it was put to the popular vote, ninety-nine members out of a hundred would vote for the retention of the Road Boards. On the Avon Board our total revenue is £2,986; our total expenses under the head of management, including salary, advertising, and office expenses, is £207—say about 10 per cent.

122. Do you think, if the work were thrown into the hands of the county, the rates could be collected and the same efficiency could be maintained for £207?—I think not. They would have to have an overseer for each of these ridings, and, as I said before, I do not think that the Council could look after the roads. You have only got to go through the District of Canterbury to see how well the Road Boards have managed.

123. I understand your conference in Christchurch was not in favour of maintaining every existing Road Board throughout the colony?—We passed a resolution that no Road Board should be retained without a capital of £300,000; but we waived that in favour of one that no Road Board should be abolished except on the report of a Commission.

124. Then, the chief point of objection is that the Road Boards would have no voice in the decision. You ask for a seat on the Commission?—We strongly urge this. We think that, instead of seventeen Road Boards, we could have about twelve or thirteen Road Boards in the County of Selwyn, with one general rate. As regards those constituted a town district, the conference was of opinion that the words "County Council" in clause 4, subsection (11), should be struck out, and the words "Road Boards" inserted. We find a lot of funds have to go undivided, and we think that if these Town Boards are constituted they should not be under the control of the County Councils. We do not want that. It is proposed to put them into the hands of a committee of management, the Road Boards to retain the powers of the town districts as constituted. Our conference also wished that the following words be added to section 196: "As originally laid out, provided that no owners shall be liable to dedicate such strip of land if the local authority certifies that the same is not required." As regards making Government property subject to rates on a special loan, the reason of passing that was that we in Papanui raised a loan, and immediately after the money was borrowed the Government bought a post-and-telegraph office site within the area, which, of course, is not liable for rates, and we think that unjust.

*Mr. Stevens:* These, I presume, are certain points into which the Committee would look.

125. *Mr. Hogg.*] I see that at this conference a resolution was passed that the conference deeply deplores the fact that the Premier did not invite representatives of Road Boards to a conference as well as county representatives: did your conference have any information on the subject?—I only saw it in the newspapers.

126. Were you not aware that a conference of county representatives has been held annually for some time, irrespective of the Premier or any one else?—I was evidently under a wrong impression.

127. Do you know whether the road districts which were represented at this conference were uniform in size, revenue, and area, or was there a great discrepancy?—There is a great discrepancy as regards size. That is why some might be amalgamated with advantage.