

trict, towards the west coast, the land that was given away to the Midland Railway Company we have not derived any thirds from: consequently we say that if the Government had cut a slice of land out of any other part of the Dominion than our district and given it to the railway company we should have been £30,000 better off to-day than we are. Unfortunately for us, the Midland Railway people made the selection in our district, and the result is that the thirds that would have come to us under ordinary circumstances are lost to us now. Then, again, we think that the Government should bear in mind, especially with regard to Oxford, that already out of the local rates thousands of pounds have been spent towards putting roads through Crown properties in order to get access to the country behind; and we think that the Government of the day acted unfairly and unjustly when they handed over so much land to the Midland Railway Company without conserving our rights regarding the thirds and fourths. It has been said that the Government could not conserve those rights because it was a cash transaction, or equal to a cash transaction; but the Government should have been aware that we were entitled as local bodies to the thirds and fourths of that land, and they should have given a greater area of that land to compensate for the thirds they robbed the local bodies of. That is the position, as we look upon it in our district. If the Government of the day gave away this land from which we should have derived thirds and fourths under ordinary circumstances, we think we should get some compensation, or we are quite prepared that the matter should be submitted to arbitrators to decide the case once and for all. Then, from another point of view it was unjust to take away from our district £30,000 in order to construct a Dominion railway—that is to say, £30,000 of our money has gone into the construction of that railway, and if we were receiving interest on that amount we should have about £1,200 a year income. We should not object if the whole Dominion had paid an equal share, but that certain districts should pay such a large amount for the construction of that railway and others not pay anything we think very unjust. I think that if the matter were dealt with by an independent tribunal we should be quite satisfied with the result. In connection with the Kowhai Road Board, the Clerk gave me his figures showing works that they have done. He mentions Ensor's Road, £320, Mount Brown Road, £800; Stackhouse's Road, £206; on Crown lands lately sold at South Kowhai, £680. This is money that has been paid out of the local rates for the formation of these roads, which under ordinary conditions would have been formed from the thirds that would have accrued. As to the suggestion that we should raise loans in order to make roads instead of coming here for the thirds, we think we have a right to the thirds because under ordinary conditions we should have got them. Then, again, a great many people who have good formed roads would object to borrowing money to road the backblocks. It is the backblockers who are suffering, and the bulk of the people will not agree to a loan because they would have to pay the interest. In our district people are constantly clamouring for roads. They ask for roads into the Virginia country, and we have to say we cannot do anything. At the present time the Waipara County Council have an overdraft of £2,000, and we are doing our best to meet the needs of the settlers as far as we possibly can. Some of the settlers are so eager to get roads formed that they themselves are contributing very largely in order to get the local authority to make the roads. I say that the country is lying undeveloped because of the need for roads, and it is because we have not had the thirds given to us that the roads are unformed and the country undeveloped.

1 *Hon. the Chairman.*] What rates do you levy in your county?—Five-eighths of a penny in the pound.

2. Do you consider that a heavy rate?—It is heavier than we have been paying. We have been paying  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. until lately.

3 *Mr Ell.*] What road districts formed your county?—We converted the Waipara Road Board into a County Council about five months ago. It embraces the land between Waipara and Hurunui.

4. *Hon. the Chairman.*] That should not be very hard country to road?—It is pretty hard in the back country.

5 *Mr Witty*] Is the Waipara County very much affected by these thirds?—Very much so.

6. What was the object in making the Waipara Road District into a county?—In order that we might have greater powers in dealing with various matters, and also because we were after a bigger subsidy. That was the chief reason.

7 *Mr Lang.*] What was the difference in the subsidy on the Road Board being formed into the County Council?—We shall receive about £1 200 a year more; and we shall need it, because our hospital rates have gone up from £600 to £1,500.

8. What is the total amount of the rates in your county?—£6,300 or £6,400, on £2,500,000 valuation.

9 *Mr. Anderson.*] What class of country is it that we have been hearing about to-day?—Land valued at from £2 up to £25 an acre.

10. Is it generally what is looked upon as rural land?—It is mixed—some rural and some sheep country pure and simple.

11. What are the proportions?—About half-and-half. There is some very good agricultural land, and some is just ordinary sheep-country.

12. Can you use the pastoral land as agricultural land?—It is used largely. There are about 100,000 acres in the Virginia country, and it is simply pastoral land.

13. Do you know whether they get thirds on pastoral leases?—As I was saying, on the eastern coast they did—all through Happy Valley and that district.

14. Was that under the Colonial Act or the Provincial Act?—I could not say which Act it was under, but Mr Gibbs was telling me that in 1878, 1879, and 1880 he was aware of several instances where land was leased and sold, and the thirds handed over; yet on the western boundary, where