

departments, with the idea that they would be taught to be carpenters, or something of that sort. This was money absolutely thrown away; of that he felt sure. He had discussed this matter with the late Minister of Education, who had agreed with him that a large amount of money was wrongly expended in this direction. In this he was not referring to technical schools, because every one must recognize the value of proper technical schools. The question of School Committees, it seemed to him, need not be discussed; but he thought the money should be saved that was now spent on manual education, and be used for the purpose of making the Universities more accessible to the people. Hospital administration was a subject in which he was particularly interested. He thought this Bill must have been a long while in being put together, and was evidently drafted before the Hospitals Bill came into force. Delegates had met together in Wellington, and had discussed various points in the new Hospitals Act, and he was sure the result of that Conference had been valuable, and had tended to economy of administration; so much so that he was sure the new system was much better than the old, as well as much more economical. The consideration of that Bill had taken a very large amount of time; it had been discussed very fully, and consequently he thought that this part of the Bill might easily be cut out of the Local Government Bill. He was satisfied there were many men throughout the Dominion who had given much time to hospital-work, which was intricate, and demanded as great attention, in order to master the details of management, as education. The one was as important as the other, so he thought both education and hospitals and charitable aid might be cut out of the Bill. One other matter he would like to mention. While the Hospitals Act gave very large powers to those doing the work, it also gave very large power to the Minister, and they would notice that the Bills that had come before the people always had one or two little bits added to them which increased our indebtedness. They had an excellent gentleman in charge of the Department, and one who was endeavouring to administer it upon the most economical lines possible; but here, again, the Minister's powers were increased. He did not think this should be so. He thought that while the Minister had a perfect right to exercise his functions in a proper manner, those who had the administration of hospitals and charitable aid should exercise their functions, and the Minister should meet them half-way. He would like to say, in connection with the Local Government Board, that he had altered his opinion very considerably since coming to Wellington. He did not think it was by any means a perfect Board; but, as had been mentioned in the President's address, he thought there were points in it which they might very well take advantage of. The Board, as recommended in the Bill, might be altered somewhat, and it might be a very good method of meeting the wishes of those whose wishes had to be consulted. The Governor in Council was a gentleman who sat very high apart from others, and it took a long time and very considerable trouble and expense to get his ideas. All this could be obviated by a board of control, which, in this respect, might do valuable work. However, as this was a matter which would really be debated later on, he would now simply return his thanks to a number of members who had put their views before the Conference in a very able manner, and thank the Minister for this opportunity of airing their grievances, and also for the fact that by means of his introductory speech he had given them a much better idea of the Bill than they could otherwise have obtained.

Mr. E. ALLEN (Auckland) said the President, in his opening speech, had made a point with regard to economy; but they would find that under the Bill economy came in mostly under the local districts. The figures given by the President showed that the cost of administration of the road districts was 15·38 per cent., whilst the cost of administration of counties was 19·49 per cent. Now, that clearly proved that if economy was sought for, the present system of road districts should be retained. At the same time, he thought that Road Boards recognized that the trend of events was towards the absorption of road districts into counties; and the counties he represented—Manukau and Franklin—had, recognizing this fact, set their house in order by instituting counties where there had previously been road districts. If, however, the abolition of Road Boards was made compulsory, it would be found that the Road Boards would kick, and kick vigorously; and Road Boards had a good deal of kick left in them yet. On the other hand, if Road Boards were left to work out their own destiny, it would be found that they would merge into the counties, or remain out, as best suited the conditions. There were many Road Boards which would merge into the counties, and there were other Road Boards which would not merge, and which, for his part, he saw no good reason why they should. Another point brought forward by the President was the matter of assured finance. It seemed to him that the amount given in the Local Government Bill with regard to that was going to place local bodies in a very much worse position than they occupied at present. At the present time Parliament appropriated a certain sum for each county, but under the Seventh Schedule of the Bill there was a scale given of subsidies to be granted to counties. If that scale was examined it would be found—

The PRESIDENT.—I stated distinctly that the subsidy proposed in Schedule VII was unworkable, and I do not propose to proceed with it.

Mr. ALLEN said in that case there was no reason why he should deal further with the subject. At the same time, one of the most important points in the reform of local government was the matter of assured finance, and no scheme had been submitted which would improve the finances of the local bodies affected. So far as education was concerned, he thought it would be premature at the present time to place it under the proposed Provincial Councils. It had been stated by some speakers that there was no outcry for reform in local-government administration. In his opinion, there had been such an outcry, and that outcry had been directed in a great measure towards giving to local bodies a more assured finance. The matter of grants or doles to local bodies from the Government had been mentioned, and he would like to say this: the Government had sent round schedules to local bodies asking how much they would want for their district. These schedules were filled in by the Boards, and forwarded to the Minister, and nothing more was heard about it. That was the position generally, so far as his Boards were concerned.

A delegate: Who is your member?