

they had nothing to say against the Wellington Hospital. Some of the other local bodies were anxious to come into the Palmerston district, and perhaps if they did it might work, but so far as joining with Wellington and being governed from Wellington that would not do. It was true, as they were told, that the Committees would be elective, but he did not think that that would succeed. On the elective Committees referred to five members would represent the district, and they would be the local Committee, but the rates would be placed upon them from Wellington. They would have no power to collect rates, and were not in that way responsible. The result would be that the gentlemen who stood for those positions would probably be looking for something in the future and not for the present. That would militate against the success of that Committee. He was not aware that the Wellington people wanted them to come into their fold. For what reason, then, should the size of the district be increased? He was aware that Dr. Valintine believed that certain districts should be increased, and he (Dr. Valintine) had some experience. In this room there sat some time ago a city Conference, and a good answer was given to increasing the size of the districts, which created such an impression upon Dr. Valintine that he had since thought it wiser to leave that particular portion alone. It would be wise on the part of the Government to leave that particular portion of the Bill out altogether. Of course, there might be laxity in some places, and whenever large expenditure took place there would occasionally be laxity; but it seemed to him that generally throughout the Dominion hospitals were very well administered, and by men who were keen on the subject—by men who desired to do the best they could for the public; and it would therefore be unwise to alter the system. Then, again, although it was only a matter of detail, he would point out that those elective Committees would require two secretaries. Therefore, who were they going to dispense with, and what would be the saving? They would have everything exactly as at present. There would still be, as he had said, the two secretaries, who would have to collect all the statistics. There would be, perhaps, considerable friction between those two officials, which would not tend to benefit the hospital district. The present Hospital Boards were composed practically of experts, who knew the position and the necessities. As to Drainage Boards, he had to say that it was very important that men living in the immediate neighbourhood of drains should have control of them. Such men were at the call of any person who desired to have their drains cleaned and seen to. To put one man in charge, as was proposed, would cost money, and lead to dissatisfaction. River Boards were in the same position, and there was an excellent example in the Wairarapa Lake. There the outlet had to be kept open, and that could be better attended to locally than by a Board composed of members who might be at the other end of the district. In such cases why disturb existing management? He hoped the Road Boards would see that it was to their advantage to join the counties in many cases. Of course, in newly settled districts the Road Boards would prefer to have the money spent by their own members.

Mr. H. SCHOFIELD (Chairman of the Auckland Harbour Board) said he noticed in the remarks made by the President this morning that one of the salient points was to endeavour to amalgamate into one body such services as Education, Harbour, and Hospital and Charitable Aid Boards. It was evident from the discussion that Education Boards would have to be excluded; they should not be interfered with. He took it, too, that large Harbour Boards would be allowed to continue their work as at present. Those acquainted with Charitable Aid Boards in large centres would agree with him that such Boards had quite sufficient to do to manage their affairs without being mixed up with roads and bridges. Hospital and charitable-aid administration was very important and very difficult work; it required men of standing and men who had given special study to this particular question before they could deal with it satisfactorily. Would members of a Provincial Council take sufficient interest in the work? If they were not specially interested in hospital and charitable-aid administration the result would not be satisfactory. He thought there might be, and in fact there was, a desire on the part of those who were acquainted with local government to have some change in the administration of local affairs throughout the Dominion so far as grouping small centres together and simplifying the conditions at present existing, but he did think it was highly important that the Hospital and Charitable Aid Department should be left severely alone. They had quite sufficient to do to manage their present work. It would not be any improvement whatever, but rather a retrograde step, to hand over their duties to Provincial Councils. That was a point he wished to emphasize specially, because it was a matter of very vital importance to hospital and charitable-aid institutions. The Auckland Board was divided up into four separate committees, and those committees spent a considerable amount of time in the work of the Board, not less than half a day every week. The Chairman had to spend pretty well the whole of his time, and if they added other duties to the work which had already to be done, then he questioned whether it would be possible to get men to sacrifice so much time in the interest of the public unless they were paid.

Mr. H. EVERETT (Waimea County Council, Nelson) remarked that members of local bodies were expressing themselves so much regarding the conduct of their own affairs that he was beginning to question why they were called to Wellington at all. It looked to him as if each local body was endeavouring to make its own marble good. They were all more or less willing to admit the fact, and it was a fact that certain simplifications in local government were required, but as soon as they touched the hem of the garment of any particular local body there was to be no simplification, no coalescence of any kind whatever; it was quite willing that the others should be modified and restricted. They should bear in mind that the general public was not represented at the Conference, inasmuch as the meeting represented rather what he called the administrative part. There was no doubt that the general public did express itself very emphatically in the direction of wanting to escape some of the burdens that had been cast on it—viz., the great expense of government duplicated and triplicated over and over again. In the part that he was familiar with, they had all the various Boards composed of the same members.