

in local districts administering their own hospitals, as against the central body. He was amused with his city friends, who seemed to think that there was no community of interest between country and city. There was no doubt about it that every road, waterway, or railway that opened up lands, giving facilities for new settlement to be profitably undertaken or old districts to be adequately worked, was not only advantageous to the agricultural industry, but equally so to the industries of the cities. The industries of the towns were improved; it gave employment to the people, and benefited the country in general in every way. There was no want of community of interest between the towns and the country.

Mr. WILLIAM MACALISTER (Southland Education Board) remarked that he came to the Conference rather prejudiced against the proposed Local Government Board; but the Minister's speech had to a large extent removed that prejudice. He thought it was possible to have such a Board, and he believed the Minister was working on sound lines. It was a democratic measure. He desired to follow up the suggestion made by Mr. Middleton, and it seemed to him that that was really the solution of the whole difficulty. They must assume now that the proposal for the establishment of Provincial Councils must go by the board, as it was clear the country did not want them. The country was equally emphatic that education should be managed by independent Boards, and he was in sympathy with such Boards. If education continued to be administered by independent Boards, then it seemed to him that one of the main functions intended to be discharged by the Provincial Councils was gone. The solution of the difficulty was touched upon yesterday by Mr. Harley—viz., the reduction of the number of counties, the extension of their area, and the enlargement of their functions. The proposal in the Minister's speech for setting up local Committees was an excellent idea. If the County Councils were enlarged, it was quite possible, in his opinion, to do away with the River Boards, and substitute in their place the proposed local Committees. They had been speaking in a sweeping manner of the abolition of River Boards, but it was really not abolition, and the better word would be "conversion," because all that was proposed in the suggestion made by the Minister was the conversion of the River Boards into a local Committee. That was to say, the river districts would remain and be administered by a local Committee under the superintendence of the County Council. That was an excellent proposal, and would not in the slightest degree impair the local administration. The local Committee would administer affairs in the river district, but the rate would be struck by the county. The Committee would have the benefit of the county staff and the County Engineer. That was economy, and at the same time would not interfere with efficient administration. The same might be said to some extent in respect to Town Boards. A great many of those could be abolished and their place taken by the local Committees, with certain powers. Town Boards with a population above a certain number—say, above five hundred—could be constituted boroughs. Those local Committees in reference to the various departments would be analogous to the existing School Committees. The Committee to be set up to consider those matters ought to bear in mind this fact: that the abolition of a River Board did not mean the abolition of the river district, nor would the abolition of a Town Board mean the abolition of a town district—that was, if the place of the Board in each case was taken by a Committee.

Mr. H. M. CORBETT (Chairman of the Ohinemuri County Council) desired to read the following letter which he had received from the Waihi Borough Council:—

"DEAR SIR,—

"Waihi Borough Council, Town Clerk's Office, Waihi, 17th May, 1912.

"I am instructed to forward you the following copy of a resolution passed at a meeting of this Council last evening recording a protest against the proposed Local Government Bill:—

"That this Council strongly protests against the passing of the Local Government Bill, for the following reasons: (1.) That it will aggravate and intensify the evils of centralization. (2.) That it will curtail the right of the people to administer their own local affairs. (3.) That its proposals will in operation prove cumbersome, expensive, and unsatisfactory. (4.) That, while increasing the cost of local government, it will not add to its efficiency, but will increase financial burdens and unnecessary taxation.

"That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the delegates who will represent this district at the Conference of local bodies to be held at Wellington, urging them to strongly oppose the Bill."

"I have, &c.,

"H. D. MORPETH, Town Clerk.

"H. M. Corbett, Esq., Chairman, Ohinemuri County Council, Paeroa."

The following resolution was passed by the Waihi Chamber of Commerce at its last meeting: "This meeting desires to record its opposition to the provisions of the Local Government Bill. It appears to strike at the principle of local authority over local affairs by placing the power in the hands of those at distant points within a province who cannot be so well acquainted with the requirements of a district as the residents, and by pressing on supreme authority to a Local Government Board in Wellington. In the matter of education, hospitals, and other public services it considers that the suggested changes would be no improvement, and that the Bill will be vetoed by the Conference in Wellington."

He was also in receipt of the following telegram:—

"Messrs. Lowe and Corbett, Local Authorities Conference, Wellington.

"Copy resolution passed meeting to-day that this Council is strongly opposed to the Local Government Bill being passed into law, the Bill being unsuitable to this county.

"R. SWINDLEY, County Chairman, Coromandel."

The Ohinemuri County recognized that some change in local government was necessary. They had a considerable area of both mining and agricultural land. So far as agricultural land was concerned, they had a big portion of that district known as the Hauraki Plains. It was necessary for the development of that district that they should have some assured finance. Roading there was very expensive. The present system of grants made from year to year were, in a sense,