

Road Board subsidies.) Amount contributed to hospital and charitable aid: Ordinary, 1911-12, £655; capital, 1911-12, £235. Amount of 10-per-cent. fines on unpaid rates—1911-12, £231; 1910-11, £274; 1909-10, £187: total, £692. In his district metal was expensive, they having paid from 5s. 6d. to 14s. 6d. a yard for metal for repairs. From the foregoing any one could see the position of the county financially, and ascertain the debt per head. Now, if they imposed the tax that would be imposed upon those people by the proposed Provincial Councils, it meant ruination, and nine-tenths of the people would have to go out of the country. Then they had a system of land exchange which fattened and played into the hands of commission agents. There were a number of uneducated people in the district, and so a commission agent with a good "gift of the gab" was able to paint and illustrate some transfer in such blazing colours as to dupe the purchaser, and the agent cared for nothing but the commission. He knew of a section that was valued at £10 per acre, and yet, through the machinations of a commission agent, it was actually sold for £30 an acre. That man would be called upon to pay 16s. per acre in the way of taxes. It was a different matter in districts where every acre could be ploughed, or where 100 acres of land would carry sixty cows. Stratford was a poor country, although it produced a lot because its settlers were energetic. The west coast had contributed much to the prosperity of the Dominion, but roads were badly needed. If they did not get facilities for making roads within their own district, it meant the closing of the creameries. When Sir Joseph Ward was laying a foundation-stone at Stratford he brought the position of the Mountain Road under his notice. The Government had carted the whole of their cement on that road, and cut it up.

Mr. H. J. SLADE (Chairman of the Hobson County Council) said that he represented Marsden-Kaipara, and he therefore came from the far and what had been the neglected north. He had been sent down to vote against the proposed system of Provincial Councils, and for the maintenance of the existing system of charitable aid and education. Those should not be interfered with. He had many notes, but, as much that he had to say had been covered by other speakers both to-day and yesterday, he did not propose to traverse the same ground. The time had come when their Committees should be set up and some work done. He did not think they would get much more out of the debate.

Mr. HENRY BIGNELL (member of the Grey Hospital Board) remarked that he had learned a good deal in reference to local government generally. In his opinion, to do away with Education Boards and place them under the proposed Provincial Councils would be a retrograde step. The Education Board of which he was Chairman was administered most economically, the cost of administration for the last two or three years being between 5 and 6 per cent—not a very extravagant amount. County members were paid reasonable travelling-expenses, but the town members got nothing, and did not look for anything. They were satisfied to carry on the work in the future as in the past, in the interests of education. It would be suicidal to remove the management of education from such gentlemen and place it under the control of Provincial Councils, whose interest in education would be secondary to roads and bridges. Generally, counties should remain as at present, but he would like to see them given extended powers, something more like municipalities. He was unable to speak of Road Boards authoritatively, as there were none in the district he represented. Judging by the discussion, Road Boards had done excellent work in the past, and did it gratuitously; they would continue to do so in the future; so why abolish them for Provincial Councils, with their several Boards or Committees? The proposal to establish Provincial Councils was a retrograde step, which went back to an obsolete system that had been swept away many years ago. He was able to say that the members of the Charitable Aid Board in his district carried out the work satisfactorily. The same could undoubtedly be said of the local hospital, and Dr. Valintine would bear him out in that respect. He could see no reason why such institutions should be abolished. It might be said possibly that extended areas should be given to County Councils. Educations Boards, Charitable Aid Boards, and County Councils should have extended powers. Lighting, for instance, was now in private hands, and County Councils should be empowered to undertake such utilities. He would not vote for the abolition of ridings in a county.

Mr. WILLIAM RITCHIE (Chairman of the Waitotara County Council) said he would oppose the formation of Provincial Councils, and would give his reasons. He noted that it was proposed to bring under the management of the provincial counties the various bodies such as Education Boards, Hospital Boards, counties, and all the small fry, such as Drainage Boards, &c. He would not deal with education, as it was a long time since he made the acquaintance of a schoolmaster. He had experience of Charitable Aid Boards, and it would be a mistake to disturb them, seeing that the legislation passed two years ago was working fairly well. The multiplicity of small hospitals was a mistake, and in that respect he was in agreement with Dr. Valintine. When possible, centralization was best for hospitals. The counties could do all that was required, and he was not sure about abolishing any of them, or amalgamating them. That question did not apply to his district at all. They were not in such a poor position as some of the croakers would have them believe their own finances were in. They were never in debt, and he was not crying out very much about subsidies. The Councils should get such extended powers as would enable them to cover the ground proposed to be covered by the Provincial Councils. As to Road Boards, he was inclined to think that some of them did good work, and yet a lot of them did very bad work. There was one thing in regard to the expenses of running a Road Board—it had only a small revenue, and could not employ a permanent engineer to plan and supervise its work. They had to call in an engineer if there was a bridge to be planned, with the result that half of their income went that way. That should be remedied in some sort of way, and he thought that no body should be in existence in the shape of a Road Board or County Council that could not employ an engineer at the rate of something between £300 or £400 a year. Supervision was badly needed,