

1901.
NEW ZEALAND.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE:

REPORT ON THE COUNTIES BILL, TOGETHER WITH MINUTES OF EVIDENCE AND APPENDIX.

ORDER OF REFERENCE.

Extract from the Journals of the House of Representatives.

WEDNESDAY, THE 24TH DAY OF JULY, 1901.

Ordered, "That Standing Order No. 211 be suspended, and that a Select Committee, consisting of thirty-six members, be appointed, to whom shall be referred the Counties Bill and certain other Bills or matters more particularly referring to local administration affected by the Bill; five to be a quorum: the Committee to consist of Mr. J. Allen, Mr. Bennet, Mr. Bollard, Mr. Buddo, Mr. Carnecross, Mr. Colvin, Mr. Field, Mr. Flatman, Mr. Fowlds, Mr. A. L. D. Fraser, Mr. W. Fraser, Mr. Guinness, Mr. Hall, Mr. Hardy, Mr. Herries, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Hornsby, Mr. Houston, Mr. Lang, Mr. Lethbridge, Mr. Massey, Mr. McGuire, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. R. McKenzie, Mr. McLachlan, Mr. McNab, Mr. Meredith, Mr. O'Meara, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Pirani, Mr. Rhodes, Captain Russell, Mr. Stevens, Mr. Symes, Mr. J. W. Thomson, and the Mover."—(Rt. Hon. R. J. SEDDON.)

REPORT.

THE Local Government Committee, to whom was referred the above-mentioned Bill, have the honour to report that they have passed the following resolutions, viz. :—

1. That this Committee proceed no further with the Counties Bill, and that this decision be reported to the House.
2. That the Bill as amended and the above resolution be reported this day.

ROBERT McNAB, Chairman.

22nd October, 1901.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The Commission has had the honor to receive from the Honorable Secretary of State, on the 11th day of May, 1911, a copy of the report of the Honorable Secretary of State on the subject of the Local Government Commission.

The Commission has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the report of the Honorable Secretary of State on the subject of the Local Government Commission, and to express its appreciation of the interest and attention which the Honorable Secretary of State has shown in the work of the Commission. The Commission has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the report of the Honorable Secretary of State on the subject of the Local Government Commission, and to express its appreciation of the interest and attention which the Honorable Secretary of State has shown in the work of the Commission.

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Very truly yours,
Chairman

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

(R. McNAB, Esq., M.H.R., CHAIRMAN.)

WEDNESDAY, 31ST JULY, 1901.

HENRY BETTS examined (No. 1.)

Mr. Henry Betts (Chairman of the Inangahua County Council) was in attendance, and, being sworn by the Chairman (Mr. R. McNab, M.H.R.), gave evidence as follows, viz. :—

The Chairman : Your name is Henry Betts, and you are Chairman of the Inangahua County Council. You desire to give evidence before the Committee on the Counties Bill, now before the House. We will be pleased to hear anything you have to say, and members will have an opportunity of asking you questions afterwards.

Mr. Betts : The reason that I desire to give evidence before the Committee is that if the franchise clause in this Bill, as circulated—clause 15, subsection (c)—if given effect to it will be the means of depriving a large number of miners in the Inangahua County of the privileges of the franchise, inasmuch as in a large number of cases the companies carrying on mining operations in that district erect huts for miners on their lands, and in no case do they charge more than from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per week rental for these huts; consequently, you will see that a £10 rental qualification would deprive these men of the privileges of the franchise. The Inangahua County Council recommends, and desires that this clause should be so amended to bring the men I refer to within the scope of the Act, that all the words after the word “relates,” in the 7th line of subsection (c), section 15, be struck out; and that, in lieu of a rental qualification, a residential qualification (say, of six months) within the county should qualify the person to have a vote at the election of Councillors. Of course, I might point out that, so far as we understand, a miner cannot get the privilege to occupy a residence area on a mining lease unless he holds the ground as a principal under the Mining Act of last session; but, so far as we are aware, a miner cannot get a title of a residence area on a mining privilege held by another person. On the other hand, of course, it might be urged that a miner can take out a miner's right and qualify himself for a vote by a miner's right, but we consider that unjust, because he would be compelled to pay rent for his hut, and also be compelled to be the holder of a miner's right as well. Another thing, the men who are working in the mines there do not receive a very large wage, and the cost of living is very dear in that part of the country, and consequently it is just simply an existence; and in other cases of the kind miners working in some of the quartz-mines live in other ridings of the county where their homes are situated, and they pay rent for the huts on the mining property on which they are working. I know of instances where miners have erected huts on mining leases, and the company have claimed these huts, and charged the men rent for huts which the men have erected themselves on the company's property. I can name the company if the Committee desires me to do so.

The Chairman : It would not affect this question of the franchise.

Mr. Betts : I know that such has been done, and we hold that it would simplify everything if the residential qualification (say, six months) was given effect to. There is another matter I would like to point out. In our district we have a very large county town consisting of seventeen hundred inhabitants, and according to the recommendation of the Counties Conference, although there are a large number of renters (miners and others paying rent for cottages in the Town of Reefton)—according to the recommendation of the Counties Conference these men would be deprived of the franchise; at any rate, they would not be in the same position as a lot of small boroughs in different parts of the colony, inasmuch as they would not have the same privileges as boroughs have got under the Municipal Franchise Extension Act, although the population of Reefton outnumbers several boroughs even on the West Coast, and although the population of the Town of Reefton outnumbers, for instance, the Boroughs of Ross and Kumara.

1. *The Chairman*.] How do you propose it should be amended, then?—Our Council recommends that the residential qualification should entitle them to a vote.

Mr. Allen : They can get a miner's right.

Mr. Betts : I would like to point out in connection with this that a man might have his family residing in one riding, and he might have his miner's right taken out for that riding where his family is residing, and he might be working in another riding of the county altogether, and consequently he would not be continually residing in the riding where his miner's right was issued, and he would therefore be deprived of a vote. I might say that the whole of the recommendations of the Counties Conference, except the allowance of a Chairman, were practically agreed to by our Council, except their recommendation in connection with the franchise clause and payment of members attending meetings, and my chief reason for coming before the Committee is to try and prevent an injustice being done to a large number of men in our county.

2. *Mr. Houston*.] Would not subsection (d) of clause 15 meet the case (the mining qualification)?—It would if he were a miner working with a party for himself, but not if he were a workman employed by a company or employer.

3. *Mr. Bennet*.] Would you expect any person that had neither miner's right nor property to have an equal vote with those who are paying rates?—The miner is paying rent for the use of the hut to the company.

4. *Mr. Colvin.*] How many men are employed in these mines with the companies?—I am secretary of the Miners' Union there, and we have a membership of 650.

5. And would most of these men be affected by this clause?—Yes, the majority of them.

6. *Mr. Allen.*] The only thing I was not clear about was the miner's right?—He has a vote provided he resides continuously in the riding in which his right is taken out for, and he has to be a holder of a miner's right on the 31st March previous to the election.

7. *Mr. Lang.*] I understood Mr. Betts to say that his Council demurred to the payment to Chairmen?—They suggest that the matter should be left to the Council itself, and the maximum amount payable to a Chairman should not exceed £400, as it is in the Bill. The Counties Conference cut it down to £100, which my Council considers is altogether inadequate.

8. *Mr. Stevens.*] What would you suggest to take their place in localities where at present local Boards exist whose administration of their local affairs would be wiped out by this Bill?—I might point out that in our district we have no other local bodies. The Council controls the whole county. There is considerable close settlement in the county. In and around the Town of Reefton I dare say there is a population of about 2,500; and the Town of Reefton is controlled by the Council.

9. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] I understand the greatest objection is the £10 rental qualification: can you give any reason why the limit should be reduced in the county instead of boroughs?—Well, I can give a reason. My reason is that in the borough the rents payable by tenants exceed the rents payable by tenants in various parts of counties. The rents in the boroughs are generally higher than they are in the country districts. For instance, the rents charged within the Town of Reefton far exceed the rents charged in outlying districts of the county.

10. Then, what would you do in that case?—I think that in many cases the people living outside the town limits in other ridings are more entitled sometimes to the franchise than those paying higher rents in the town. I would like to point out again that the miner's right qualification is not a safe qualification at all. A man might lose his vote altogether if he votes on a miner's right, simply because they might work in one mine for six months and then remove to another mine in another riding, and the result would be that he would be disqualified because he had removed his residence.

Mr. Guinness: I understand that you object to compelling a miner to take out a miner's right for the purpose of getting a vote where a miner's right is not required for a miner working for wages. I understand you to say that those miners who are paying 1s. 6d. per week rental are not rate-payers within the meaning of the Counties Bill, and do not come under the qualification, and are therefore deprived of the franchise.

11. *Mr. Flatman.*] I understood Mr. Betts to say that Reefton would suffer under the conditions of this Bill through not being a municipality: could they not prevent it by merging it into a borough?—The people in our district do not wish to have any more local bodies at all.

12. *Mr. Buddo.*] The population of Inangahua are, I take it, mostly single men, moving from place to place in search of employment?—A large number.

13. *Mr. Hogg.*] Have you any sawmills in your district?—Yes; we have three sawmills.

14. Do you know how the men are situated who work at these mills?—They are practically in the same position as miners working for wages.

15. Then, they would be disfranchised under this Act?—Yes.

16. *Mr. R. McKenzie.*] In respect to miners' huts: supposing these huts to be on Crown lands, do you not rate them in that case?—We do rate them in a case of that kind under the Mining Act, as being in illegal occupation of Crown lands. I might say that the mining-property rate of our county is far higher than the general-property rate. Our mining-property rate equals £3,000, and the general-property rate equals £1,900.

17. *Mr. W. Fraser.*] What was the amount of rates you collected before you started the unimproved value?—I cannot tell you from memory. The rates would be less. I might point out that the unimproved value of property has gone up within the last few years.

18. Are the residents of Inangahua as satisfied under the unimproved value as they were under the old rating Act?—Yes. The total revenue of our County Council ending 31st March last was £8,520, which included Government grants of £2,968. We levied a rate of 3d. in the pound on unimproved value mining property, and a rate of 3½d. in the pound on general property.

THURSDAY, 22ND AUGUST, 1901.

FREDERICK HORRELL, Chairman of the Mandeville Road Board, examined. (No. 2.)

Witness: With regard to the Counties Bill, we, as representing the Road Boards in the Ashley County, consider that it would not be at all suitable. We do not wish to see this Bill passed, for reasons which I will point out to you. In the first place, the Road Board which I have the honour to represent—the Mandeville Road Board—the district has a population of 2,488. We have 428 ratepayers, and 829 rateable properties. Our capital value is about £623,290. In our road district we have about a hundred and thirty miles of formed roads, which are in a capital state of repair at the present time. Besides these hundred and thirty miles of roads, there are certain boundary roads which we have to contribute towards. We are bounded by the Boroughs of Rangiora and Kaiapoi, and I might say that our rates for last year (on the basis of a halfpenny rate) were £234. Our total income amounted to about £2,000, while our office expenditure to administer this is under £200. At any rate, we pay a very efficient man, who acts as surveyor, clerk, and collector, the sum of £140 per annum, and there are other expenses connected with the management which would not exceed the £200. I might say the £140 is paid to the clerk in addition to a free house. There are also other buildings belonging to the Road Board. Our policy

as a Road Board has been to renew all our old bridges and culverts, &c.; and the bridges and culverts we are constructing are now of a permanent character. The old bridges are decaying, and these are the bridges we are renewing in concrete. We have spent nearly £1,200 on culverts and bridges, and we are spending £900 per annum in keeping roads in repair and road-making generally. Of course, our contention is this: We have Road Boards established, and the five men comprising the Board are distributed over the whole of the road district. They know exactly the wants and requirements of the different parts of the road district they represent, and their services are given gratuitously. We meet once a month, and if there is anything special to discuss we call a special meeting, and the requirements of the district are met in every way. If anything is required the surveyor is instructed to inspect. He keeps a gang of men, who work in different parts of the district. And I say this: that if the Road Boards were abolished, and the control handed over to the County Councils, the district would only be inspected by one man, who would be quite unable to report on all repairs wanted, and the roads would get into a bad state of repair. We do all this with a halfpenny rate, and, with the County Council, I cannot possibly see how the work can be done cheaper or more effectively. The whole of our roads are in a thorough state of repair. Of course, nearly the whole of the roads in the county have been formed and metalled for a good many years, and to render them more suitable and more durable I might say our Board has imported a stone-crusher. And the fact of the matter is we do not want to be interfered with by the County Council. We do our own work.

1. *Mr. Hogg.*] What is the total area of your district, approximately?—In addition to the roads I have named, we have a main road of eight miles, from Kaiapoi to the north—the main north road to the northern part of the province. We are in the County of Ashley.

2. How many Road Boards are there in that county?—Eight Road Boards.

3. I presume there is a general county rate?—No; each road district strikes its own rate.

4. *Mr. Meredith.*] The Counties Act has never been in operation?—We had a conference last week, and you have a telegram conveying a resolution moved by Sir George Clifford, and unanimously agreed to by the delegates present, objecting to the abolition of Road Boards.

5. Then, you are of opinion that Road Boards and road districts should not be abolished?—Yes.

6. *Mr. Flatman.*] How do you collect your charitable-aid and hospital rates?—The whole is included in our general rate. Of course, this year we have gone to the expense of purchasing a stone-crusher, and I might say that towards hospital and charitable aid we pay about £300 per year.

7. *Mr. Lang.*] Is the Road Board the only local body in your district?—There is a Water-supply Board which takes in a small portion of the district, and there is a Drainage Board which takes in part of my district.

8. The Counties Act is not in force in your district?—No.

9. *Mr. Guinness.*] What is your total revenue?—Roughly speaking, about £2,000 under a halfpenny rate. The rates amount to £1,284.

10. How do you get the other revenue to make up the £2,000?—We have license-fees, we have the dog-tax fees, and we have a Government subsidy of about £300. Roughly speaking, it comes to about £2,000.

11. The people in your district have not tried the county system?—No, we do not want it.

12. *Mr. Hall.*] How many miles of road are still unmade in your district?—There are a few by-roads, but as a general thing our roads are formed and metalled.

13. *Mr. Stevens.*] I am pleased to hear your Road Board is so successful. Could you suggest any idea by which other Road Boards in different localities could be carried on as well?—Unless it were small Road Boards, then I think you could merge two or more districts into one.

14. You are aware, of course, that there are a very large number of these small Road Boards in the colony, and the ratepayers' money is absorbed in clerical work, and there is only, in a great many cases, two-thirds of the money actually spent on the roads, owing to the fact that there is so little left for the purpose: have you any suggestion to offer?—I dare say the Counties Act would suit a good many parts of New Zealand, but our county wishes to have it made permissive, and not mandatory. There is no doubt other counties might like to adopt the system.

15. There are many. For example, supposing there were one hundred Road Boards in the colony, the administration of which cost one-third of the rates collected, and there were only twenty-five who administered their affairs properly, would you think it reasonable that these one hundred Road Boards should be allowed to continue in order to save such Road Boards as you are Chairman of?—If the Road Boards did not administer their affairs in a proper manner, or if a Road Board cannot carry on its work efficiently with a small rate, I do not see how the County Council can. The only remedy is to strike a higher rate. In this case the Ashley County comprises eight ridings, and if the control were handed over to the County Council they would require a staff of officers, such as an engineer, and other assistance, which I think would swallow up equally as much money as our several Road Boards do.

16. I do not wish it to be understood that I am hostile to your expressions of opinion. I am merely asking for information. I understand the reason of this Bill is to prevent the absorption of the rates in clerical and other work to the sacrifice of the general interests. Do you think it would be improper that we should save the many because, perhaps, we interfere slightly with the few?—No; still, I do not think that those who carry on efficiently should suffer for the many. The only way is to make it permissive.

Mr. J. WRIGHT examined. (No. 3.)

Witness: I represent the Eyreton Road Board. The opinion of the ratepayers in my district is strongly against this proposed new measure; and we carry on our finances in a most satisfactory way. Our district valuation is £449,962. The total area is eighty-nine square miles, and the total

population is 1,566. The cost of administration, including the clerk's salary, and office expenses, and other small items, is under £200. We have over a hundred miles of metalled and shingled roads, all in first-class order, and about sixty-one bridges and culverts to maintain—some of them 300 ft. to 400 ft. long—exclusive of White's Bridge, on the Waimakariri River, and the principal road to the northern district. I might state, generally, that we also contribute to White's Bridge 21 per cent. to keep it in repair. We have a first-class clerk at £150 per annum, and he has carried on the work satisfactorily for about thirty years.

17. *Mr. Hogg.*] Is that the only officer you have?—Yes.

18. Do you require the services of an engineer at times?—No; the clerk does the engineering work also.

19. Do you think the work could be performed in an equally satisfactory manner if the Road Board were merged into a county—instead of five members you would need only one?—No, I do not think it would. Five members give their time gratis, and where there are back settlers they can go to him, or he goes to them, and then refers the matter to the Board, and the man's requirements are attended to straight away.

20. Could you give us a statement of the amount collected in rates?—£1,125.

21. *Mr. Hogg.*] Out of that how much has been spent on road-work?—About £900. It might be a little more—say, £1,000.

22. *Mr. Buddo.*] Your Road Board in its area has a large number of bridges over rivers?—Yes. We have Coult's Island Bridge, 300 ft. long, and the bridge over the north branch of the Waimakariri, about 350 ft. We have to keep them, and also embankments, in repair.

23. The rivers there are frequently in flood: is it not necessary that members of the Board assist the surveyor in looking after protective works and bridges in flood-time?—Yes. The main road runs alongside the Waimakariri. Last year alone we had to spend £450 to maintain the road, and keep the river from washing it away.

24. Do you consider that any other system of local government, such as a County Council, would assist you to in any way cause greater efficiency or economy?—No, I do not think County Councils could do as well.

25. Are you interested in any outside boundary bridges; and, if so, have you any difficulty with the other local bodies, or do they meet you fairly?—Yes, we are interested with other local bodies in boundary bridges, and we are met fairly.

26. You wish no further legislation to assist you in the matter?—No.

27. *Mr. Flatman.*] You say your clerical work costs £150 per annum: do you pay anything extra for collecting rates?—No, the clerk collects the rates, and does the engineering. We never call in any extra assistance for our work.

28. *Mr. Houston.*] How long has your Road Board been in existence?—About thirty-six years.

29. During that time did you employ the services of a professional engineer?—Not to my knowledge.

30. And your clerk is competent to draw out plans and specifications for roads and bridges?—Yes.

31. Then, over and above your clerk, you only spend £50 for advertising and other incidentals?—Yes.

32. Do you think that in a sparsely settled district a Road Board could manage as economically as yours?—Yes.

33. Even in a district where it is necessary to employ a competent engineer? Where a number of such Road Boards exist in a county, do you not think it would be more economical to supply the services of one engineer than that each Road Board should have a professional engineer of its own?—No, I do not think so.

Surely one competent engineer could do the work of seven.

34. *Mr. Lang.*] Is the Counties Act in force in your district?—No.

35. What rates do you levy?—Our rate is $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

36. Is that what you have been in the habit of striking?—Yes; for the last three years.

37. *Mr. Pirani.*] It has been suggested in the Bill, as introduced, that there is no such thing as the County Council being supplanted; and it has been said that all the rates should be levied and collected by the County Council, and then a proportion should be divided amongst the road districts: what do you think of the proposal?—Looking at it from a Road Board point of view, I think the Road Boards are doing better work than the County Councils.

38. Do you think it would be better that road districts should do it as they do now?—Yes, sir, I do; I think we are best where we are.

39. *Mr. Hall.*] Can you tell me what rate has been struck, say, for a period of five or six years back?— $\frac{1}{2}$ d. for the last three years.

40. Do you manage to get all your roads made, &c., by a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate?—Yes; we have no special loans.

41. *The Chairman.*] Have you any special grants?—No.

42. If you have no special rate, and no special grant, what was the position of the road when the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. commenced: was it in a state of nature?—No; a little road-making had been done, partly by the Provincial Government.

43. Were there any other roads made?—Yes; I think there was the main road—about three miles. This road, besides some others, was made out of the land-grants of 25 per cent.

44. How many miles of road were made previous to the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate out of grants and other sources?—There would be about half.

45. What is the average value of land in your district?—I am not a land-valuer; I should think from £14 to £15 per acre.

Mr. WORNALL, Chairman of the Kowai Road Board, examined. (No. 4.)

Witness: I came up to interview you on this matter. We know we are under a better system now than we would be under the Counties Act. Our Road Board has been in existence for twenty-seven years. We have five members, and these five members are distributed over the district in different places, and they look after each ward. Each man is supposed to look after a portion of it, and the interests of the ratepayers, and the roads. We have a valuation of £500,000, and a ½d. rate brings in £1,302. We have also had a special rate for special work on the Ashley River, which raised £350, and that was all expended in protecting the river-banks for six miles and three-quarters along the river. Other sources of revenue, such as dog-taxes and small reserve-rents, run up to £289: the total income is about £1,941. The cost of the administration of that is clerk's salary, £150, and other details might run into £20, which is the only expense we have outside of labour. We have about 214 miles of roads formed and metalled, and in fairly good order; also, there are two main roads running through the district for about twenty-nine miles. We have bridges, culverts, &c., and we are going in for permanent concrete bridges and culverts throughout the district. The Ashley Bridge is 310 ft. long, Saltwater Creek Bridge is about 250 ft. long. The labour falls entirely on the ratepayers. Another bridge we built cost over £300. We are of opinion that the rates collected and administered in the present way—under the Road Board system—is better, more satisfactory, and cheaper than it could be under a County Council; and in the event of the Counties Bill becoming law, we would ask that the ratepayers be consulted, and that they should decide whether they be brought under the Counties Act or remain under the Road Board. We do not wish to be under the Counties Act. We have also buildings belonging to the Board to the value of £790; and we have a plant, consisting of horses and carts, up to the value of £240, so that these, I suppose, would have to be done away with; and we think that if the Road Board were abolished and the Counties Act brought into operation, and the present members abolished, it would cost more to get other men to work than we get the work done for at the present time, and that it could not be looked after in as good a way as is done by the present administration.

46. *Mr. Hornsby.*] Are you in the same position as the Eyreton Road Board—your roads were principally made for you when you started?—No. The roads were good enough, and, of course, there were some grants, but it is many years ago. We have made new roads quite recently.

47. To what extent? How many roads have you made under your ordinary rate or proportion?—Under the ordinary rate, several new roads have been made since the Provincial Government was abolished.

48. And bridges?—Yes.

49. Were they principally made before you started to rate yourselves? Have you had to rebuild any?—No. We have had to renew the Saltwater Creek Bridge, 250 ft. long.

50. *Mr. Lang.*] Your Board has been thirty-seven years in existence, and has given general satisfaction to the ratepayers?—Yes, general satisfaction.

51. Would you be in favour of allowing the question to be submitted to the ratepayers, which form of Government they would adopt?—Yes; if this Bill is going to come into law, we wish to have the right to retain our Road Board.

52. Is ½d. the usual rate you strike on your Board?—For thirty-four years it was only ¼d., and for nearly three years it has been ½d.

53. What is the special rate?—It was for the Ashley Bridge.

54. You do not pay a special rate in addition to the ½d.?—No.

55. I understand you are making permanent works: is that done out of your revenue?—Yes.

56. *Mr. Houston.*] In what county is your Road Board situated?—In Ashley.

57. How many Road Boards are there?—Eight.

58. Have you any idea of the working-expenses of the other Boards?—No, I have no idea—only what members here said.

59. That £150 you pay your clerk—does he do engineering work as well?—Yes, and also collects the rates.

60. You cannot say what would be about the amount of the other Road Boards in the county?—Some would probably be less, because their districts are not so large.

61. And you think these eight Road Boards can be worked more economically than a County Council?—I feel quite satisfied.

62. *Mr. Flatman.*] Would you be in favour of the County Council striking a rate and disbursing to the Road Boards for their requirements?—I do not know. The requirements of the Road Boards are different. They strike a rate for themselves.

63. You formerly had a fund from the land sold in Canterbury, of which you received 25 per cent.?—Many years ago.

64. How long has that fund been exhausted?—Some years.

65. And you have made many miles of road since that fund has been exhausted?—We have 214 miles of road made, and twenty-nine miles of main road. I would say that more than half of these roads were made since the Land Fund was exhausted.

66. *Mr. Hogg.*] You have five members?—Yes.

67. Are there any travelling-expenses charged?—No.

68. Assuming that instead of eight Road Boards you had a County Council administering the works of the district, do you think that the cost would be lessened or increased—I mean the official expenses?—I feel satisfied that under the Counties Bill the cost would be increased, because we would require more men to go and see the roads and attend to them. At the present time the members do a good deal, and they are in touch with all the roads, culverts, and bridges, and they know exactly what work has to be done.

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.

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.

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.

128. Do you think there is any desire for amalgamation?—Yes.

129. In the case of the amalgamation of two small road districts, would any good purpose be achieved?—I think so, sir; but not being on any of the small ones I have not worked it out; but it is my idea to merge some of the local bodies.

130. Are there any duly qualified engineers assisting these Road Boards?—We have qualified surveyors on some Boards, but if anything special crops up we get a certificated engineer to carry out the work for us.

Mr. GEORGE WITTY examined. (No. 8.)

131. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I believe you are a member of the Templeton Road Board, and also a member of the Selwyn County Council: can you tell the Committee what the feeling of the people in Canterbury is?—The feeling is very much against it. They certainly think that most of the work could not be done for anything like the cost it is done now for. We are working on a $\frac{7}{16}$ d. rate, and no one can look after that district better than those who are now doing it.

132. Speaking for the Templeton Road Board, could you give the Committee any idea of what your total expenditure is and the cost of management?—We collect about £1,400 in rates now, and we can rate up to £1,656, and all our expenses amount to about £150.

133. What is your total expenditure?—£1,479.

134. Now, with regard to the question of the franchise, what is the opinion of the people down there as to its remaining as at present?—Ours is a floating population, and on that account alone the present Bill would be unsuitable from beginning to end.

135. Is there anything else you wish to say on the salient points of the Bill?—Only to emphasize what Mr. Morgan stated with regard to each Road Board having a direct representative on the Council. There are six Road Boards who have not £1,000 in rates all together.

136. Then, you believe in the principle of amalgamation, where circumstances make it desirable?—Yes.

Mr. WILLIAM BOAG examined. (No. 9.)

137. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I believe you have been for a number of years a member of the Selwyn County Council and Riccarton Road Boards; will you kindly tell the Committee what you think as to the desirability or otherwise of retaining the Road Board system?—I have thought it over in many ways, and I can hardly come to any conclusion that it is going to be amended in the way the Bill suggests. I was in the Council for ten or twelve years. The Council has nothing whatever to do with Road Boards or road districts. It only collects a certain amount of rates and taxes, which I think should be left in the hands of the Road Board. I do not wish to be opinionative, but how it can be worked without Road Boards I can hardly understand.

138. Do you think the Bill is necessary or desirable at all?—Well, the only thing I see is necessary is to give the Road Boards a little more power. Let us speak of the Riccarton Road Board. I think they have managed that body well, and if the whole of the funds were vested in them they would have considerably more income than they have.

139. Are you in favour of altering the franchise?—No, I think not. We prefer to leave it as it is. I think this franchise a little bit dangerous. For instance, there are lots of people about who have no interest in the district.

Mr. J. H. SHARP examined. (No. 10.)

140. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I believe you have had large experience in the Oxford District as clerk to the Road Board, and you are now clerk to the Riccarton Road Board: can you give the Committee some idea of the cost of management as compared with the expenditure?—As far as the Oxford Road Board is concerned, I think about 12 per cent. is about the average. Riccarton is something less—about $11\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Riccarton is a small district and a rich district. It is splendidly managed by the Road Board, and if any alteration is to be made in the existing state of things, I think the County Councils should be abolished. If the road districts are made a certain size so that they can be properly located, my opinion is that the Road Board system is the best form of local government you can have.

141. Do you think the affairs of the district could be more economically managed under the control of the county?—Certainly not. For instance, under the present system the members themselves act as a kind of inspectors. They have a special knowledge of the district, and if they do not know it themselves the ratepayers soon let them know. Now, if it were in a big district, the ratepayers would not be able to get hold of members, and they would have to employ inspectors.

142. As a matter of fact, you act as clerk, surveyor, and engineer?—Yes, at a salary of £200 per annum; and the total expenditure is about £3,000.

Mr. FRANK EAST examined. (No. 11.)

143. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I believe, Mr. East, you have been connected with the Lincoln Road Board for about eighteen years; what is the feeling throughout Canterbury as to the proposal to abolish Road Boards?—The feeling is in favour of retaining Road Boards.

144. What is the expenditure of your Board in a year?—We spend about £1,000 per year from rates, and about £150 from other sources, at a cost of about 10 per cent.

145. What is the feeling with regard to the franchise?—We are strongly against any alteration of the franchise.

Mr. C. W. COMER. (No. 12.)

Mr. C. W. COMER, clerk to the Halswell Road Board, and also a member of the Spreydon Road Board said they were altogether against the abolition of Road Boards, but he believed that the Road Boards should in certain cases be amalgamated with the adjoining Road Boards. He said his Board's rates alone amounted to £1,000 a year, and the total expenditure for management is £150.

Mr. WILLIAM McMILLAN examined. (No. 13.)

Witness: I represent the Ellesmere District. We want to retain the Road Boards, and if the Road Boards are abolished we wish to form a county ourselves. Ours is a large district and well bounded. The nearest point in my district is twenty miles, and the farthest away over forty miles, and our valuation is a million and a third. The $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate brings £2,700, and the expenses for management amount to about £280.

146. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] What is the feeling in regard to the alteration in the franchise?—Leave it as it is.

147. Would you like extended powers, as far as the franchise is concerned, if the Road Boards are retained?—This Counties Act would give us what we want, I think.

148. But you also have a proposal, as far as amalgamation is concerned?—That would not affect us at all. I think the amalgamation would be of advantage.

Mr. F. BENHAM. (No. 14.)

Mr. F. BENHAM, Malvern Road Board said: The feeling of our district is strongly in favour of retaining the Road Boards. They are not altogether against amalgamation. Our rateable property is £1,394. We strike a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate, which brings £352, and the cost of administration of that is £153 0s. 11d.

149. *Mr. Stevens* (to Mr. Morgan).] I understood you to say that the subsidies were divided between the Road Board and the County Council?—We get some back in the shape of subsidies to mend roads, and some to mend bridges.

150. In what direction do they spend their £500?—It goes to the general maintenance of the county.

151. Is not the whole of the money spent for the same purpose as that for which the Road Board expends its subsidies?—No; a large amount goes towards the office expenses.

152. This subsidy of £1,000—is it all expended in the best interests of the general public?—I expect we get a fair proportion of it.

153. It seems very strange to me that it requires two local bodies to administer the interests of one area?—It is not a small area. The county is over one hundred miles from one end to the other.

154. I wish to get some salient points why it requires two local bodies?—They could not do it very well with one centre. They would have to maintain the present Road Office to work the county. As we argue, it is absolutely impossible for the County Council to take the place of the Road Board.

155. *Mr. Hall* (to Mr. Sharp).] You have roadmen in your district. Do the men bring in reports to you?—Yes.

156. I would like to ask you this: During the whole of the evidence we have had the contention that they would be administered at a very much less cost than if they were merged into one body, as the members had a special knowledge of the requirements of the district. Would it not be sufficient to have these reports from the roadmen?—My contention is this; that the way the Ashley County is worked is the best system of local government.

157. *Mr. Meredith* (to Mr. Boag).] You are in favour of retaining the present local franchise on a property qualification with a plurality of votes; and you believe in Road Boards and road districts as the most efficient and economical form of government?—I think so, and I do not think it can be bettered. Take, for example, our district. There are five men selected—all practical men. They meet there once a month, and lately once a fortnight, and these men know thoroughly the requirements of the district. We have a thoroughly practical man as clerk and surveyor, who is not overpaid by any means. The conclusion I have come to is this; that I do not think it can be managed otherwise with any better success.

158. You are not in favour of the parliamentary franchise becoming the local franchise?—No.

159. *Mr. Hardy* (to Mr. McMillan).] You speak of the Road Board management being very popular?—Yes, it is.

160. And what about the County Council?—It is a disgrace to any county. Every one concurs in that opinion.

161. You sometimes have considerable trouble in your district in connection with bridges; have you been able to get those bridges erected or not?—No; in consequence of the position taken up by the County Council we were unable to avail ourselves of the grant which was made by Parliament for this purpose.

162. *Mr. Hornsby* (to Chairman): I want to know if these gentlemen recognise that they are all in favour of amalgamation of Road Boards, but not in favour of the Counties Bill. As a matter of fact, it appears to me that they want extended powers. Will you ask them how they reconcile that?

Mr. Morgan: We do not object to the counties. We want them in a workable size. We want direct representation on this Commission.

163. *Mr. Hornsby.*] Then, as a matter of fact, if you had that representation you would not object to counties being formed instead of road districts?—We do not mind if the term "Road Board" is taken away as long as we are divided into workably sized districts.

Mr. Hornsby: Coming down to bed-rock, you do not object to being made into counties if you have the powers.

164. *Mr. Lang* (to *Mr. Witty*).] In the first place, I understand that the Selwyn County has a dual form of local government: is that correct?—Yes.

165. What I want to find out is the amount of rates struck and collected?—None at all. The County strikes no rates.

166. The next question is what rates are struck and collected in each road district?—When you asked the question about rates I misunderstood. Of course, we have got water-rates, and these we have to collect. We supply nearly the whole of Selwyn with water. We have no general rates. Our general rate for the Templeton Road District is $\frac{1}{7}$ d. We do not deal with the special rate to pay for loans borrowed.

167. *Mr. Buddo.*] I desire to ask *Mr. McMillan*, representing Ellesmere, if there is any other power the Road Board desires that is not provided for by legislation?—The only thing is the drainage. We consider the power under the drainage clause defective.

168. Have you any difficulty with regard to bridges on boundaries—*i.e.*, with the other local bodies? It is a question of legislation suitable for your requirements. I want to know if you have any difficulty in erecting or maintaining the boundary bridges?—No.

169. Do you consider the present administration of your district as economical as it possibly could be under any other form of local government?—You could not work it from Christchurch as economically.

170. If you went in to form a county, what would be your idea of the area of a suitable district to work; would it be similar to the Ellesmere?—Ellesmere would make a suitable county.

171. *Mr. Buddo* (to *Mr. Comer*).] With regard to the main road, do you find it a heavy tax on your resources?—Very heavy indeed.

172. (To *Mr. McMillan*).] Have you any assistance towards the bridge?—No; a clause was drafted for "The Public Works Act, 1900," but it did not go far enough. It allowed us to impose a license-fee.

173. Can you suggest any amalgamation of your immediate Road Boards which would assist you in any respect?—We have to keep the Taitapu Road fit for traffic up there.

174. What would you consider a suitable area for a county?—Any two Road Boards.

175. *Mr. Rhodes* (to *Mr. McMillan*).] About the rates in the Ellesmere District: do you have to raise a special rate for charitable aid?—Yes.

176. The Selwyn County Council collects a good deal of revenue from your district?—Yes, water-rates and other revenue.

177. And you consider you can manage the water-races equally as well as the County Council?—Equally as well.

178. You have a town district within Ellesmere; what is the feeling—do you wish to take over the management, or leave it to be managed by the Town Board?—I would leave it as it is at present.

179. (To *Mr. Comer*).] You represent Halswell. I gather from certain regulations gazetted last year that you have considerable trouble with regard to traffic. I suppose you find it a heavy item?—Extremely. The traffic to Christchurch was injured to the extent of £1,500 over about four miles of road. It is almost impossible to keep the roads at all. Hence the reason why we wish to get a wheel-tax.

180. And you think that under the regulations gazetted last year you would be able to collect that tax?—There seems to be a difference of opinion amongst the lawyers in Christchurch about it. One solicitor says we must impose a tax per ton, and another solicitor says we can do without that. I may say that last winter there were huge quantities of stone dragged over that road to Christchurch and the surrounding districts.

181. Have you any water-races in your district?—No, but unfortunately we have some outside which terminate in a river in our district.

182. *Mr. Hardy* (to *Mr. McMillan*).] *Mr. McMillan* said something about controlling water-races: how would you propose to control the water-races in different districts?—I think there could be a Water-race Board formed to manage water-races.

Mr. Hardy: Consisting probably of Chairmen of Road Boards.

Mr. Meredith: That would mean the creation of a new body.

Mr. McMillan: I might say that we are in the same position as they are in Halswell.

WEDNESDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER, 1901.

Hon. Mr. W. C. SMITH, M.L.C., examined. (No. 15.)

Witness: The Hawke's Bay Provincial District has been unable to send any delegates to give evidence before this Committee, and I have been asked to state the case for some of the local bodies. I may say that I have been Chairman of a County Council for about ten years, and a Road Board for about fifteen years, and have had a large experience of both local bodies. The Hawke's Bay District is at present divided into four counties, while all the Road Boards are merged in the Hawke's Bay County, and one local body represents both, and has done so for many years, and this seems to give general satisfaction. The next County is Waipawa, and this is worked with a mixed Road Board and county system. My experience is that the county system is much the better one for local government. I would point out this to the Committee: of the Town Boards—one

is the Waipawa Town Board ; that should be a borough, because it allows the county to levy a rate, and then collects the rate itself, and spends the whole of the rate ; and that Town Board is allowed two representatives on the County Council. This is under the present dual system. It pays nothing of the county rate to the county fund, and, as Waipawa has a large majority of votes, it can return two representatives to the County Council. There is another county (Patangata) that has the dual system, and in the most extraordinary way is its local government carried on there. The County Council meets once in three months, and maintains the county road in these Road Boards, and the County Council bears the expense. In some of the Road Boards the County Council does nothing to the roads whatever. There is a Road Board that never levies a rate ; it has £50 a year allowed by the Council to keep it going. That goes in the expense of clerical work, advertisements, and elections ; but as a Road Board it never does anything, and there is often great difficulty in forming the Board. Two more Road Boards levy rates and do a certain amount of work, and the County Council does a certain amount of work on these roads. They work on the dual system. In conclusion, my experience of Road Board and county is that, so far as Hawke's Bay is concerned, it would be a very great advantage to the people of the district if one body controlled the roads, &c., as a large proportion of the rates goes in expenses at present which would otherwise be obviated.

1. *Mr. Houston.*] I understood you to say that the county levies 1d. rate, and the Road Board $\frac{3}{4}$ d. : is that correct?—Well, not exactly.

2. I understood that the County Council levies more than $\frac{3}{4}$ d.—That is on unimproved value.

3. *Mr. Lang.*] I understood Mr. Smith to say 1d. in the pound in the county, and a penny in the Road Board district on the unimproved value (that is equal to $\frac{3}{4}$ d. improved value)?—Yes, both in the Road Board and county.

4. What is the rate which they strike in the Hawke's Bay County?—I think, about $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

5. *Mr. Lethbridge.*] Did you say the County Council of Patangata only meets once a quarter?—Yes.

6. Would it not be better to have suspended the Counties Act?—Yes, and let the Road Boards work the whole thing.

7. You say that one county has been divided ; in fact, that it is now in three counties?—Yes ; and I firmly believe that the people in the district are not satisfied with the present system. They would not care if there was one large local body.

8. They are in favour of one local body, no matter what you call it?—Yes ; and I maintain it would save a large portion of the rates, and they would get the extra subsidy. If they have partial Road Boards and County Councils, they do not get all the Government subsidy which they would otherwise do. They would then get a double subsidy, 10s. instead of 5s.

9. *Mr. Rhodes.*] Where there are town districts, do you think they wish to be retained?—I think myself they wish to be retained.

10. And the bulk of the Town Boards wish to be retained?—I think so.

11. You mentioned one or two : have they the necessary population to enable them to become boroughs?—Yes, I think so.

12. *Mr. Hall.*] I would like, Mr. Smith, to understand a little more about this subsidy. I understand that where two Road Boards are merged into one there is only one subsidy?—Practically they would each get half.

13. Then, the Government would not pay a subsidy to a merged Board?—They will not pay the double subsidy which they would get if all were merged.

14. Then, it would be very much more advantageous to the county if it were merged?—Yes.

15. You are in favour of having only one local authority?—Yes ; either Road Boards or County Councils.

16. *Mr. Stevens.*] From your own personal knowledge of the work of the Town Boards and Road Boards, have they worked satisfactorily?—Under some circumstances they have.

17. Assuming, for example, there was a population sufficient to form a Town Board situated twenty miles from the headquarters of the county, do you think the business could not be as well conducted by the County Council as under a Road or Town Board?—I think so.

18. With respect to the merging of Road Boards into a county, is it not a fact that wherever a Road Board exists then the county grant cannot exceed £500?—Yes, that is so.

19. So that the merging of the Road Board into the county would give them another £500 if they struck a rate?—There is not any alteration. They can go up to £500.

20. *The Chairman.*] You stated that the Waipawa Road Boards wanted either one or other condition of things, either a Road Board or a County Council?—I did not say that the Road Boards do. The opinion of the people is that there should be only one rate.

21. And the Road Boards are opposed to their being merged?—No. I may say that a circular was sent out, and from one county only one Road Board delegate came ; in the other, four came out of eight.

22. And were the others represented—Takapau, Waipukurau, Waipawa, and Norsewood?—Yes ; but as a matter of fact they did not represent nearly all the district. There were only five Road Boards for four counties.

23. Then, they had no authority to wire to me that the Waipawa Road Boards opposed the Counties Bill?—They had no authority to say "all." The Patangata County had only one representative there. I was not present at the meeting, however, and cannot tell exactly. There was only a very small proportion present.

THURSDAY, 19TH SEPTEMBER, 1901.

Mr. F. G. BOLTON examined. (No. 16.)

The Chairman : I understand, Mr. Bolton, you desired to appear before this Committee with a view to giving evidence. The Committee will now be very pleased to hear anything you have to say.

Witness : The object of my appearance before the Committee, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, is that a petition has been prepared with a view to the constitution of a road district for a marine suburb of Wellington on the other side of the harbour, viz., Day's Bay, and this petition has been signed by over 170 out of 225 ratepayers; and, so far as I know, it might be signed by almost the whole 225 if taken to each one of them; but, of course, a certain number of them are not get-at-able, and others are absentees. However, considerably more than two-thirds of them have signed it, as required by the Act. The petition has been advertised, and will, in all probability, be considered by the Hutt County Council early next month. The object of my appearance is to draw the attention of the Committee to this particular case, and to ask that, assuming that existing road districts are to be preserved, they will also include road districts in process of formation. In this matter all the necessary steps have been taken by the petitioners, and nothing more remains to be done, except the constitution of the district by the Hutt County Council. I might say that the principal reasons for the proposed change are these: this district of Day's Bay has nothing in common with the governing body, the Hutt County Council. It is a marine suburb with a growing population, and will no doubt ere long become a populous district, and the present governing body, being a farming community, has nothing whatever in common with its interests, and that is the principal reason why the people wish to get control of their own affairs.

1. *Mr. Symes.*] It is at present a part of the Hutt County Council?—Yes.

2. Would this particular road district have to go through any other part of the county?—There are two methods of communication—by sea and through the Hutt Borough.

3. But will they have two roads?—They have a road which leads as far as the Hutt Borough. This petition was meant to cover the particular case mentioned by you, and provides that the road district should extend from the Hutt Borough southward to the terminus of the former road, so that no liability would be cast on the Hutt County Council which they should not be asked to meet.

4. *Mr. Buddo.*] Would it not be quite as easy for your district to proceed to form another local body, such as a town or borough district?—No. The objection with regard to a town district or borough is that we have not the population. We have 225 ratepayers, and the district is growing, but we have not the necessary population at present. I might suggest that the section of the Act retaining road districts should be extended to include a road district in process of formation.

Mr. ELL, M.H.R., attended and made a statement. (No. 17.)

Witness : Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—There are just one or two points I would like to raise. The first one is with regard to objections to the necessity of having so many different pollings. There are a number of local bodies which are elective. For instance, in Canterbury we have a River Board, a Drainage Board, and part of the members of the Harbour Board. This necessitates three different pollings. I would suggest that if you fixed the date of the polling for the election for members of County Councils, Road Boards, and Town Boards on the same day as the elections for Borough Councils, thus having the whole of the elections for different local bodies on the same date, by such an arrangement the members of these other bodies could be elected at the same polling. It would save a lot of trouble to ratepayers and a lot of expense. This is one of the matters I wished to refer to, and I think it can easily be remedied. There is one other matter, with regard to the rating. In a number of districts they have carried the rating on unimproved value system. As a case in point: I live in a district which carried this system of rating. It is proposed to attach a portion to a road district which has not adopted the rating on unimproved value system, and a complication would ensue; and as there are likely to be changes in the boundaries of districts this might crop up in a number of other cases. That is why I think it necessary to suggest that something should be done to meet such a difficulty. Then, with regard to the form of ballot-papers. As it is now, sometimes you may have ten or a dozen candidates to select from for three members, which would necessitate the striking out of, say, nine. A much better system would be to put a cross against the names of the people you want to vote for, and this would mean putting three crosses instead of striking out nine names.

APPENDIX.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE.—COUNTIES BILL.

COPY OF CIRCULAR TELEGRAM AS SENT TO ALL CHAIRMEN OF ROAD BOARDS IN THE COLONY.

The Chairman, Road Board.

THE Counties Bill is being considered by the Local Government Committee of the House. Under this Bill the Governor in Council is authorised to retain in existence any road district, with power to amalgamate any existing road district, but all road districts, either retained or amalgamated, are, under the Bill, to absolutely merge in the county.

Section 4, subsections (20) to (27), and section 8: In retained and amalgamated road districts the Bill provides as follows: Franchise to extend to freeholders and residential occupants, as proposed for counties. Section 15: Board elected for three years. Sections 55 and 75: Retained road districts will levy a general rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ d. Section 83: And other rates as at present. Section 101: Will be subject to the present law as to special loans. Section 157: Will have control of district, roads, bridges, and ferries. New district roads to be 66 ft. wide. Section 250: Will continue to have control over existing district works. Section 319: And will have many of the improved and wider powers of the Bill.

You are invited to wire any objections or recommendations your Board wishes to make on the proposal to abolish road districts, or on any other provisions of the Bill, to Chairman, Local Government Committee, House of Representatives, Wellington, by 21st August. Telegrams up to one hundred words can be franked by you.

R. McNAB, Chairman of Committee.

REPLIES.

Ahuroa Road Board.—*Re* Counties Bill: This Board objects to Road Boards being abolished; should amalgamate only on petition from ratepayers. Poll of ratepayers determine whether counties or road districts be abolished.—W. L. SANDERSON, Chairman.

Akaroa and Waimui Road Board.—Our Board objects to Road Boards being abolished without sanction of ratepayers interested. We think fairest way would be for each road district to ballot for or against retention, and the majority of votes cast to decide. *Re* franchise: We think the present system far before that proposed in the Bill. We also think rating on unimproved value should be decided by ballot.—JOHN R. NEWTON, Chairman.

Albertland North Road Board.—Albertland North Road Board strongly object to general abolition of Road Boards, also to extension of franchise to non-ratepayers. They approve of triennial election.—W. B. FARRAND, Chairman.

Albertland South Road Board.—Albertland South Road Board resolved desirable franchise confined to ratepayer, as now. Many road districts too small. This Board thinks that no road district should be less than fifty ratepayers, and income of £60 from rates. Power of returning (retaining?) and amalgamating road districts be vested in County Council. Road Board election triennially. Local Board should have extended power for rating maximum amount for Road Board and County Councils, each six farthings, levied as now.—MARTIN GUBB, Clerk.

Anama Road District.—Anama Road District recently enlarged, and has now a rateable value of £255,000. The Board desires that the district be retained, and strongly objects to be merged in the county, as they can manage their own affairs more economically. The existing franchise is fair and equitable both for large and small holders, and the Board thinks that the proposed alteration eminently unjust, and desires to record its protest against the change.—EDWARD G. WRIGHT, Chairman.

Arai Road Board.—The Arai Road Board wish to be a retained Road Board. The district is large. Valuation £245,000, with yearly increase as the county becomes settled. The Board is, by the aid of Government loans, putting roads through the Crown lands, and prefer to look after their own work and expend their own money. Have no faith in the way county expenditure is conducted. If Board were merged are sure the district would suffer. Have no suggestions to make.—T. W. BILHAM, Clerk.

Ashley County, Conference in.—At a meeting held in Rangiora to-day of representatives of the several Road Boards in the Ashley County the following resolution was unanimously carried: That, in the opinion of this meeting, it is extremely undesirable that the present Road Board system should be discontinued in the Ashley County where the conformation and situation of the road districts render Road Boards the most effectual method of administration.—J. MARSHALL, Secretary Conference.

Avon Road Board.—Have posted to the Premier and to members of Parliament in County of Selwyn resolutions passed at a conference of Road Boards, and delegates are coming to Wellington to support same. Can you appoint a day for them to attend before your Committee?—A. B. MORGAN, Chairman.

Awatere Road Board.—My Board considers question of retention or otherwise of existing road districts should be decided by poll of ratepayers; that eastern portion of Omaka Road District should be amalgamated with Awatere; that instead of a freehold qualification the existing qualification under Counties and Roads Acts should be adopted, giving ratepayers votes in each riding in which their property is situated.—S. M. NEVILLE, Chairman.

Awhitu Road Board.—Awhitu Road Board objects to be included in the Counties Bill. Being extreme end of Peninsula, it would be most unreasonable to put this district in the category with

the more central and progressive portions of Manukau County or Franklin District. Can be more economically and efficiently administered under Road Board, and respectfully request constitution of this district to be retained as at present.—T. R. TINDALL, Clerk.

Barrett Road Board.—Strongly urge road district be retained as at present. If merged into county rate will be higher, and very doubtful if road will be kept in the good and satisfactory state as under road district control now.—A. GEORGE, Chairman.

Cambridge Road Board.—The Cambridge Road Board discussed the Counties Bill when first issued, and unanimously passed a resolution to the effect that any interference with local government by Road Boards would be prejudicial to the public interest. Every Road Board within the County of Waikato is of a like opinion.—JAMES TAYLOR, Chairman.

Carrington Road Board.—The Carrington Road Board is unanimously of opinion that it would be entirely detrimental for them to merge into the County Council, and consider that our Road Board, running as it does direct into borough, never using the county road, should not be liable to a full county rate. Would favour franchise if, say, twelve months' residence. The Board expresses their regret at their inability to reply more fully to telegram, owing to not having before them a copy of the Bill now before the House.—JOHN LASHBROOK, Chairman.

Coldstream Road Board.—Coldstream desires to be retained in existence. Suggests that no Road Board be merged without consent of majority of ratepayers. Favours extension of franchise to freeholders, but considers residential qualification should require twelve, not three, months' occupation. Favours triennial elections. Approves clauses 83 and 101, but Bill should give retained Boards power to levy differential general rates for different wards without losing Government subsidy on same. All main arterial roads to be declared county roads and maintained by County Council. Suggests that provision be made enabling boundaries of retained Boards being altered.—JOHN STUDHOLM, Jun., Chairman.

Collingwood Road Board.—Counties Bill: Our Road Board recommends that present Collingwood County be divided into two counties; each of the two existing ridings, Collingwood and Takaka, and respective outlying districts, to be constituted separate counties. Present county wide and scattered, and almost unworkable, and ridings have no interest in common. Failing this, Board wishes Collingwood Road District retained, with extended rating-powers for taxing heavy timber-wagons, for instance; also control of rivers and other public interests. Also consider provisions should be made for payment travelling-expenses of members of Board.—ALFRED J. PEART, Chairman.

Courtenay Road Board.—My Board agrees with resolution passed at a conference of delegates representing the various Road Boards in the Selwyn County held at Christchurch on the 31st July, 1901.—H. A. KNIGHT, Chairman.

Cust Road Board.—Counties Bill: Section 4—subsections (20) to (21), object to road districts being interfered with; (22), agreed to; (23), consistent with (22); (24), not in favour of more than two amalgamated; (25), accepted; (26), (27), accepted. Section 15 approved. Sections 55-75 approved. Section 83, not favour of county rating; retain Road Board districts unless doing special work. Section 250 approved. 391 accepted as consistent.—ROBERT KINGSBURY, Chairman.

Dovedale Road Board (see also Waimea).—I am instructed by the Dovedale Road Board to say that they object to any alteration in connection with road district without first taking a vote of ratepayers.—HUGH KENYON, Chairman.

Drury Road Board.—Drury Road Board strongly opposed to abolition of road districts, also to proposed extension of franchise. Consider that none but ratepayers should be electors. Disapprove of electing Board for three years; present system satisfactory.—J. FITZGERALD, Chairman.

East Tamaki Road Board.—For reply see "Conference of Local Authorities, Manukau County."

Eden Terrace Road Board.—Eden Terrace Road Board and ratepayers strongly object to merge into county, being quite satisfied to remain as at present. We have our own waterworks, gas through district, fire-brigade, and are now carrying out drainage-works with loan of £3,000 from the Government. Have also signed deed of delegation authorising electric tram company to run trams through district. We urge that Eden Terrace Road District be retained.—F. A. CLEVELAND, Chairman.

Elliott Road Board.—The Elliott Road Board is unanimously of opinion that there should be no interference with the existing system of Road Boards without by vote of ratepayers, and consider that if either bodies are abolished it should be the County Council, as the Road Boards do their work more efficiently and at less cost than County Councils. If the Boards were merged into the County the roads in back of districts would be neglected. Should it be deemed advisable for road districts to amalgamate with other districts the ratepayers interested should be consulted.—CHOLDWILL BILLING, Chairman.

Epsom Road Board.—Approve generally amalgamation of road districts to save expense of administration, but not to have two rating-powers, such as County and Road Board now have in some parts. Franchise not to be extended to non-ratepayers.—S. HESKETH, Chairman.

Featherston Road Board.—Thanks for telegram *re* Counties Act. Ratepayers have already petitioned the House through Mr. Hornsby to constitute Featherston Road District a county. This district has an area of 585,000 acres, and the Board feels, is too extensive to merge in present county. *Re* section 15, object to extending franchise. As for section 55, appears members elected two years; think should be three years. Present system election under Road Boards works satisfactorily. Think road district should be retained in large county, and machinery provided enabling large road districts becoming counties. Think votes of ratepayers should be taken before merging road districts. Proposed population requires to cover too large area to be worked economically without road districts.—A. MATTHEWS, Chairman.

Fitzherbert Road Board.—Section 4, subsections (20) to (27): Board considers Road Board districts with capital value not less than £250,000, where Counties Act suspended and working with 20 per cent. of income, should be retained. Section 8: Object to residential franchise clause; suggest that only ratepayers be allowed to vote. Suggest clause relieving Boards from re-erecting or building bridges over large rivers on main roads when such bridges will cost over £5,000.—Wm. P. KENDALL, Chairman.

Frankley Road Board.—Frankley Road Board suggests road districts should amalgamate so as to be not less value than £150,000. Franchise: Favour rating; if residential, twelve months' residence; property should have vote in every riding. Provision should be made so that road districts leading into boroughs, and not using county roads, should not be liable for full rate levied by County Council. 85 not workable in this district.—H. OKEY, Chairman.

Geraldine Road Board.—Geraldine Road District should be retained in existence; no better form of local government could be substituted here. Residential qualifications very undesirable. The law relating to the powers of Road Boards should be consolidated and made perfectly plain in new Local Bill. Provisions should be made in Bill to enable the local authority to deal with traction-engines hauling heavy loads over bridges and roads; possibly broader tires, higher fees, with greater restraint as to endangering life and property, would be desirable.—J. KELLAND, Chairman.

Henui Road Board.—Henui Road Board considers great mistake to abolish or amalgamate Road Boards. Affairs of road districts always managed better by Boards, who should have knowledge of requirements of their districts. This is my Board's experience. My Board prefers remaining as at present, as it has always been able to manage its affairs out of revenue derived from rates, and without the aid of any loans. Holdings in district small, but numerous and valuable. Better managed by Board as at present. Board strongly protests against residential qualification.—HESLOP BARNITT, Chairman.

Hikurangi Road Board.—Our Board are against any but ratepayers having a vote, and also in favour of retaining the Road Boards, and having it optional to merge into counties.—J. O. CARTER, Chairman.

Howick Road Board.—Howick Township Board in favour of abolition of small Boards; in favour of large road districts if enlarged districts can collect rates equal to those collected by county where no road districts; otherwise in favour of county. In favour of franchise being limited to ratepayers; in case of county being divided into large road districts it would be impossible to leave out one unable to earn subsidy by itself.—FRANK HIRST, Chairman.

Huntly Road Board.—Huntly Road Board in favour of road districts being retained; also in favour of subsection (8) of section 4 being made law; but Board decidedly against clause (8) of section 15 becoming law.—J. P. BAILEY, Chairman.

Hunua Road Board.—The Hunua Road Board recommend that ratepayers have the power to say when Road Boards retained, merged into county, or amalgamated. Object to residential qualification. Object to clause (1) of 68 and 229. 172: Should tender for over £20. Riding rates to be spent in riding where collected, less expenses. Rates collected on Crown lands should carry subsidy. Sixth Schedule: All subsidies to be paid to Road Board. Members of retained or amalgamated Boards should be paid for attending ordinary meetings.—GEO. A. WILSON, Chairman.

Inch-Clutha River and Road Board.—Recommend road district to be retained. Section 8: Recommend ratepayers only entitled to vote.—J. MOSLEY, Chairman.

Kaiti Road Board.—Kaiti Road Board convinced Cook County Council will be unable administer district road satisfactorily; strongly objects merging. Approves section 4, subsections (20)–(27). Section 250: Board suggests, where county road intersects a retained or amalgamated road district, that rate levied by county be definitely allocated for expenditure in such district on such roads, *vide* county map showing Wainui Road, which intersects Kaiti and Pouawa Districts, in the alternative that such road, being arterial road serving the whole of East Coast, be a Government road, and respective districts be relieved of county rate now imposed.—G. MATTHEWSON, Chairman.

Kakapau Road Board.—For reply see Waipawa Road Board.

Karaka Road Board.—The Karaka Road Board does not approve of Road Boards being abolished, and desires in particular that this road district be retained; and consider that the franchise should only be extended to ratepayers as at present, and that the Acts now in force are sufficient, and does not consider any alteration necessary.—WILLIAM RATCLIFFE, Clerk.

Katikati Road Board.—Thanks your telegram. Katikati Road Board strongly urges retention Road Board system, and even formation of new Road Boards, if desired, by poll of ratepayers. As to future merging, the law to remain as at present. Board strongly objects on co-operative works proposals; desires perfect in contracts. The franchise to remain as at present. If no rates struck any one year, full subsidy to be paid to Council on rates collected. County main roads to be taken over by Government.—VESSEY STEWART, Chairman.

Kaukapakapa Road Board.—In reply to your wire *re* Counties Bill, the Kaukapakapa Road Board enters an emphatic protest against the proposals to abolish Road Boards without the consent of ratepayers. The Board further objects to County Councils nominated Committees taking the place of elected Boards in future legislation. Taking into consideration the small details which the Boards have to deal, the Road Boards' administration is or must be cheaper than County Councils'.—FRANK DYE, Chairman.

Kensington Road Board.—Object franchise, ratepayers only to vote. Salary Chairman, £100 maximum. Suggestions: Merged road districts to have fixed revenue; one-half county general rate and subsidy, less administration. Chairmen Road Board Ridings Councillors virtue of office. Ratepayers in riding only to be Councillors for riding, ceasing to be ratepayers ouster from

office, county and road. By-laws not to upset through technical objections. Give power to limit number of horses to pair of wheels. Councillors to be paid more than travelling-allowance.—**J. GRIFFIN**, Chairman.

Kirikiroa Road Board.—The Kirikiriroa Road Board, on receipt of the Councils Bill, maturely considered its provisions, and came to the unanimous conclusion that any alteration or interference with the local government by Road Boards would be disadvantageous. I may add that the Tamahere and Cambridge Road Boards have passed resolutions to exactly the same effect.—**JOHN GORDON**, Chairman.

Kiwaka Road Board.—This Board enters a most emphatic protest against clauses Counties Act prohibiting for abolition Road Boards. It considers it would be a great calamity to this district, being extreme northern end of the Waimea County, and having control of about thirty miles by-roads, and yearly extending into back districts, also twelve miles bridle-tracks, all of which could not possibly be maintained as efficiently by County Council as by Board; also having under control the management of two wharves, built by ratepayers and invested by Marine Department.—**DANIEL BATE**, Chairman.

Knapdale Road Board.—Knapdale Road Board objects to residential franchise, and is of opinion that only those who contribute to revenue should vote. Secondly, is strongly of opinion that the dissolution of Road Boards should be left entirely to ratepayers. Resolutions to this effect were passed at meeting of Board on Saturday.—**GEORGE BRETT**, Clerk.

Kohi Road Board.—Board prefers to carry on as at present constituted. Strongly oppose being merged in county. Ratepayers thoroughly satisfied with present working of Board's affairs.—**R. BREMER**, Chairman.

Komokoriki Road Board.—*Re Counties Bill*: I beg to inform you that we are opposed to same, preferring our present system of administration by our local Road Boards.—**A. E. DUNNINGHAM**, Chairman.

Kumeroa Road Board.—Your telegram to hand. The Kumeroa Road Board is merged in the Woodville County, which has just passed through the House, and soon will be in working-order. Would suggest that copies of Bill be sent to local bodies interested for their perusal.—**P. H. LYNCH**, Chairman.

Lincoln Road Board.—*Re Counties Bill*: Lincoln Road Board fully indorse circular forwarded by local conference. Delegate from Board going to Wellington.—**J. W. OVERTON**, Chairman.

Little River Road Board.—Board think that in counties in which Road Boards exist poll of ratepayers should be taken before abolition of Road Board, or *vice versa*. Any two or more Road Boards should have the power to amalgamate. Akaroa County peculiarly situated: eastern ratepayers require road to nearest wharf, western ratepayers only require road to nearest railway-station. Under circumstances, opinion Road Boards in Akaroa necessary.—**H. BUCHANAN**, Chairman.

Longbeach Road Board.—Owing to district being closely settled and thickly populated, this Board is unanimously of opinion that interests of ratepayer would be best served by retaining this as a road district.—**GRIGG**, Chairman.

Mainene Road Board.—Our Board respectfully requests and desires to remain as we are. Amalgamated in Council or Board we feel sure our roads would be badly neglected. If all Councils are like Rodney it would be best to wipe them all out; they take our rates out of the district, dog-tax too; they have not spent one shilling in our district for years. Council has five miles in our district. Government maintain four, leaving County one. Respectfully request to remain as we are. Yours respectfully.—**OLIVER HEYWARD**, Chairman.

Makara Road Board.—My Board was unanimous against the absorption of the Board by the County. Makara is an isolated place, and would not obtain benefit from altered circumstances; rather the contrary. The Board is in a good financial position, its roads are in very good order, and the Board recognise that they would be neglected if under the County.—**W. F. ENGLAND**, Clerk.

Manukau County, Conference of Road Boards.—At a conference of all the Road Boards of Manukau County, held at Papakura on the 5th June, 1901, the following resolutions were passed:—Resolution 1.—Local Authorities Bill, 1900: That this conference is of opinion that the Road Boards of the Manukau County have hitherto carried on the work of local government well and economically, and think, while some of the contiguous small road districts might be amalgamated with advantage, and their then powers enlarged, some provision should be made in the Local Authorities Bill for the suspension of the Counties Act when the ratepayers wish to do so. Resolution 2.—Local Authorities Bill, 1900: That this conference is of opinion that in the event of this Bill becoming law a clause should be inserted to the effect that the rates collected in a riding should be spent in that riding, less a proportion for working-expenses and hospital and charitable aid. Resolution 3.—Government valuation: That this conference protest against the methods of valuing, inasmuch as the cost is very largely increased, and the work done less effectually than before the passing of the Act.—**SAM. A. BROWNE**, Secretary.

Manukau County, Conference of Road Boards.—Conference Road Boards Manukau County unanimously favour ratepayers retain or adopt Road Boards with enlarged powers.—**SAM. BROWNE**, Secretary.

Manukau County, Conference of Local Authorities.—At a conference of Road Boards represented by Otahuhu, Papaitoi, Mangere, Maurewa, East Tamaki, Papakura, West Tamaki, Pakuranga, it was unanimously resolved that, as the Manukau County is very extensive and sparsely settled, the work of local government as now carried on is much more advantageous and economical than if the Counties Act was brought into operation. It was further resolved that a vote should be exercised by ratepayers only. The conference was strongly opposed to the amalgamation of Road Boards unless at the special instigation of the Boards interested.—**ALFRED STURGES**, Chairman.

Manawatu Road Board.—In reply to your telegram of 14th instant, I am directed by the

Board to state that they consider the Counties Bill should be amended in the following respects: Road Boards at present within counties where Counties Act is suspended should be retained, with option of continuing as Road Board or County, notwithstanding limitations proposed as to area, value, or population. Retained Road Boards should absorb Drainage Boards and River Boards now in existence within road districts, and should have power to constitute new drainage districts. This Board strongly objects to franchise to residential occupants, except to lessees for a term not less than twelve months. Auctioneers' license-fees should be paid to Road Board or County Councils adjacent to towns where auctioneers' principal sales are conducted. Retained Road Boards, where the valuation exceeds £5,000, should have power to pay Chairman or Wardens the same allowance as can be paid to County Chairman and Councillors. More extended and specific powers should be given retained Road Boards as to regulation of heavy traffic. The hours for voting at elections are needlessly long, the experience of this Board being that practically no voting is done after 4 p.m.—W. RUTHERFURD, Clerk.

Manchester Road Board.—Manchester Road Board's valuation is upwards of £1,100,000, and it thinks that all Road Boards with valuation-roll of three-quarters of a million should be retained. The Board also thinks that the franchise should continue as at present, and be confined to rate-payers; also that Part XV., clauses 127, 138, and 139, should be made applicable to retained Road Boards.—GEO. WHEELER, Chairman.

Mangawai Road Board.—*Re* Counties Bill: The Mangawai Road Board disapproves of abolition of Road Boards except by desire of ratepayers, and are strongly opposed to extension of franchise.—GEO. E. FARRAND, Clerk.

Mangawhero Road Board.—Your telegram to hand to-day *re* the Counties Bill. I cannot possibly get a meeting of the Board, or a majority of the members, for the 21st August, but can answer for the Board and the ratepayers, that both are very anxious for the Mangawhero Road Board to be retained. Ours is a large and scattered district. The rateable value (exclusive of Crown and Native lands) is £317,625. There is a vast quantity of Crown (Tauakira and other blocks) and Native lands (Ohutu and other blocks) and blocks that are owned part by Crown and part by Native owners, the interests of which will be better looked after by resident and interested rate-payers than by a Council which will be otherwise composed of ratepayers representing well-roaded and close-settled country. At present our County (Wanganui) consists of six ridings, with a total rateable value of £1,105,781; Mangawhero Riding, rateable value £317,625, considerably more than a fourth of the whole. Ours is the only riding in the county that has not had any assistance from the county towards works of county importance, although we have just as important and necessary works of county importance to do. We have a main arterial road (will be when Crown and Native land is settled) running through our riding, and on up to Auckland and hot-lakes district. Under the existing Acts a ratepayer must be twenty-one years of age before he can exercise the local franchise. Any one seventeen years of age can take up and be the occupier of Crown lands. It appears to me that an occupier liable for rates, general and special, should be allowed a say in whom is to levy the said rates. Some more provision should be made in the case of partners. It happens that the partner whose name appears first on the roll is absent on polling-day, and though the other partner is present he cannot vote. There are also properties occupied and worked by competent managers. I think where an owner is willing to transfer the whole of his voting-power to his manager he should be allowed by law to do so.—D. MASON, Chairman.

Mangere Road Board (see also Conference of Local Authorities, Manukau County).—Mangere Road Board objects strongly to Road Board being abolished. Hitherto Road Board have done work empowered to do economically and well. Government statistics show costs administration 9·4 per cent. revenue, while cost of administration road districts was 8·8 per cent. Counties Bill should contain provisions for suspension of Act where local bodies favour suspending it. Object to arbitrary powers given to Governor in Council to amalgamate also boundaries of road districts. Inhabitants of district should have some voice in alterations. Object to any temporary residents having vote. Only ratepayers should have right to say how rates should be spent.—M. M. KIRKBRIDE, Chairman.

Mangorei Road Board.—Owing to the configuration of the land, our road district is isolated from any other. We therefore prefer to remain a separate road district as at present.—G. H. HERBERT, Chairman.

Maraetai Road Board.—The ratepayers of the Maraetai Road District prefer to remain as they are.—WILLIAM DUDER, Chairman.

Marua Road Board.—People here, including Councillors, strongly favour retaining Road Boards. Many favour abolishing Councils as being cumbersome and expensive. Boards use only half of subsidy for cost of administration, and could expend Council rates without further cost if Government takes over main roads. It would favour certain ridings, only object to change of franchise. Amalgamation undesirable here. Conditions different to the South. Better scheme to copy, education system: Make Council like Education Boards, and Road Boards like School Committees—subservient to Councils. Abolish riding. Boards only duty expend rates and elect Councillors. Council attend outside subject, deviations, valuation, collect rates.—S. HAWKINS.

Matakohe Road Board.—This Board strongly in favour of retention of Road Boards. Franchise should be for ratepayers only. Heavy wheel traffic regulations need to be made more workable.—E. PHEASANT.

Mauku Road Board.—We are not opposed to being merged in a County Council provided that the present subdivision into wards be maintained, so as to secure the expenditure of rates where collected. Ratepayers would not mind paying increased rates so much if expended where they can get the benefit. Nothing gained by dividing. Rating and expenditure between Council and Board. Amalgamating of road districts strongly objected to; also ordered in Council rate-payers should decide, or else members of the House. Road rates and subsidy not sufficient to meet increasing traffic.

Maungakaramea Road Board.—This Road Board desires to be retained as a road district. Even should this Bill become law we strongly object to any alteration of existing franchise. We also think that the maximum amount of County Chairman's salary should not exceed £100.—WILLIAM CRAWFORD, Chairman.

Maunu Road Board.—Maunu Road Board objects extending franchise to residential election. Ratepayers should only be entitled have voice in local government affairs.—M. W. ARMSTRONG, Chairman.

Maurewa Road Board.—For reply see Conference of Local Authorities, Manukau County.

Mercer Road Board.—Proposed alteration more costly, perhaps more effective. Proposed rates insufficient. One local authority sufficient. Present system needs reform. Riding population thinly populated districts too high. Objects candidates deposit fee. Police should assist local authorities. Crown lands should be rated. Practical road-makers badly needed. Favour permanent road gang each county.—FREDERIC FREEMAN, Chairman.

Moa Road Board.—Section 4, subsections (20) and (27): We think that road districts should be amalgamated with counties; that counties should be made smaller, and divided into nine ridings, in case road districts should be retained. Provisions approved. Section 110: This Board would like it made clear that the powers for raising loan under "Loans to Local Bodies Act, 1886," are not curtailed. Schedule VI.: We think that, with regard to subsidies, amount should be considerably increased. Schedule VIII.: Conditions with regard to confiscations appear unnecessarily strict.—H. TRIMBLE.

Momohaki Road Board.—Am of opinion that Road Boards have proved most useful and economical form of local government, and should be retained. "Counties Act, 1886," allows of Road Boards merging into counties if ratepayers require to do so. Subsection (4), section 38, would work very inconvenient where local bodies require to anticipate rates for work being constructed during proper months of year.—WILL. B. FISHER, Chairman.

Moturoa Road Board.—My Road Board is in favour of amalgamation with other Board or being merged in the County Council, as we consider large Board district can be worked at less expense.—H. P. METCALFE, Chairman.

Mount Albert Road Board, Auckland.—*Re Counties Bill:* General principle approved. Consider section 15, subsection (1), clauses (c) and (d), mischievous, and object altogether to any other than ratepayers voting. Eighth Schedule, section 2, subsections (1) and (2), section 3, section 5 should be struck out; too much special labour law already. *Re Part XXVIII:* Board prefer all Health Officers and Nuisance Inspectors appointed by Government to administer the part on us, should not be on local authorities; members of Boards are not independent; local personal feeling engendered.—JOHN BOUSKILL, Chairman.

Mount Eden District Road Board.—The Board object to be merged in the County of Eden. They object strongly to the retention of road districts being left to the Governor in Council. They also object to the proposed extension of franchise to residents. They support the resolution of the conference leaving question of retention of road districts to poll of ratepayers.—R. UDY, Chairman.

Mount Hutt Road Board.—This Board considers that Road Boards should be retained under the provisions of "Counties Act, 1901," provided road district contains population required for riding, because there are local works which can be carried out more satisfactorily by Road Boards than by body whose headquarters are at a considerable distance; and members of Road Boards being more in number than Councillors of a riding, can give more attention to requirements of their districts. Further considers that existing electoral qualifications should not be extended.—WILLIAM MORGAN, Chairman.

Mount Peel Road Board.—This Board are strongly in favour of Road Boards being retained on present lines.—G. J. DENNISTON, Chairman.

Mount Roskill Road Board.—In reply to your memo. of 14th *re* County Bill, it is the opinion of my Board there should be no interference with the existing system of Road Boards—in any case, not without the consent by vote of the ratepayers; that under the present system of Road Boards the necessary work is done more efficiently and more cheaply than it could be done by County Councils. My Board cannot see any good that would be obtained by extending the franchise beyond actual ratepayers. It is also our opinion that the present rating-powers are ample.—CHARLES BAGLEY, Chairman.

Mount Somers Road Board.—We consider Road Boards should be retained as best form of local government. Also, where overseer is kept, Chairman should receive some remuneration.—W. T. CHAPMAN, Chairman.

Mount Stewart Road Board.—The Mount Stewart Road Board is opposed to amalgamation in the Counties Bill. We have kept our roads in good order from our road rates. Five Boards in Bruce are merged in County Council, and borrowed large sums, which will take years to wipe off. We know we can control the expense of our immense district, with its seventy miles of roads, far better than we can possibly do if merged in the Counties Bill. We respectfully urge you to retain our Board intact. We object strongly to residential franchise, as miners in Adams Flat might swamp the freeholders who have taxed themselves for thirty-five years to make the roads without a farthing from the miners. Those who raise the revenue should have the right of spending it.—JAMES ADAM, Chairman.

Mount Wellington Road Board.—*Re Counties Bill, 1901:* At a meeting of the Mount Wellington Road Board yesterday this Bill was fully discussed, and a resolution unanimously passed to ask that Mount Wellington Road District be allowed to remain as now constituted; also that the power given by section 38 to grant a salary to Chairman of Council up to £400 per annum, and by section 71, subsection (11), allowance to a member as travelling-expenses up to £100 per annum, is excessive.—ROBERT S. CARTER, Clerk.

North Ruataniwha Road Board.—The North Ruataniwha Road Board, while not making any

special recommendations, think that the needs of this district would be better served, both from an administrative and economical point of view, by the retention of the Board; for since it has been in existence the needs of the district have been well attended to, while the rates have been moderate and the cost of administration low, which would not be the case if the Board were merged in the county.—J. MATHEWS, Chairman.

Norsewood Road Board.—For reply see Waipawa Road Board.

Oakura Road Board.—The Oakura Road Board are unanimously in favour of retaining the road district as at present.—JOHN LOONEY, Chairman.

Oero Road Board.—The Aeroa Road Board desires the Aeroa Road District should be retained, and that the existing franchise should remain unaltered.—H. B. WILLIAMS, Chairman.

Okaaka Road Board.—Okaaka Road Board disapprove of provision in Counties Bill, and hopes it will not become law.—R. ALLEN BENT, Chairman.

Okain's Bay Road Board.—This Board protests against either amalgamating with other Boards or merging into County Council, on grounds that configuration of Peninsula peculiarly unsuitable large districts, and such formation must be detrimental ratepayers' interest. Cost administration in this district only three pounds per cent., total expenditure remaining actually spent on public works proved by reference last certified balance-sheet.—W. THACKER, Chairman.

Okato Road Board.—*Re* Counties Bill: The Board are strongly of opinion that the Road Boards should be retained as at present, as the work upon the by-roads can be done better and more economically under the supervision of persons residing in the district, and are not in favour of amalgamating with any other district. The Board also considers that ratepayers only should have votes.—JOHN CAREY, Chairman.

Ohotuku Road Board.—Board wishes to remain as at present constituted. Can see no advantage in any alteration, as Board is working satisfactorily.—S. NAPIER, Chairman.

Omaha Road Board.—The Omaha Road Board are of opinion that existing Road Boards, where working satisfactorily, should be retained; that the franchise extend only to ratepayers; that no Board be abolished or amalgamated contrary to wish of ratepayers. As it is not proposed to pay honorarium to trustees, no deposit should be required when nominated. Otherwise generally in favour of Bill.—CHAS. S. CLARKE, Chairman.

Omaka Road Board.—Counties Bill, 1901: Section 15, clause (a): This Board objects to the owner and occupier of a property each having a vote, and thinks the person paying the rates should be the person to vote only. Section 18: This Board considers a ratepayer should have a vote for each property on which he pays rates.

Omata Road Board.—Strongly urge Board district be retained as at present. If merged into county the rate will be higher, and very doubtful if road will be kept in the good and satisfactory state as under road district control now.—A. GEORGE, Chairman.

One-tree Hill Road Board.—Board considers Counties Bill fairly calculated to meet requirements of county, but suggests that Road Boards in the district are generally working well and economically. Possible £400 a year to Chairmen County Councils, and £100 to members, too much by one-half. Rating-powers suggest possibility of excessive burdens on land, and should be carefully watched with a view to further limitation.—H. B. MORTON, Chairman.

Opotiki Town Board.—We strongly object to legislation which would place affairs of this town in other hands than those of representatives elected by town ratepayers. Owing to isolation and other causes, this town's best interests would materially suffer.—STEWART BATES, Chairman.

Oraki Road Board.—In reply to your telegram *re* Counties Bill, I have to state that, as all the land in the Oraki district is Native land, and as there is a probability of the land being leased for building purposes shortly, seeing it is in close proximity to the City of Auckland, the Oraki Road Board desire that they should remain as at present.—WM. J. DENNISON, Clerk.

Oruru Road Board.—Oruru Road Board ceased to exist; merged into Mangonui County more than a year ago.—J. W. LAMBLY, late Chairman.

Otamatea County.—Telegram to Chairman, Whakapirau Road Board, handed to me, as Road Board inoperative for many years. Abolish Road Boards, Council only to be local governing body. Existing counties and number of Councillors be named; present electors' qualifications to remain. Sections 22 and 32: Twenty-eight days instead of fourteen; election triennial; number of public notifications excessive, and in small counties would be a heavy drain on finances. Cost of administration generally increased without corresponding means of increasing revenue except through ratepayers, who object; increase Government subsidy.—JAMES HEMPHILL, Clerk.

Otahuhu Road Board.—For reply see Conference of Local Authorities, Manukau County.

Otonga Road Board.—Object to residential occupants having a vote. Section 4: Recommend each elector should have a vote in any riding that he may own property in, as at present. Section 18: Biennial elections. Section 55: Object to this as being too costly. My Board would respectfully recommend that so far as the Otonga Road District is concerned, that it is the wish of the ratepayers to retain the road district as at present.—A. G. MACKENZIE, Chairman.

Pakuranga Road Board.—The Pakuranga Road Board are unanimous that present road districts should be retained, as they have done their work very economically and efficient in the past, and that only ratepayers should have the power to vote.—ALEX. BELL, Clerk.

Panmure Township Road Board.—The Panmure Township Road Board are unanimous in opinion that their Road Board be allowed to remain as at present; also that the power given under sections 36 and 38 to allow a salary to Chairmen up to £400 per annum, and an allowance to Councillors up to £100 per annum, is excessive.—W. H. GAVIN, Chairman.

Papakura Road Board.—For reply see Conference of Local Authorities, Manukau County.

Paparata Road Board.—Paparata Road Board desires to be left as they are, and is not in favour of the Bill.—GEORGE BALN, Chairman.

Papatoitoi Road Board.—For reply see Conference of Local Authorities, Manukau County.

Parihaka Road Board.—Our Board objects to amalgamating or merging, on the ground that our district is large enough, and extends too far from county centre to receive thorough supervision from county. Would suggest amount general rate be optional with local body. The most economical method would be to divide county into areas, containing about 400 square miles, or about 200 miles of road, and place all roads in such areas under control of one local body, with power to levy general rate up to 2d.—FRED. FRETNEY, Chairman.

Parua Bay Road Board.—Do not approve of road districts being amalgamated into one another or into counties, but to be retained, as they are managed better than they would be if they are merged into one another or into the county. Approve of qualifications of freeholder and residential, but disapprove of others. Also of sections 157, 250, 319.—A. F. ALLWOOD, Chairman.

Patangata Road Board.—Patangata Road Board strongly protest against abolishing or merging Road Boards into counties. Remain as at present constituted; have worked well hitherto. Request Captain Russell, M.H.R., to urge retention and franchise as at present.—JAMES COLLINS, Chairman.

East and West Road Boards, Patea.—Public meeting East and West Road Boards and ratepayers passed following resolutions: (1) That this meeting strongly recommends that the Road Boards within Patea County be merged in the county; (2) that this meeting recommends that expressed provisions should be made in the Act providing that separate riding accounts should be kept, and means devised whereby each riding must receive its full financial benefit.—W. C. SYMES, W. DERRETT, Chairmen.

Patutahi Road Board.—The Patutahi Road Board considers should be retained closely settled. Many districts road not benefit to merge with Council. Owing franchise being more than single vote, more farmers can't get on Council. Considers franchise should be each ratepayer one vote. More ratepayers seventeen years could not get on Board until Government reduces franchise. Patutahi Road Board to have control of cemetery and Domain.—OWEN GALLAGHER, Chairman.

Pelorus Road Board.—*Re Counties Bill:* Pelorus Road Board favour franchise extended to freeholders. Recommend property in any subdivision should carry qualifications to such subdivision. Object to subsection (3), dual vote of husband and wife in mining qualification. Favour present system of election of members. Object to county rating in retained road districts; Sections 101, 157, 250, 319 approved. Resolved, that this Board does not approve of the Counties Bill, and is in favour of road districts being retained, as all parts of the district are thus represented at a near centre by members well acquainted with their requirements, and the administration is cheaper and more efficient than it would be under the county.—CHAIRMAN, Pelorus Road Board.

Picton Road Board and Pukaka River Board.—The Picton River Board are unanimous in objecting to Road Boards being abolished. The option should, in any case, be left with the ratepayers. The Pukaka River Board hold the same opinions as the Road Board.—JAMES LAW, Chairman.

Pigeon Bay Road Board.—The Pigeon Bay Road Board strongly protest against abolishing Road Board districts, especially on Banks Peninsula.—ELI SCOTT, Chairman.

Point Chevalier Road Board.—The ratepayers and residents of Point Chevalier Road Board District are quite satisfied with present arrangements, and request to remain as we are.—G. KNIGHT, Chairman.

Pokeno Road Board.—Pokeno Road Board wish to protest against any alteration in system local government, and urge all Road Boards be retained. Counties Act never been worked in Manukau County under Road Boards. The administration is more efficient and economical than by counties—example, Whangamarino Bridge recently repaired cost £260. Engineering and over-seeing cost £35, done by Waikato County Council. Pokeno Road Board recently built two bridges costing £130. Expenses, engineering, &c., nil. Paid out of the Government grant, and passed by Government Engineer as first-class work.—F. W. PAYNE, Chairman.

Porangahau Road Board.—Porangahau Road Board suggests *re* Counties Bill, section 4, ratepayers of road district affected, not Governor in Council, should decide by poll the question of continuation or amalgamation. Section 15: Franchise should be confined to freeholders however small, and leaseholders of twelve months' tenancy; strike out (c). Section 55: Road members should hold office for three years, not two years.—G. HUNTER, Chairman.

Port Levy Road Board.—The Port Levy Road Board are of opinion that the best interests of this district would be served by being cut off from the Akaroa County Council, being retained as a Road Board or amalgamated with the Port Victoria Road Board. Also, ratepayers should have power to vote for or against the abolition of Road Boards or Council.—H. FIELD, Clerk to Board.

Portobello Road Board.—Excepting franchise clauses, approve generally of provisions of Counties Bill. Board unanimous in wishing this road district retained if capital value £445,000. Income—rate, subsidy, &c., £1,025. Insufficient; suggest amalgamating with the Otago Heads District, capital value £52,000. Income—rate, subsidy, &c., £215. Its main interest identical with this district.—W. M. DICKSON, Chairman.

Port Victoria Road Board.—Am posting to-day the objections which the Port Victoria Road Board wish to make to the Counties Bill now before your Committee.—ROBERT ANDERSON, Chairman.

Port Victoria Road Board.—With reference to your communication *re* the Counties Bill: A meeting of the Port Victoria Road Board to consider the above has just been held, when it was resolved to strongly protest against the abolition of Road Boards where they are working satis-

factorily. In our own case the Akaroa County Council has always worked in an unsatisfactory manner, owing to there being no community of interests between the outlying parts of the county; and if the Road Boards are done away with it will mean, in our case, a great hardship indeed. We think it will be desirable if it could be so arranged that there should be only one local taxing body, but that the ratepayers in each Road Board district should be able to declare by ballot whether body should be the Road Boards or County Councils. With reference to franchise: We think only ratepayers should have a right to vote at local elections, as only ratepayers are interested in seeing the funds spent to the best advantage. Those, too, are the points on which the Board would wish to offer their strong objection to becoming law.—ROBERT ANDERSON, Chairman.

Pouawa Road Board.—Pouawa Road Board are of opinion that Road Boards are necessary for carrying out local works efficiently. Counties cannot and do not do so properly. In power to levy general rate continued to counties, Councils should be obliged to see that at least a substantial portion of such rate levied from a road district should be expended there. Pouawa District is badly neglected in this respect, as it has no county road within its boundary, nor does it use any county road except a few hundred yards at Gisborne.—W. G. MACLAURIN, Chairman.

Pukeatua Road Board.—Strong objection to abolish Pukeatua Road Board. The district is large, sparsely settled, income small, necessitating great care in fairly apportioning funds. Not possible under county administration except at large extra cost, and consequent loss to district. Many Chairmen willing to supervise works gratuitously. A limited charge for horse-hire should be permissible by Act. Approve three-years term providing election *bonâ fide*. Not by nomination of required numbers as is usual, obviating election, liable abuse. Provision or penalty required to induce more general interest securing efficient Boards.—THOMAS HOLDER, Chairman.

Pukekohe Road Board.—This Road Board is of the opinion that "The Road Boards Act, 1884," and its amendments is sufficient for all the requirements of the county, and that we do not wish to be brought under the provisions of Counties Bill now before the House, our opinion being that the working of the Act will be very expensive, cumbersome; and also we wish that provision be made for the suspension of those portions of the Bill relating to County Councils in any county where such suspension may be desired by the ratepayers. We strongly object to any change in the franchise.—J. ROUTLY, Chairman.

Pukekohe East Road Board.—The Pukekohe East Road Board unanimously ask the Government to retain the Road Boards, and to enlarge their status as local authorities as being more economical and more efficient than County Councils.—JOHN COMRIE, Chairman.

Pukekura Road Board.—The Pukekura Road Board strongly object to a mere residential qualification giving power to vote away money paid by ratepayers. The principle is unfair with regard to other provisions of the Counties Act. It has no recommendations to make, having no copy of Bill.—ROBERT FISHER, Chairman.

Remuera Road Board.—Approve generally amalgamation of road districts; save expense of administration; but not to have two rating-powers, such as County and Road Board now have in some parts. Franchise not to be extended to non-ratepayers.—P. BUDDLE, Chairman.

Riwaka Road Board.—For reply see Waimea West Road Board.

Seatoun Road Board.—In reply to your circular letter, I am directed by the Seatoun Road Board to say that it has very strong objection to abolition of Road Boards. The Seatoun Board is in the Hutt County, but it is geographically quite separate from that county, the Boroughs of Melrose, Wellington, Onslow, and Karori lying between the Hutt County proper and the Seatoun district. The Seatoun district is practically unknown to the members of the County Council, and to attempt to govern it through such a body would never have satisfactory results. My Board has already addressed the Premier on this matter, and, as the Premier has informed me that he has placed the letter before your Committee, it is not necessary for me to go over the ground again. What the Seatoun district requires is more power to handle questions of sanitation and the removal of nightsoil, and the regulation of the erection of buildings, as the district contains a large summer population, and during the hot summer season the local body should have power to insure the health and well-being of the people that take up temporary residence in the district. My Board have therefore suggested that town districts should be created in some cases where the population is less than five hundred, as is at present provided in the proposed Act. If the limit were reduced to four hundred it would meet our case, and allow the Seatoun district to become a town district; but it would also be necessary to give separate representation to town districts, for the Seatoun district could never be governed through the Hutt County Council. The proposal to govern such districts through bodies nominated by the County Council seems to my Board to be a retrograde step.—SAMUEL ROBINSON, Clerk.

Selwyn County, Conference of Road Boards.—Resolutions passed at a conference of delegates representing the various Road Boards in the Selwyn County held at Christchurch on the 31st July, 1901: That this conference, representing all the Road Boards in the Selwyn County, deeply deplores the fact that the Premier did not invite representatives of Road Boards to a conference as well as county representatives. That it be a recommendation that no Board be abolished, divided, or amalgamated with any other except on the report of a Commission, and that each Road Board concerned should have representation on such Commission; the Commission to consist of representatives from each Road Board affected, with an equal number of members of the County Council, the Chairman to be appointed by the Governor; provided that no Road Board be retained that has a less capital value than £300,000. That, as representatives of Road Boards in the Selwyn County, we enter a strong protest against the Road Board system being abolished. That subsection (10) of section 4 be struck out. That the words "County Council" in clause 4, subsection (11), be struck out, and "Road Boards" be inserted. That this conference protests against any alteration in the franchise qualification. That where the Government subdivides land for settlement they should be subject to the same condition as regards formation of the roads under section 195 as a private

individual; but in case of dispute between the local authority and the Government the provisions of subsection (7) of section 195 shall not apply. That the following words be added to section 196: "As originally laid out, provided that no owner shall be liable to dedicate such strip of land if the local authority certifies that the same is not required." That each road district constitute a riding of the county, and that each riding shall have a representative on the County Council. That in section 193, subsection (3), (p), after "sell the surplus spoil of roads," the following words be inserted: "or retain the same on the side of the road within six feet of the side drain for future use without liability." That the County Council shall, in conjunction with retained road districts, define main roads ascertained from each retained district, the annual cost of maintenance of such roads, and strike a general county rate to cover the same, and allocate to Road Boards *pro rata*. That after section 347 the following be inserted: "That section XIII. of 'The Public Works Act Amendment Act, 1900,' be incorporated in the Counties Bill, 1901." That in clause 130, subsection (2), (c), of "The Public Works Act, 1894," after the words "making special regulations," the following words be inserted: "or imposing special fees." That any retained Road Board may buy or acquire land, open up roads, or carry out any public work, and expend moneys for such purposes within or out of its district, if the Board is of opinion that the same is beneficial to the district. That the provisions of section 21 of "The Local Bodies' Loans Act, 1886," as amended by section 3 of the Amendment Act, 1900, be incorporated in the new Counties Act, and shall also apply to retained Road Boards. That, after the raising of a loan or striking a special rate in any district or portion thereof, if any property is acquired by the Government or by any institution, body, or person exempt from payment of rates under "The Rating Act, 1894," or any other Act, such property shall, notwithstanding such sale, continue liable for all special rates thereafter levied in respect of such loan or otherwise; this provision also to apply to any property sold after the raising of any loans now existing. That the law at present in force relating to triennial elections of members is preferable to all members retiring every two years, or if any change is made it would be better that one-half of the Board should retire every year, without any general elections. That Road Boards be the local authority under "The Tramways Act, 1894," instead of County Councils, provided that if any dispute shall arise between any tramway company and any local authority the dispute shall be referred to the County Council for arbitration. That the following words be inserted after section 268 in the proposed Act: "Provided also that the water-race district shall contribute to the maintenance of rivers, drains, and watercourses into which such water empties outside such districts." That this conference enters a strong protest against the Rating on Unimproved Values Act being made compulsory. That, as regards retained Road Boards, the proposed Act, instead of consolidating the law relating to such Boards, makes the same more complicated, as several of the Acts now in force are expressly to be repealed; and yet it is provided that retained Road Boards, in addition to the powers given them by the new Act, are to have the same powers as regards roads, public works, raising loans, and making by-laws, &c., as such Boards at present possess under existing enactments; and this conference is therefore of opinion that all powers intended to be given to retained Road Boards should be consolidated and incorporated in the new Act. This conference, being of opinion that Road Boards as at present constituted, with the additional powers given by the new Act, and as altered by the foregoing resolutions, is the best form of local government for the County of Selwyn, suggests that, if the alterations and amendments proposed in the above resolutions are inapplicable throughout New Zealand generally, then that same be made to apply to all Road Boards to which same has been found applicable.

South Malvern and East Malvern Road Boards.—Following resolution was passed at meetings of ratepayers in East and South Malvern Road Districts: That the ratepayers of the East and South Malvern Districts protest against any interference with the constitution or boundaries of these districts. If your Committee requires any further evidence a delegate would attend from each district. If delegates required, kindly wire when it will be necessary to attend at Wellington.—D. McMILLAN, GEO. F. WRIGHT, Chairmen.

South Rakaiia Road Board.—Suggest Road Boards being retained with fuller powers, unless by expressed wish of ratepayers of present districts, and not at will of Governor in Council. Franchise to remain as at present, and not as suggested by proposed Counties Bill. All Government subsidies on rates collected in road districts to be paid in full to Boards, instead of half to Councils as at present. Road Boards to prepare their own valuation-rolls and maintain same without interference of Government Land Valuation Department.—JOHN LAMBIE, Chairman.

Spring Creek Road Board.—Spring Creek and Picton Road Boards are opposed to Counties Bill, and wish to be left alone, and not abolish present Boards.—J. H. REDWOOD, Chairman.

Spring Creek Road Board.—I have the honour to convey to you the following resolutions framed by this Board on the proposed Counties Bill, 1901, as follows: (1.) That these Boards be retained as at present, members being of opinion that the management cannot be excelled, especially from financial point of view. (2.) That they are of opinion that none but freeholders should have a vote at election of members. (3.) If amalgamated, that freeholders shall have a vote in each riding.—J. FAWCETT, Secretary.

Springs Road Board.—In reply to your telegram of the 14th instant *re* proposed Counties Bill, asking this Board to submit any objection or recommendation for or against the measure, I have the honour to inform you that this Springs Road Board has, in conjunction with other Road Boards in the Selwyn County, held a conference to consider the matter as affecting Road Boards, and I forward herewith a printed circular containing resolutions or recommendations adopted at that conference, with which my Board is in sympathy, and would respectfully suggest that the proposed Bill should be amended accordingly.—HENRY NEALE, Clerk.

Stoke Road Board.—This Board objects to any interference or alteration as existing at present without first taking a vote of the ratepayers.—W. COLEMAN, Chairman.

Suburban North Road Board.—A special meeting Suburban North Road Board, held 17th

August, passed resolution strongly objecting amalgamation with county, Suburban North Road District being isolated from rest of county. Local management more economical. Would recommend whole Wanganui Riding being formed one road district, Road Board having control same. Objections to amalgamation with county administration: Failure to obtain best results for money expended owing lack supervision while works are in progress, large sums being absolutely thrown away in this riding from that cause alone. Local management would tend to lessen expense, and secure better inspection in this riding, thereby effecting large saving.—W. GILL, Chairman.

Takaka Road Board.—*Re* your telegram of 13th instant, my Board strongly protests against Road Board being abolished. The Board thinks the present system works less expensively in Collingwood County than if it were merged into the County Council. My Board is also strongly adverse to new district roads being a standard width of 65 ft., as in this district, where the population and traffic are greatest, the roads are only 75 links wide, and are found to be quite wide enough.—W. C. BAIGENT, Chairman.

Takapau Road Board.—*Re* telegram Counties Bill: Takapau Road Board considering section 4, subsections (20) to (27): Unanimous in favour retaining present road districts against amalgamation of Board, except by express wish of ratepayers. Section 15, subsection (c): Objects to residential qualification. Board is of opinion that present system local government is satisfactory. Counties Bill now under consideration. Deem unnecessary.—AMBROSE POTTS, Chairman.

Tamahere Road Board.—The Tamahere Road Board maturely considered the provisions of Counties Bill when issued, and unanimously agreed that any interference with local government by Road Board would be prejudicial to public interests. The Kirikiriroa and Cambridge Road Boards passed resolutions of a similar character, and so did the Huntly and Whangamarino Road Boards.—A. T. F. WHEELER, Chairman.

Tamaki West Road Board.—The Tamaki West Road Board recommends that present road districts be retained, as they are more economical and efficient than County Councils, and that they be not amalgamated unless at the desire of those interested, and that only ratepayers should have votes.—ALEX. BELL, Clerk.

Taruheru Road Board.—Haruheru Road Board objects to being merged in any other Road Board, but approves of abolition of dual local government, and prefers merging with Cook County. It also protests against proposed extension of local franchise, as past experience proves that under present liberal scale injustice has been done in thinly populated districts.—J. MACFARLANE, Chairman.

Tataraimaka Road Board.—In reply to your telegram of the 13th August, 1901, the Tataraimaka Road Board is of the opinion it would be impossible to abolish present existing Road Boards, considering, as they do, that the by-roads would be affected to the disadvantage of settlers residing thereon as far as this district is concerned. This Board protests against any alteration in the present system of management.—JOHN PEARCE, Chairman.

Tauhca Road Board.—Unable to wire before. Resolution of Board *re* Counties Bill: That this Board strongly objects to either merge into county or amalgamate, but wish to be retained in its present position.—F. BOLER, Clerk.

Te Horo Road Board.—This Board considers that the question of retaining Road Boards should be decided by vote of the ratepayers, and where the County Councils have county roads running through road districts the ratepayers should also have the power to place such roads under the district Road Board.—ALFRED MONK, Chairman.

Temuka Road Board.—Temuka Road Board strongly desire retention their district as at present. Consider ratepayers satisfied with present system of County Council and Road Board, but if it be a question of one only, and which, would much prefer Road Board retained. Rateable value of district, £753,000; rates collected last year, £2,310. Proposed to give extended powers to retained road districts approved of.—JOHN TALBOT, Chairman.

Te Puke Road Board.—This Board would beg to recommend franchise remain as at present; also, either Road Boards or County Councils, but not both, to be at option of ratepayers' wish.—SAMUEL BRANZORD, Chairman.

Tepuna Road Board.—Consider dual control objectionable. Road Boards, except in very exceptional cases, be abolished. Committee to take their place. These might be elected instead of appointed. Strongly object to extension franchise. Satisfied present arrangements. Agree with suggestions made County Council conference.—J. A. M. DAVIDSON, Chairman.

Titirangi Road Board.—This Board wishes to retain its individuality, but has no objection to being merged into county. We are opposed to any further extension of franchise.—TUCKER, Chairman.

Tomahawk Road Board.—Bill appears satisfactory. Do not object thereto, provided no curtailment of powers of existing Road Boards, or any alteration in constitution thereof which would alter or prejudicially affect this district. Section 319 should be extended to include Parts XXV., XXVIII., XXXIV., XXXV., and XXXVI. Section 235, subsection (7), should be extended to include any nuisance committed. Section 78, Sixth Schedule, Government subsidy: Peninsula County consists entirely of road districts. No county roads. Counties Act suspended. Provision must be made that Boards receive full subsidy under new Act.—ALEX. SWAILL, Chairman.

Tomahawk Road Board.—*Re* Counties Bill: I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of and thank you for your telegram of the 13th inst., to which I replied yesterday as follows [see preceding paragraph]. Neither the local Postmaster nor Officer in Charge had instructions to frank reply, which I therefore sent "collect." The feeling of my Board is against any curtailment of our powers or alteration of our district. There are many exceedingly valuable provisions in the new Bill, and I shall be glad if my suggestions can be embodied therein, and the powers of Road Boards thereby extended. Section 78, Government subsidy: You will see the force of my remarks hereon when you take into consideration the position of this county. We have no County Council, the Act

being suspended. The whole area of the county is under Road Boards. Peninsula-Portobello-Tomahawk and Otago Heads: There are no county roads, the main roads being treated and managed as district roads. Provision should be made to meet these special conditions, and the subsidy be paid to the Boards as at present. I see there is no special provision for this county. Is any such suggested? If not, what is to be the position? If the county is to come into life with Council, Chairman, officers, &c., there will be nothing to govern. Section 285, Injuries and Nuisances: We have much trouble with the nightsoil. The roads are at times in a terrible mess from leaking carts and filthy contractors. If the addition I suggest is made to subsection (7) the provisions of section 291 will apply, and we will be able to get at the persons who permit the nuisance. The provisions of the Public Works, Road Boards, and Police Offences Acts are deficient in this respect. Section 319: The extension of this section to include Parts XXV., XXVIII., XXXV., and XXXVI. would greatly widen and improve the powers of Boards. Part XXV. is especially necessary in order to give us full powers over county roads, private roads, rights-of-way, &c. I said we have no county roads—*i.e.*, in the full acceptation of the term—but the interpretation of "district road" under the Public Works Act is restricted, and Boards would be the better to have all these full powers certainly in this county. The same applies to the other parts named. There is no general provision as in the existing Act giving Boards all the powers of Councils in suspended counties. I think some such provision should be made to meet our special conditions. I telegraphed to Mr. E. G. Allen, member for this district, asking him to see my telegram to you and to act in our interest. I am sending him a duplicate hereof, and will thank you to afford him all information, as I do not know whether he is on your Committee. Thanking you for your courtesies in the past, and in anticipation, and feeling sure that with your large personal knowledge and experience in these matters, our interests will be well cared for in your hands.—ALEXANDER SWAILL, Chairman.—Road Boards have been in existence in this county for about thirty-five years, and have proved entirely satisfactory. We do not wish to part with any of our powers or privileges, or be merged into any larger body, as we work upon the most economical lines possible.

Tuaku Districts, Raglan County.—Inhabitants Raglan County have gradually abolished Road Board, except one that dies this year. Have twenty years' experience Boards (Town, Road), County. Unhesitatingly assert county administration ahead Boards—instance Manukau, adjoining county, with twenty-seven Boards, management £700 yearly; 135 members; meeting monthly. All civil engineers on election. Twenty-seven clerks. Hope Premier keeps stiff back, and reduces number local bodies. What's in a name, county or district? Statesman-like legislation wanted. With assured finance area not too large. Bulk of existing counties all right.—CONRADI, for Tuaku districts.

Tuhikaramea Road Board.—We are strongly in favour of retaining Road Boards. They have done good work in the past at small expense. Should be very sorry to see them abolished. We strongly disapprove of the residential qualification. We consider the present qualifications more just to the ratepayers.—F. J. VICKERS, Chairman.

Upper Ashburton Road Board.—My Road Board desires to be retained under the proposed Counties Bill, as the district is well satisfied with the working of the present system, which does not clash with existing County Council. They object to residential occupants being on the roll.—G. J. HARPER, Chairman.

Upper Mahurangi Road Board.—Special meeting Board to-day; resolution carried unanimously: This Board desires strongly to protest against any interference with the present road-district system, the experience of this Board going to prove that Road Boards have worked more satisfactorily in these districts than the county system under the Board; we have five engaged to supervise roads, as against two by the County over the same area. We feel that extended powers should be given to road districts, and county system should not overlap road districts.—JOHN BARTON, Chairman.

Upper Moutere Road Board.—For reply see Waimea West Road Board.

Upper Wangaehu Road Board.—Upper Wangaehu Road Board, Wanganui, wishes to retain its district as provided in Part XI., Division II, Counties Bill. Our valuation is £350,000, and increasing rapidly. Recommend that Board be given power to levy larger general rate than provided by section 83; also, voting-powers for special loans should remain as at present, otherwise will lead to excessive borrowing: see section 110, subsection (3).—MANNINGTON, Chairman.

Wade Road Board.—First, object strongly to any alteration of existing Road Boards. Local bodies can best manage local affairs; work executed cheaper than County Council could; might have to wait for months for Council to do the work, therefore cost more. Second, only names on the ratepayers' roll to have a vote. Third, Road Boards should have full subsidy. Fourth, Road Boards are an assistance and help to the County Councils.—JOSEPH W. ORAM, Chairman.

Waikohou Road Board.—Waikohou Road Board, Te Karaka, and residents of district in favour of retention of Road Boards.—INGPEN, Secretary.

Waimea County Road Board.—In reply to yours of the 14th instant, I beg to state that a conference of Waimea County Road Boards was held here on the 10th instant. Copies of resolutions have been forwarded to the Hon. the Premier, the Hon. C. H. Mills, Messrs. John Graham and R. McKenzie. The copies contain all suggestions made by united meeting of Boards. Kindly apply to Mr. Graham, member for Nelson.—J. D. BENKE, Chairman.

Waimea County Road Boards Conference.—Resolutions: (1.) That this meeting is of opinion that there should be no interference with the system of Road Board administration without the consent, by vote, of the ratepayers, and that no conference has any right to take any steps in alteration without their consent. (2.) That in future, when any conference is held where matters concerning Road Boards are likely to be brought forward, the Road Boards should be invited to send representatives to such conferences, and that the Government be asked to grant representa-

tives their travelling-expenses, as under the present Road Boards Act the Boards funds are not available for such purposes. (3.) That this meeting is of opinion that, should the present system of local government be retained, the Government should make provision for putting the Road Boards on a better footing financially, either by increased subsidy or grants; also, that the Road Boards Act should be amended so as to allow Road Board members to receive some compensation for time spent on road-inspection, laying off works, supervision, &c., inasmuch as they are at a disadvantage when compared with members of other local governing bodies. (4.) That this meeting is of opinion that the present county area should be lessened as being too large, and causing expenditure of too great a proportion of revenue in administration. (5.) That the Government be asked to pass a Bill giving ratepayers in road districts or county districts the option, upon a vote being taken, of abolishing or retaining Councils or Boards. (6.) That copies of these resolutions be forwarded to the Right Hon. the Premier (through the member of the district), the Hon. C. H. Mills, and Messrs. Graham and McKenzie, M's.H.R. (7.) That the secretary forward copies of these resolutions, also copies of all correspondence relative thereto, to the several Road Boards in Waimea County.

Waimea West Road Board.—I have to acknowledge receipt of telegram *re* Local Government Bill, and in reply wish to state that the various Boards in the Nelson District held a conference in regard to the Local Government Bill, and have forwarded resolutions decided upon at that meeting for your consideration; and we trust you will give them your earnest consideration.—C. F. RUSS, Secretary.

Waimui Road Board.—For reply see Akaroa Road Board.

Waipaea Road Board.—Board strongly object to proposed extension of franchise under Counties Bill to residential and mining qualification, and are of opinion it should only be freehold and rating qualification; also urge that road districts merged into Council should be entitled to have a representation in Council.—H. E. TIPPEN, Chairman.

Waipara Road Board.—Board strongly insists on necessity for maintaining road districts where administration from county centre would be inadequate. Their district is large and remote from such centre, and therefore local administration can alone secure proper attention to requirements of ratepayers, and to petty details important to satisfactory maintenance of roads and execution of other duties. Board trusts its district, being exceptional, may be specially recommended for continuance.—GEORGE CLIFFORD, Chairman.

Waipawa Road Board.—Board unanimously resolved against abolition of Road Boards; also, a meeting of representatives of Waipawa, Taradale, Kaikora North, and Ormondville Town Boards; Waipukurau, Norsewood, Kakapau, and Patangata Road Boards; Taradale and Waipawa River Boards, resolved that Road Boards' rating and voting remain as at present. Members present from all these Boards.—STEPHEN MCGREGORY, Chairman.

Waipukurau Road Board.—See preceding paragraph.

Waipawa Town Road Boards.—Meeting delegates Town Road Boards, Waipawa, resolved, is desirable provision be made in Bill for purpose retaining Road Boards at present constituted. If fresh local-government legislation be passed, ratepayers town districts to have power electing Committee, and license-fees be part of Town Board fund. The passing of Bill will not be to the interest of country generally; that local government will not be carried out as judiciously as under present local bodies.—J. WILLIAMS, Chairman.

Waipipi Road Board.—Waipipi Road Board are opposed to any alteration in local government. They consider Road Boards are preferable to County Councils, also that proposed franchise would be complicated; electors should have the right of deciding if members be elected for three years or as at present.—A. M. BARRIBALL, Chairman.

Wairau Road Board.—My Board considers question of retention or otherwise of existing Board districts should be decided by poll of ratepayers; that, instead of a freehold qualification, the existing qualification under present Counties and Roads Acts should be adopted, giving ratepayers votes in each riding in which their property is situated; that question of amended boundaries of Road Boards be relegated to Commission; that the administration of the Noxious Weeds Act should be left in the hands of the Road Boards or County Councils, as the case might be.—R. F. GOULTER, Chairman.

Wairoa Road Board.—Instructed by Wairoa Road Board, Manukau County, reply your telegram Counties Bill: Board approves Bill, only wishes ratepayers have power retain or adopt Road Board, suspend Counties Act, also enlarge status of Board as local authorities. Board efficient and economical; only ratepayer vote; triennial election, as at present; no deposit for candidates.—SAM. BROWNE, Clerk.

Wairoa Road Board.—In reference to the Counties Bill, 1901: I am directed by the Wairoa Road Board to ask you to be so good as to give Road Boards full status as local authorities; and also to allow ratepayers to suspend the Counties Act where necessary, and have no County Council. This is as it is at present in Manukau County (this county), and I think our roads are better than in any other county, and more efficiently and cheaply controlled.—SAM. A. BROWNE, Clerk.

Waitara West Road Board.—This Board are unanimously of opinion that the existing system should be continued, as they consider that if Road Boards are merged in counties only main roads will be attended to, and that the expense of administration will be increased; members of Boards giving services gratuitously.—T. WESTON, Chairman.

Waitoa Road Board.—Question of retaining road districts should be submitted to ratepayers. Proposed franchise cumbersome and costly; should be same as in "Counties Act, 1886." Roll should be made once a year, and unalterable until next roll comes in force. All roads should be vested in Crown as at present, for obvious reasons. General rates should be uniform throughout county or subdivided road district.—WILLIAM P. CHEPMELL, Chairman.

Waitotara Road Board.—Board of opinion present boundaries of road district are satisfactory, and do not wish any alteration made in Board's present constitution. Suggest better provision for regulating heavy traffic on roads.—J. LUPRON, Chairman.

Waiuku Road Board.—Waiuku Road Board thinks present system of local government best adapted to country districts, most economical and efficient. Small parts by proposed Bill will be overlooked. Strongly object to proposed change. Road Boards have done good work last thirty years. Object to franchise.—C. T. BARRIBALL, Chairman.

Waiwakaiho Road Board.—*Re Counties Bill:* Object to any provision whereby existing road districts shall be merged in counties. Otherwise approve of principles of Bill.—Wm. BOCOCK, Chairman.

Wakanui Road Board.—*Re Counties Bill:* No objection to Bill, except franchise and Second Schedule. Think present system election best and safest power. Second Schedule should be exercised only on petition of, say, three-fifths majority of ratepayers in each district affected. Would strongly object to any alterations in boundaries Wakanui Road District, as our district is self-contained and inexpensively managed; it also forms a riding of the Ashburton County Council.—GEORGE WILLIAM LEADLEY, Chairman.

Wallingford Road Board.—Wallingford Road Board suggests *re Counties Bill*, section four, ratepayers of road districts affected, not Governor in Council, should decide by poll the question of continuation of amalgamation. Section fifteen: Franchise should be confined to freeholders however small, and leaseholders of twelve months' tenancy; strike out (c). Section fifty-five: Road Board members should hold office for three years, not two years.—G. HUNTER, Chairman.

Weber Road Board.—We would much prefer to be a separate district quite apart from the county, but with all powers of a county, and with power to amalgamate with any other Road Board district, provided the majority in both districts are in favour of the amalgamation; the question to go to poll. We are in the Patangata County, and we strongly object to be merged in that county, as they are nearly all large landowners on the coast, and we would have no voice.—STEPHEN FRANKLYN, Chairman.

West Eyreton Road Board.—In answer to your telegram the West Eyreton Road Board consider that no alteration in system of local government by Road Boards should take place in any Road Board district unless ratepayers in such a district consent by vote to such alteration.—ADDINELL, Chairman.

West Tamaki Road Board.—For reply see Conference of Local Authorities, Manukau County.

Whangamarino Road Board.—The Whangamarino Road Board is opposed to the abolishing of Road Boards. The residents of district who use road know the requirements of road better than people at a distance who have no interest; they see road in all weathers; engineers only visit road in good weather. The franchise to extend to *bona fide* ratepayers, owner, or registered lease.—ROBT. LINDSAY, Clerk.

Wharehine Road Board.—Object to abolishing road districts. Unanimous vote to retain this district in its present form. Object to biennial election of Councillors; prefer three-years term. Councillors gain experience, and are better qualified for office; also save useless expense.—D. MARCROFT, Chairman.

Whareora Road Board.—Whareora Road Board approves clauses in new Counties Act relating to powers and functions of Road Boards, except as to franchise; Board upholds the present system—viz., ratepayers only should have the say in local elections, and not residential, as proposed in Bill.—JOHN DONALDSON, Chairman.

Whataupoko Road Board.—Following resolutions carried by majority Whataupoko Road Board: (1.) It is undesirable and unnecessary to extend the franchise, as proposed by Counties Bill, beyond freehold and ratepayers' qualifications. (2.) While approving of the proposed abolition of small Road Boards, this Board protests against all existing road districts of over five hundred population being merged into county; and also protests against retained road district being made ridings of the county, but, instead, the road district so retained should exist distinct from the county, with full power to rate up to six farthings, and sole control of all matters. (3.) That this Board also protests against any Town Boards that may be constituted under the Act being made ridings of the county.—A. FORDE MATTHEWS, Chairman.

Wirikino Road Board.—Copy of resolution passed by Wirikino Road Board 17th August, 1901: Resolved, that this Board recommends that the residential qualifications in subsection (c), clause 15, should be six months in place of three months, County Act.—E. H. SNOW, Clerk.

COPY OF CIRCULAR TELEGRAM AS SENT TO ALL CHAIRMEN OF TOWN BOARDS IN THE COLONY.

The Chairman, Town Board.

THE Counties Bill is being considered by the Local Government Committee of the House. Under this Bill all existing town districts become ridings of the county, and the County Councils may exercise therein all the rating and other powers of "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1900," as if the district were a borough, but the Town Boards are to be dissolved. New town districts are to comprise nine square miles, no two points being distant more than six miles from one another, with population of five hundred, and will also be ridings without any Town Board (see section 4, subsections (8) to (13), and section 8 of Bill).

You are invited to wire any objections or recommendations your Board wishes to make on the proposal to abolish Town Boards, or on any other provision of the Bill, to Chairman, Local Government Committee, House of Representatives, Wellington, by the 21st August. Telegrams up to one hundred words can be franked by you.

R. McNAB, Chairman of Committee.

REPLIES.

Amberley Town Board.—Replying to your wire of yesterday's date, I have the honour, by direction of Amberley Town Board, to enclose herewith a copy of circular being sent out to the various Town Boards in the colony. The circular is extracted from a letter forwarded by the Board to Mr. Meredith, and embodies the objections of this Board to the proposed measure. The words in italics may probably convey the crux of the position of Town Boards generally. "CIRCULAR.—The various Town Boards being so widely scattered through the colony, the only means of joining in a common cause being through the medium of the parliamentary representatives, I am instructed to send you a copy of what has been forwarded to the member for Ashley by the Amberley Town Board, and to bespeak your friendly co-operation: 'At a special meeting held for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the measure the Board unanimously carried a resolution hostile to the proposal, so far as it affects Town Boards, and to protest against the proposal to administer town districts by County Councils. The proposition was sustained by the fact that the Amberley Town Board has successfully and satisfactorily, without any undue financial strain, fulfilled its functions since its origin in 1885; and that the experience of such as were resident prior to that date, while under the local administration of the Kowai Road Board, has not yet been forgotten, *being remembered mainly as an evidence that the methods and instincts of a body elected in agrarian interests cannot be expected to be found in sympathy with the wants and necessities of a populous centre.*'"—A. GREGG, Town Clerk.

Bull's Town Board.—Bull's Town Board earnestly protests against the proposed abolition of Town Boards, believing the affairs of towns under present administration to be more effectively administered than if merged into counties.—THOMAS KING, Chairman.

Clinton Town Board.—Object abolition Town Boards following grounds: 1st, want of local administration; 2nd, no change desired, proposal retrograde movement connection local government, tend retard progress small towns; 3rd, requirements population situated town districts entirely different population country districts, former requiring attention paid drainage, footpaths, lighting, nuisances, &c., which would be neglected under control county; 4th, member representing town district riding would be outvoted by interests of county represented by eight or nine members composing Council; 5th, Town Boards have done good work in the past; 6th, local Committee required administer affairs cemetery and domain.—A. IRVING, Jun., Chairman.

Clyde Town Board.—Clyde Town Board strongly urges Town Boards be retained in Counties Bill. Strong objections town districts being merged in county, such course bound to give rise friction. District desires spend its revenue without interference of the County Council. Why cannot a clause be introduced in new Bill giving power to retain town districts, especially as boroughs cannot now be formed with less than 1,000 population? Neither Clyde Town District nor Wairoa County Council favour idea contemplated in Counties Bill of placing town district under County Council management.—G. PERKINS, Chairman.

Featherston Town Board.—Thanks for telegram re town districts. Our area is over 800 acres, besides 10 acres cemetery, 57 domain, other reserves. Population over 600. Library and Town Hall under control. No desire to extend boundaries or district, existing order of things. Ratepayers already petitioned through Mr. Hornsby against proposed Counties Bill as affecting town districts. Are quite satisfied present system of control under Town Districts Act. Economical and satisfactory for small communities. Confidently leave matter in hands your Committee and member for district.—J. G. COX, Chairman.

Geraldine Town Board.—The Geraldine Town Board strongly protests against the proposed Counties Bill so far as it interferes with its status as a local body, and regards the proposal to abolish Town Boards as a retrograde movement in connection with local government, and thinks the proposed legislation unnecessary and harassing.—J. J. McCASKEY, Chairman.

Halcombe Town Board.—The ratepayers of Halcombe petitioned against abolition of Town Boards and the inclusion of rural districts. The requirements of town are different from rural districts, and there is always friction when small towns are included in a riding of Road Boards or County Councils. The members of this Board, on behalf of the ratepayers, strongly protest against any alteration, as they are of opinion that it will prove cumbersome, and retard the progress of the towns, and will cause a deal of annoyance and dissatisfaction.—JOHN GRAVES, Chairman.

Hampstead Town Board.—Hampstead Town Board opposes being abolished without the consent of the ratepayers. We consider it a retrograde step to reduce the power of local government; also that is most unlikely to be satisfactorily governed by a body who has large powers but not personally interested, most of whom would probably live many miles away, whose interests would not be identical with town districts. If the Act becomes law we think provision should be made for town districts to continue, with power to extend their area, under the M.C. Act, free from County Council in every way.—G. W. ANDREWS, Chairman.

Havelock Town Board.—The Havelock Town Board cannot see from the Bill whether town districts are to be abolished or not, as subsection (9) of clause 3 says, "Existing town districts are hereby declared town districts under the Bill," while subsection (1) of clause 8 says all town districts are to be abolished. Which is right? At the same time, this Board sees no objection to this town district becoming a riding of the county if all existing rights and responsibilities are secured.—W. T. ERSKINE, Clerk.

Helensville Town Board.—Helensville Town Board strenuously opposes abolition town districts or any alteration of Town Districts Act, but strongly recommends clause being made to new Counties Bill prohibiting County Councils having any jurisdiction whatever within town districts, Town Board being of opinion that municipal affairs can be better managed within town districts by the Boards alone than by two governing bodies.—SPINLEY, Chairman.

Inglewood Town Board.—At a meeting of the Inglewood Town Board held last evening the following resolution was passed: That the Inglewood Town Board strongly protests against any interference with its status as a local body, and objects to the clauses in the Counties Bill abolishing Town Boards. We consider it as a retrograde movement in connection with local government.—B. H. NICHOLLS, Chairman.

Johnsonville Town Board.—In answer to your telegram *re* Counties Bill, we, the Johnsonville Town District Board, object to such clauses of the Counties Bill which aim at the abolishing of Town Boards. We consider that the passing of the Counties Bill will not be in the interest of the county generally. We are also of opinion that we, as a Town Board, can manage our affairs better than we could possibly expect one representative on a County Council to do for us, and, as our population is over the required number, we would prefer to remain a Town Board. We would recommend that Town Boards be given more power than at present. Also that a County Council be not allowed to levy any greater rate over a town district than it takes to manage the affairs of that town district. An instance—we Johnsonville ratepayers pay to the Hutt County Council three farthings in the pound, whilst we only pay a halfpenny to our Town Board. Trusting your Committee will accept our objections.—G. S. MANSON, JOHN ROD.

Kaikora North Town Board.—Kaikora North Town Board protests against merging into counties. Request member support retaining as at present. Add power to have one year's rates overdraft, similar to Road Boards.—JAMES COLLINS, Chairman.

Kamo Town Board.—The Kamo Town Board strongly protest against any interference with its status as a local body, and regards the suggestion to abolish Town Boards as a retrograde movement in connection with local government. Further than this, Board heartily co-operate with the Raleigh Town Board in resisting such unnecessary and harassing legislation. County Councils at present are cumbersome and expensive in their administration, and to give them rating-power as a borough will still increase the expenses in administration, which we protest against. County Councils take half the rates from Town Boards already, and to give them more rating-power would interfere with the Boards' finances. Town Boards incur little or no expense in administration. This Board protests that, instead of abolishing Town Boards, they should be retained and granted additional power, similar to Borough Councils, and consider they can administer local funds more equitably and economically than County Councils.—GEO. HOPWELL, Town Clerk.

Kihikihi Town Board.—The Kihikihi Town Board opposes the abolition of Town Boards, because it is a retrograde movement in local government. The requirements of the town cannot be managed from a distance as well as by persons on the spot, and moneys raised in the town will be absorbed by the counties and not be spent in the town. The rate raised in the town being a local rate, the ratepayers should have the right of spending it. Public reserves and cemeteries would be neglected under the management of the Council. In any case the abolition of Town Boards should be decided by a poll of the ratepayers of the town.—W. H. GRACE, Chairman.

Lethbridge Town Board.—At a public meeting held on the 16th August the following resolution was unanimously passed: That the people of the Lethbridge Town Board strongly protest against any interference with its status as a local body, and regard the suggestion to abolish Town Boards as a retrograde movement in connection with local government.—R. G. KNOX, Clerk.

Manaiā Town Board.—Mass meeting held last night *re* Counties Bill. Strong indignation expressed at clauses *re* town districts abolition. Following resolution carried: That this meeting desires to express its entire disapproval with the provisions contained in the clauses of the Counties Bill wherein it is proposed to abolish town districts throughout the colony. We further regard the proposed legislation as a menace to the progress of such districts existing, and calculated to unreasonably increase the rating for no appreciable purpose. Am forwarding petition against Bill through our member.—JOHN HUNT, Chairman.

Ngaruawahia Town Board.—The Ngaruawahia Town Board strongly protest against the provisions in Counties Bill *re* town districts. They are utterly unsuited for this district, and would cause endless complications. Present system works well; proposed changes would be disastrous.—G. T. DICKSON, Chairman.

Normanby Town Board.—At a meeting of ratepayers held last night the following resolution was passed: That this representative meeting views with alarm the provisions in the Bill now before Parliament which propose to abolish the government of small townships by Town Board Commissioners; that the latter system has worked well and economically in the interests of ratepayers; and that, should the government of Normanby lapse into the hands of the larger body which administer the affairs of rural ratepayers, the streets in the town will in all likelihood suffer by the preponderance of attention which will be given to county roads, and the endowments, which have been the loving care of ratepayers and townsmen, will suffer by neglect, and the revenue of the town be expended in a manner contrary to the wishes of the ratepayers.—W. ROWE, Chairman.

Opotiki Town Board.—People here strongly object to any alterations present management Town Board affairs. Proposed new Counties Bill disfranchises town people, and hands conduct of their business to others. Such a step is in spirit similar to that which caused the South African War. Proposed Bill deprives town ratepayers of the power to rate themselves, and to spend their rates on the improvements of town and wharves, transferring that right to others who have but small interest one way or other. Would respectfully and strongly urge that your Committee carefully preserve their rights to the people.—STEWART BATES, Chairman.

Opotiki Town Board.—Opotiki Town Board strongly objects to legislation which would place affairs of town in other hands than those of representatives elected by town ratepayers, and believes that proposed legislation would be detrimental to best interest of town ratepayers and town district generally, interests of town being separate and distinct from those of country districts, by which,

however, thirty-four members of Council would be elected as against one by town district. No saving could be effected by change if administration to remain equally effective. Town population, approximately, equal to population of whole of rest of county.—BATES, Chairman.

Ormondville Town Board.—Ormondville Town Board disapprove new Counties Bill as bearing on existing Town Boards, and hope that present Boards be allowed to remain, and have all existing powers and privileges, as the Counties Bill would do away with all such powers and privileges to the local bodies, and in this way keep back townships which would under old Act make headway, as members of present Town Board are always on the spot to see necessary work done immediately, which be conclusively proved by time and money being saved; whereas, if controlled by County, delay is often ruinous to small progressive towns.

Otautau Town Board.—The Otautau Town Board strongly protests against any interference with its status as a local body, and regards the suggestion to abolish Town Boards as a retrograde movement in connection with local government. Further, this Board is co-operating with other Boards in resisting such unnecessary and harassing legislation.—GEO. GILCHRIST, Town Clerk.

Outram Town Board.—We consider the proposal to abolish Town Boards a retrograde step, and enter our protest to the proposed alteration as suggested by the Counties Act. We would point out that we have been in existence since 1882, and the Board has carried out its duties to the entire satisfaction of the ratepayers in this district during that time. We have carefully husbanded our funds, and now enjoy the privilege of a good water-supply and electric light, no debt, no liabilities, no arrears of rates.—WM. SNOW, Chairman.

Papakura Town Board.—Ratepayers strongly object to Papakura Town Board being dissolved, or present working under Town Districts Act interfered with. Since district constituted Town Board great progress has been made; good roads and footpaths and recreation-ground provided; result, very considerable increase in population, value of land almost doubled. Formerly Papakura was part of large road district, consequently rates spent miles away. Present cost of administration about £10 yearly.—JAMES WALKER, Chairman.

Raleigh Town Board.—Board and community strongly object to Counties Bill. Consider retrograde movement, and proposed representation disastrous to successful administration town district. Councillors, excepting representatives of town ridings, no direct interest in welfare township. Sections 57 to 60, Part VII., provides sub-committee, who would be nominative, and probably not have confidence of ratepayers, and actions harassed by subserviency of Council, as against present system of elective administration by ratepayer. Sixty-eight directly interested to town district's welfare as residents, whose services are, moreover, purely voluntary. Protest strongly against interference present administration. Letter following.—OGLE, Chairman.

Raleigh Town Board.—I beg to acknowledge receipt of your telegram *re* County Councils Bill, under which it is proposed to abolish Town Boards, and, in confirmation of my telegram already forwarded, to lay before your Committee the reason why the Board strongly protests against the clauses relating to the abolition of Town Boards. That under the provisions of the Bill town districts would not receive anything like adequate attention from members of a County Council, as individually they would not have any direct interest in the welfare and prosperity of the township, not being residents, and not being identified with its requirements. As at present constituted, Town Boards are composed of men who reside in the township, who have a direct interest in its welfare, and are therefore well fitted to look after its requirements. Certain members are also appointed a Works Committee, and the duty they undertake is to make themselves daily conversant with the many needs that are always requiring attention, and to have such needs attended to. Under the new Bill this particular work would undoubtedly be more or less neglected, and the township suffer accordingly. The present representation of Town Boards is, moreover, in no way cumbersome or expensive, and instead of the administration being merged into a County Council it should, in the opinion of this Board, be fostered and assisted more liberally than at present. The work of the Commissioners is purely voluntary, whereas with County Councils there are numerous incidental expenses of members which would considerably increase the cost of administration. It is, moreover, quite apparent that members of County Councils living many miles away cannot possibly attend to the wants of a township in anything like the manner that Commissioners (who are residents) do; neither could they be expected to devote the time (which would always be at the Council's expense) to matters away from their own particular riding. It is obvious by the framing of the Bill that these difficulties have been apparent, as in Part VII., sections 57 to 60, provision is made for the election of Committees (either Councillors or others) to administrate town districts, or, in other words, to take the place of present Town Boards. In the opinion of this Board, such administration would prove disastrous to the welfare of townships, and in no way as effective as the present system. The Committee would then be a nominative one, and consequently would not have the entire confidence of the ratepayers, seeing they had no choice in the selection of such Committee; whereas at present Commissioners are elected by the wish of the ratepayers at the ballot-box, and, as already pointed out, are the men best qualified to perform the work required. In conclusion, this Board strongly urges upon your Committee the necessity of Town Boards with their present powers being retained, as it sees no reason why this satisfactory and inexpensive form of local government should be interfered with; and, further, feels convinced that the passing of the Counties Bill as at present framed would be a retrograde step, as under its provisions local government will not be carried out as judiciously or as economically as under the present local bodies.—W. W. OGLE, Chairman.

Southbridge Town Board.—Southbridge Town Board protests against proposed abolition of Town Boards. This Board recognises that previous to its formation, sixteen years ago, Road Board local management was inimical to district's best interests, gradual accumulation of property for use of ratepayers amounting to £600. Improvement of streets, introducing water-races, have

been such that ratepayers believe future County Council arrangement could not fairly carry on local necessities satisfactorily. Work of Board has been carried on without financial strain; over £3,000 has been spent on property, streets, and water-races, whereas for equal time previous hardly £300 has been spent.—DR. WITHERS, Chairman.

Taradale Town Board.—Taradale Town Board would suggest that the Counties Bill be confined to its proper place, the waste-paper basket.—W. WATERHOUSE, Chairman.

Te Awamutu Town Board.—Your wire received *re* Counties Bill. At special meeting Te Awamutu Town Board held last evening to consider the matter the following resolution was unanimously carried: That this Town Board strongly opposes proposed legislation town districts, and urges that the Te Awamutu Town District should be retained like road districts, maintaining principle that it should be optional; also that cost administration in our case practically nil. We have valuable institutions, including flourishing library and largest Town Hall in county, valued at £1,000, whose progress and benefit would be marred if absorbed in the county.—W. NORTH.

Timwald Town Board.—Unanimous opinion this Board that interests of our ratepayers would be best considered by this district remaining as at present, but if change must be made it is desirable that County Council should not be authorised to raise rates in this town district, as rates so raised are not spent for benefit of this district.—DOHERTY, Chairman.

Waverley Town Board.—Strongly object to abolition of Town Board. Public meeting of town and country residents held here on second, when following resolutions passed: Meeting strongly opposes proposals Counties Bill *re* abolition Town Boards, which would prove disastrous to welfare of Waverley Town and district, as whole of property of Town Board, two Domain Boards, and Cemetery Board would rest in Patea County Council without local control. That Government be requested to make provision for retention Town Boards similar to those now constituted.—W. DAVIS, Chairman.

Waverley, Resolutions of Public Meeting.—I have the honour to inform you that a public meeting of ratepayers and residents in Waverley Town and surrounding district was held in the Town Hall, Waverley, on Friday, 2nd August, to protest against the proposed abolition of the Waverley Town Board under the new Counties Act now before Parliament. The meeting was a fully representative one, and was attended by ratepayers and residents in both town and country district. The matter of the proposed abolition of Town Board was fully discussed, with the result that the following resolutions were unanimously carried: (1.) That this meeting strongly opposes the proposals contained in the the new Counties Bill providing for the abolition of Town Boards, and is of opinion that, if passed into law, such proposals will be disastrous to the welfare of the Town of Waverley and surrounding district, as the whole of the property of the Town Board, the Waverley Domain Board, the Cemetery Board, and the Wairoa, Domain Board would vest in the Patea County Council without any local centre. (2.) That the Government be requested to make provision in the Bill for the retention of Town Boards similar to those now constituted under the Town Districts Act. (3.) That a copy of these resolutions be sent to the Premier through the member for the district.—JOHN MUIR, J.P., Chairman.

Wyndham Town Board.—At special meeting of Wyndham Town Board it was unanimously decided to protest against the proposal to abolish Town Boards and administer town districts by County Councils, as it is considered a retrograde step and inimical to the best interests of this township. This Board will be pleased if you will use your influence to prevent this proposed enactment. This township is an important one, having nearly sufficient population to constitute it a borough. It will therefore be a great injustice to deprive it of its local administrative body, which has been in existence for twenty years, and has always performed its functions satisfactorily. It is believed that local affairs are better managed by local Boards than they can be under the proposed alteration, therefore the continuance of existing Town Boards cannot be too strongly urged upon the House.—CHAIRMAN, Town Board.

