

Mr. CARSON (Wanganui) said he intended to move a resolution to the effect that, inasmuch as the Government proposal to reduce the subsidies was based on the assumption that the administration had been marked by carelessness or extravagance, or both, the Conference requested the Government to take over the management of charitable relief.

The CHAIRMAN said it was his idea—it was not the Government's idea. He had not got the Government's approval.

Mr. CARSON said they had heard the Minister's speech.

The CHAIRMAN said there was nothing concrete put before the Conference as to the shape the actual reduction would take.

Canon JORDAN (Tauranga) said the reduction or withdrawal of subsidies for outdoor relief would affect his district very much indeed. All the charitable-aid money expended in that district was in outdoor relief and in paying for patients admitted to hospitals and benevolent institutions outside the district. The amount expended in his district had been brought down to a minimum. The hospital rate was only a very small matter indeed. He sincerely hoped the abominable workhouse system would not be introduced into this country.

Mr. FRASER (North Otago) agreed that every effort ought to be made to curtail the expenditure on outdoor relief, but he did not agree that it should be done away with altogether. He did not think they had been extravagant in his district. The amounts they paid were very small, and most of them were given to widows with young children. The Charitable Aid Boards often felt they did not receive the assistance they should receive from the police in the cases where men had left their wives and families. He thought that was a point the Conference ought to express an opinion upon. Men had been allowed to escape from their responsibilities who ought not to have been allowed to get away, and the result was that the State had to maintain their families. If possible, the children should be kept with their mothers rather than be separated and the children placed in any charitable institution. He thought it would be a great mistake for the Government to withdraw the subsidies to outdoor relief, and he would oppose the proposal.

Mr. GALLAWAY (Dunedin) thought the Conference should affirm the principle that if the Government reduced the subsidies on outdoor relief they should take over the cost of the maintenance of children committed to industrial homes.

Mr. NORRIS (Christchurch) said that was exactly his point in submitting remit No. 90—viz., "The liability for cost of maintenance of all children committed under the Industrial Schools Act should be borne by the State, and not by the local Boards. This view is supported by the strong opinion expressed by the Conference of charitable-aid authorities held in Wellington in 1904." If the Government took over the children at a cost of some £20,000 a year, it would not be an unreasonable thing on the part of the Boards to consent to some reduction in the subsidies for outdoor relief. He certainly thought there should be a change made in the present system under which Magistrates committed children to industrial homes. In many cases parents were thus enabled to escape their responsibilities.

Mr. RITCHIE (Wanganui) agreed that care should be exercised in the administration of outdoor relief. Every precaution should be taken to prevent imposition. It was stated that in some parts of the Dominion there were three generations of the same family receiving outdoor relief. He knew of a case some time ago in which outdoor relief had been given to a woman, and it came to the knowledge of the Board that she had been able to take a front seat at a theatre. Payment was soon stopped in that case. He did not know how they were going to remedy the trouble. He did not think the reduction or withdrawal of subsidies would necessarily achieve the object they desired.

Mr. HORNER (Patea) said the delegates from his Board attended the Conference with the object of opposing the boundaries as they found them in the Bill. Then there was the proposed withdrawal of the subsidy. The Inspector-General had consulted the representatives of the Board with respect to the boundaries of the districts, and no doubt he would recommend the Minister to modify the proposal in the Bill in that respect. Surely a compromise could be arrived at with respect to the question of subsidies—a compromise which would make the Boards more careful in the administration of outdoor relief, and which would ease the Government of the responsibilities resting upon them. In his district they only gave rations in cases of outdoor relief. He thought that was the best course to adopt. He felt sure they would do well by attempting to arrive at a compromise with the Government in this matter.

Mr. BELLINGER (New Plymouth) said if they did not show a solid front and affirm the principle that the subsidies they had been getting were fair, and should be continued, they would be giving the Minister an opportunity of saying that they could not agree amongst themselves. They should inform the Government that they were going to insist on still receiving the subsidies they had been working under for a number of years. He ventured to say that if they did that no Government or Parliament would interfere with the subsidies. If they were unanimous at the Conference, they could surely work their representatives in Parliament to see that there was no change made in respect to the subsidies. He asked the Conference to vote on the subsidy question first, and he hoped there would not be a dissentient voice.

The CHAIRMAN said it seemed to him that he was playing rather a lone hand. He trusted that he was not altogether the heartless person that some persons would seem to think. He was in a rather unfortunate position, because he was not at liberty to tell the Conference all his scheme. He could not do so until he had the proper authority. He would not say any more about that except to emphasize the fact alluded to by a member of the Conference that there was nothing more infectious than pauperism. They had at the present time in New Zealand paupers of the third generation. It was an infectious and contagious thing, and the sooner the children were removed from the environment of pauperism the more likely they were to become useful citizens,