

as members of some of those Boards could not tell a plan or a specification when they saw it, and did not know when the work was properly carried out. Members of Road Boards had passed work that was not half done—work that was slummed. Some reform in that direction should be brought about, either by absorption into the county or combining together. The abolition of ridings, he thought, would be a mistake, not for financial purposes, but for election purposes. It had been mentioned that a corner of the county might return all the members and get all the pickings. Whether that was likely to be so or not he did not know, but he thought the ridings should be kept not merely for the matter of accounts, but for election purposes.

Mr. J. G. RUTHERFORD (Auckland) did not intend to take up time in traversing ground already covered, especially as they would have an opportunity of expressing their views when the Committee brought in its report. His only reason for speaking was that the Manukau County had never been worked as a county, but had been worked by two Road Boards. It seemed to him there could be no question that the Road Boards in the past had done good work, and if they were to give place to anything he should like to be sure that it was to something better. It should be remembered that the Road Boards had done the cheapest work, as they had done their work for 15 per cent., while some of the municipalities had run up to 30 per cent. What he wished to refer to was clause 3 of the Bill. In that clause the representation on the Board was to consist of the Minister, three Under-Secretaries, and three members to be appointed by the Governor. In his opinion, the last three members should have been elective. If the Government of the day appointed four of the members of the Board, the other members should be elected by the people.

Mr. R. T. WRATHALL (Mangonui) said that many months ago, when the Bill was first submitted to the local bodies, he had come to the conclusion that it was very much in the interests of the community that the Bill should be adopted almost in its entirety. This was not in accord with the opinion expressed by many of the speakers at the Conference, who had criticized the Bill adversely, but, in his opinion, had failed, because their denunciations of the measure had been quite illogical, and their arguments had been conflicting. He thought that even in Great Britain the people were in favour of a form of Provincial Councils, a portion of the functions of which should be the carrying-out of the system of education. In addition to being Chairman of the County Council, he was also Chairman of the School Committee in the far north, and he had had the pleasure, or the displeasure, of electing members of the Education Board, and all must admit that the manner in which members of the Education Board were selected was unsatisfactory. There was no member of School Committees present who had known anything at all about the qualifications of the members of the Board they had been called upon to elect.

Delegates: Oh, oh! That is not so.

Mr. WRATHALL replied that, at any rate, he had never known anything as to their qualifications, and he had been Chairman of a School Committee for a very long time. He had often balloted for candidates, but had never known anything about them. On the other hand, if the control of education were transferred to a Provincial Council they would have an opportunity of putting their views before the candidates, and he thought they would be able to get better representatives. Regarding County Councils, the Provincial Council would undoubtedly do Mangonui a lot of good. They held the unique position of having no through roads, and they were the goal of the Dominion. They were going to be the terminus of the Great North Road, the terminus of the Main Trunk line of railway, and their county was to-day the binding link of the Empire, since they had the Pacific cable-station there. It had been stated on the previous day that the Provincial Councils would be bad because the interests of the cities were against the interests of the country, but that statement had been very rightly challenged: there was identity of interest as between city and country. He would support almost absolutely the Bill as proposed.

Mr. T. KENNEDY (Chairman of the Westland Hospital Board) had listened with great interest to the different views expressed by the delegates, and the conclusion he had come to was now quite different from the one he entertained when he arrived in Wellington. At that time his opinion was that the Bill was going to have a flying passage; now he thought it was going to be productive of much good, although the Bill would not be accepted in its entirety. The result of the Conference would be that the Minister and his colleagues would be given a good base, through the different delegates assembled, for what really was required. No doubt a certain amount of reform in local government was needed, but he thought the Bill in some things went rather too far. For instance, he did not think education would benefit by being handed over to Provincial Councils. Education as now carried out could not very well be improved upon. Nor did he think that the functions now administered by the Hospital and Charitable Aid Board could be bettered. One reason he would like to see these bodies last longer was that they had only been in existence something like two years, and in many part of the Dominion the different Boards were really only getting to know what their functions were, and to get the best results from their knowledge. As to harbours, of course it was only proposed to deal with small harbours, and, coming from a place where there was a very small harbour, he was quite convinced that the small Harbour Boards could be done away with, and their functions exercised by the Borough Council or the County Council with equally good results. While on the question he was sorry to say that he did not see included in the proposal one local body that, although it was not a governing body, was an elective body, and a very expensive one. He referred to the Licensing Committees. He thought these Committees could very well be done without, and their duties absorbed by some of the other bodies. To show how expensive these Committees were, he might mention that the election of the Westland Licensing Bench had cost a small borough like Kumara £50. That was a very large sum for this purpose, and he ventured to assert that the usefulness of the Licensing Committees was not sufficient to justify the expenditure. On one occasion the Committee had granted a license, and the Magistrate had held that decision up for three months by refusing to issue the certificate. That showed the Committee was not a very useful body. He was in favour of keeping the ridings in