

County Councillors, as a rule, were picked men, who carried on the important work of the district, and they should, therefore, take over the other work not so important, such as that of the small Drainage Boards, &c. As regarded Hospital and Charitable Aid Boards, these had only quite recently been reorganized by the Government, and appeared to be working admirably. Every member who had spoken almost had remarked that they were doing good work. It would be a shame to disturb the arrangements that Dr. Valintine had given so much time to bring about; they should be given a fair trial. The only bodies, so far as he (Mr. Corkill) could see, that the Conference could deal with were the River Boards, Road Boards, Drainage Boards, and Water-supply Boards. Nothing else, according to the feeling of the meeting as he understood it, was going to be touched.

Mr. J. T. QUIN (Chairman of the Eltham County Council) said he was a representative of a very large area embracing several Boards, and he wished to say a few words, and be as brief as possible. He was against the formation of the proposed provincial counties, and he was opposed to the Local Government Board. He was in favour of the enlargement of the existing County Councils with community of interests, so that it would not be possible for one county to tax another in the way of subsidy or toll-gates. There should be absolute community of interests. In his district they had got one county in which there was some of the finest land in New Zealand, yet they had no outlet to the railway-line except by going over the roads of other counties, and, as a consequence, they were penalized to the extent of four toll-gates at the present time; whilst a Commission was then sitting with the object, if possible, of establishing another toll-gate. That position should not be allowed, and counties should be permitted to so amalgamate as to produce community of interest where such was considered necessary, with the consent of the small bodies. In that way the counties could levy the first cost for the maintenance of the main arterial roads, and afterwards put a special rate on the by-roads. He had had many years of experience in this connection, and he had not yet found a county in which the boundaries admitted of anything like a fair adjustment. Speaking of representation as regards the counties and the proposal in the Bill, he was against the abolition of the ridings; that would tend in small congested areas to the election of men in a small portion of the county, and not one of them might be a ratepayer. The Education Boards should be allowed to remain as they existed at present. He maintained that Education Boards were not masters; they were merely employees, and the Teachers' Institute overrode them all. That wanted amending. As a matter of fact, there was no possibility of removing a teacher directly, and the indirect way was to remove the children from the school. As regards hospitals, he was in favour of centralization. Small hospitals were not in the true interests of the community. In such cases it was difficult to get good medical men, and sometimes the nurses and staff exceeded the number of patients. That should not be. Where there was railway communication there should be only small cottage hospitals connecting as depots. They wanted the best buildings, the best stuff, and fair representation for each district. He would not say that the Bill was all bad. The finances of a county should be secured. The law should be so amended as to permit the Public Trustee, out of moneys received by him under the West Coast Settlement Act, to be kept by him and paid to the County Councils. At present the Natives were using the roads, milking, and sending their milk to the factory; but they would pay no rates. The collector would be told that the owner was dead, was at the Bay of Islands, or somewhere else. Before anything could be done the consent of the Native Minister had to be obtained, and he had the power of veto. That wanted amending. It was not proposed to penalize any Native in the centre of the Island who had areas that were not roaded, and from which they were deriving no benefit, but they should, when they had the advantage, pay the same as a white man.

Mr. MASON CHAMBERS (Chairman of the Hawke's Bay County Council) said he had been asked, on behalf of the Hastings Borough Council, to object to all the clauses in the Bill that would bring them within the scope of the proposed legislation. It was unnecessary to enumerate the clauses, and he did not intend to traverse the whole question that had been discussed. He would touch upon one question that no other member of the Conference had dealt with, and that was the disintegration of counties. There was no doubt that the law existing at present had a tendency towards dividing up counties. The subsidy system alone was a strong inducement for a large county to divide into two. In the event of a county dividing into two or three counties, then it got two or three times as much subsidy as before. The same thing applied to branch Boards. The County Council had no power to strike a rate for a drainage area, and the only possible chance a drainage area had was to form itself into a separate body, which tended at once towards the multiplication of local bodies. He thought it was unnecessary that he should dwell further on the subject.

Mr. WILLIAM HATHAWAY (Chairman of the Stratford County Council) congratulated the Chairman on his speech. When he first scrutinized the Bill he thought it was a misnomer, because it should have been entitled "The Local Bodies Confiscation Measure." He would tell them why. Under the Bill with regard to the Provincial Councils and County Councils they had a rating-power of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the capital value. The County Councils were not composed of fools; but he questioned very much if Provincial Councils would not compel the county to collect their $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. He would not detain the Conference long, but he would put a few figures in front of them as to the position of the Stratford County Council: General rate for the whole county, 1911-12, nearly 2d. in the pound on the unimproved value; for the North Riding, 2d. in the pound; for the South Riding, $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound; for the East Riding, 2d. in the pound; for the West Riding, 2d. in the pound; for the Mangaehu Riding, 3d. in the pound. Amount raised by loans: Under the Local Bodies' Loans Acts, inscribed amount, £122,667, under the New Zealand State-guaranteed Advances Act, £7,040; pound for pound subsidy on loans received from the Government, £7,440. (The above was from April, 1903, and did not include Mangonui