

Hospital Boards were concerned, looked after the interests of the Department and Parliament in general. He had studied carefully the reduction and alteration in subsidies, and reading between the lines, he had come to the conclusion that what was intended in the future in regard to Hospital Boards was simply that their whole upkeep would become a charge upon the local rates. The Horowhenua County seemed to have a grievance which should be considered. He was of opinion that the portion attached to Wellington should be attached to Palmerston North, because a great many persons from Horowhenua were sent to Palmerston; moreover, it would be a very much smaller tax upon the county. As to City Councils and Borough Councils, in the opinion of some of the delegates there to-day, they had rather a bad run, but he thought they were quite able to look after themselves. There was no doubt about it that the Conference which was held in Wellington every two years, when they met to consider legislation necessary for local bodies, was productive of good results, because they were able to take their deliberations along to the head of the Government and ask that they become law.

A delegate: They are put into the waste-paper basket.

Mr. NASH replied that they were not put into the waste-paper basket. As an example, he would cite the result of their last Conference in Wellington. Their requirements were placed by the President of the Conference before the Government, with the result that out of twenty-eight proposals which they asked should be made law, no less than twenty were put upon the statute-book of the Dominion; so that they had quite a satisfactory result. Then, again, there was the election of Charitable Aid and Hospital Boards, and also Harbour Boards. If he might be permitted to say so, he thought the present mode of election to those bodies, particularly in regard to Hospital Boards, was rotten in the extreme, because hitherto it was customary for the local bodies interested to send along the representatives whom they were entitled to nominate; but instead of that method it was now done through the franchise. So far as the franchise was concerned, some reference had been made to it this afternoon, but the franchise in regard to elections for boroughs and cities was quite a right thing, and it would be undemocratic to make any alteration at the present time. He did not want to delay the Conference, because a gentleman from Otago would remind them that he had not had the privilege of speaking yet. He thought they should adjourn at a given time, and not sit that night, and resume again to-morrow morning. He was quite prepared to move that resolution. In conclusion, he would like to say this: that, so far as local bodies were concerned—that was, City and Borough Councils of any note—if he was placed—and he hoped he would be—on one of those Committees, he had a resolution to put before them which would save them a great deal of time and trouble.

The PRESIDENT pointed out to the Conference the desirability of sitting that night. The subjects discussed were fresh in the minds of delegates, and it would be advantageous if they went on. If it were agreed not to sit that night, then he suggested that they should go on with the discussion until 6 o'clock. Personally, the Government were anxious to get the Conference through as rapidly as possible, as it was not desirable to keep a large body of men away from their homes and businesses. His own departmental work was getting behind, notwithstanding the fact that he had been back at work every night during the last fortnight. He would take the feeling of the delegates on the voices.

The appeal to the voices was inconclusive.

Mr. PARR suggested that they should go on with the discussion till quarter to six. Good work had been done so far, and members had travelled far, and were really fatigued.

Dr. J. C. COLLINS urged the advisability of adjourning early. Many members had travelled all last night. They were now in possession of the valuable address delivered by the President, which none of them had had an opportunity of perusing and studying, and that opportunity would not be found if they were pushed to the exhaustion-point. So far the criticism had been more or less of a local standard, and he thought it would be wise to study the speech that had been delivered.

Resolved not to sit that night, and to rise about 6 p.m.

Mr. F. HORRELL (Chairman of the Hospital Board and Rangiora County Council) remarked that when the meeting was convened the Minister must have expected severe criticism on the Bill, and he was not disappointed. Although they came there to criticize the Bill, they also came with the idea of assisting the Minister in the endeavour to evolve some simple form of local government. The Bill under discussion did not conduce to economy, efficiency, or good government. The first part of the Bill had already been severely criticized in regard to the Local Government Board. As was pointed out, it was proposed to give that Board a veto over anything which a Provincial Council or a county might do. It had been already suggested that morning that the management of education should be eliminated altogether from the Bill, so that it was unnecessary to refer to that phase of the question, inasmuch as the delegates who had spoken were strong in the belief that it was impossible for the proposed Provincial Councils to undertake the functions of the existing Education Boards with any degree of success. And he would follow that up by saying that it was practically impossible for the said Councils to successfully grapple with the functions and duties of the Hospital and Charitable Aid Boards or to sustain them in anything like their present state of efficiency. On the existing Boards—Charitable Aid and Education—there were men and women who were practical experts, and he thought the President would bear him out in the fact that in Canterbury that work was done in a most efficient manner. The men and women comprising those Boards were there for the dual purpose of seeing that the rates were judiciously expended, and whilst relieving, not to encourage poverty and pauperism. If they eliminated Education and Hospital and Charitable Aid Boards from the province of the Provincial Councils, what was there left for the Provincial Councils to do? It merely brought the Bill back to roads and bridges, and if they looked at it properly that could be overcome. The main roads and bridges should be in the same position as the railways—viz., they should be