

was some equality of sacrifice, not much reform could be brought about. They had therefore to face the position of trying to evolve something that would be applicable to the Dominion as a whole, and at the same time conserve the rights of the people to manage their own affairs. Mr. Harley, he thought, was moving in the right direction. Not only were there too many small bodies, but there were too many counties, and he thought they should indicate to the Minister where sacrifice could be made. Those sacrifices should emanate from themselves. If they had not more than forty-two counties in New Zealand, they should have quite enough. He believed, with Mr. Studholme, that the creation of Provincial Councils would tend to elevate the whole system of local government. He did not say he was going to support the principle of the institution of Provincial Councils, but he did say that the creation of Provincial Councils would draw to them the best and brainiest men in the community. They would have men in them from whom in time they would select their members of Parliament. However, he thought they had learned sufficient from the discussion to see that the creation of these Provincial Councils would not eventuate. But if they eliminated a great number of small and insignificant counties, and created between forty and fifty counties, they would have bodies to which it was an honour to belong, and they should have the best men in the community taking their seats upon them. The same applied when they came to the cities and towns. However unreasonable it appeared, he thought they should, as a Conference, boldly set out what they thought should be done. It did not matter what standard they set up, they might depend upon it, it would be criticized and handled pretty severely before it came to take shape in a Bill. If they looked at the Handbook they would see the tremendous size of some of these cities and towns. Waikouaiti, with an area of 2,700 acres, had a population of 688; whereas Newmarket, with an area of 150 acres, had a population of 2,780. He would suggest that all boroughs contiguous to cities or large towns should be abolished by extending the areas of cities' operations as follows: Cities of ten thousand population or over to include the surrounding district beyond the area included within the greater city area existent at the time of the passing of the Bill by five square miles on every side. This would allow of proper town-planning, acquirement of reserves, and prevent slums. It might be said that they were taking in country, but the figures he had given with regard to Waikouaiti surely showed that that was the case even under present conditions. Towns of under ten thousand people should extend their area of influence for a distance of three square miles on every side. Town districts with a population of five hundred and over should be converted into boroughs, and extend their influence two square miles all round. All boroughs under five hundred should merge into the counties; also Drainage and Water-supply Boards. This would mean a certain amount of sacrifice to the community he particularly represented, and he was expressing views after conversation with men who had a good deal to do in connection with these matters. Where two small boroughs were contiguous they should be converted into one—the larger. After what they had heard, he should say that the Education Boards should remain as at present, with larger powers, as stated by the Prime Minister. If thirteen education districts were sufficient for the control of education in the Dominion, he did not see why the same number of hospital and charitable-aid districts would not be sufficient. In these respects there would be a considerable breaking-down in the number of local bodies. There would be a saving of almost two-thirds on existing conditions in the counties, and in cities and towns there would be a considerable reduction. Town Boards and other small Boards would be brought down to a workable number. After all the discussion they had had, he thought the larger Harbour Boards would have to stand. It might be said that by doing all this they were taking away from the people the liberty to manage their own affairs. He did not think so at all. He thought there was a kernel of good suggested in the Bill in the setting-up of Committees. If they embraced all these smaller bodies within the limits of the larger ones they would not do away, as Mr. Macalister pointed out, with the districts. He advocated the preserving of the right of the people to govern themselves largely as at present, and to keep alive that spirit of service for the community as a whole that existed. Each separate area included in any proposed absorption should have the right of the appointment of a committee of advice on all matters pertaining specially to its own area, which committee of advice should present reports, make known the wants of the district, and submit recommendations to the central authority in the district. He would also, in this connection, like to say that he thought there was a great waste in the methods in which the local bodies' accounts and returns were now kept. He spoke on this with some little degree of authority, because he had had some experience in it. He thought the Minister would be able to bear him out when he said that the Audit Department of the country was put to an enormous amount of trouble in correcting the records coming from the local bodies; and the keeping of these records in proper form as required by the Department was a charge made on each of the small local bodies. In connection with the framing of any Bill, he believed it would be possible to enact that every public body should keep its accounts in a particular way, and that it should make its returns to the Government on a uniform system. If that was done, the cost of the Audit Department might be greatly reduced on what it was at present. He had discussed this with the Government Auditors, and believed it was perfectly feasible. It would be infinitely easier for the men who had to deal with the accounts of these bodies if that were made compulsory. With regard to representation, he thought the experience of Education, Hospital, and Harbour Boards, and City Councils showed that efficient and economical administration could be achieved by these larger bodies better than by having a number of small Boards.

Mr. D. J. WILLIAMS (Chairman of the Buller County Council) said that a number of speakers had seen great beauty in the proposed Local Government Board, but none in the Provincial Council. He could not see what use the Board would be without the Provincial Council. Were they to have a Local Government Board over the counties, a Local Government Board over the harbours, and a Local Government Board over all the other numerous bodies?

The PRESIDENT.—No.