

the counties, and did not think the work would be better done if the ridings were abolished. In conclusion, he sincerely hoped that something good would come from the Bill, and thought that good must come from its discussion by the delegates.

At this stage a delegate rose and suggested they should close the discussion and get on with the business. The President said he was about to call upon Mr. Storry, who had first risen. Mr. Storry said he had risen to make the same proposition, and this was indorsed by several other delegates.

Mr. E. MAXWELL (Taranaki) said it seemed to him that practically there was one thing they had to deal with—the finance of local bodies. The question of grants had not been sufficiently emphasized; the failure was not on the part of the local bodies' administration, but on the part of the Central Government. He had always regarded this as a great failure of duty on the part of the Government, and in this he was not referring to a particular Government, but to Governments generally. The opening-up of new lands was the greatest source of trouble to local bodies. When land was opened up, in the first place it ought to be properly roaded, and if this were done it would effectually do away with the vicious principle of political grabs. If the Central Government did its duty, it would road each block of country that was opened up for settlement, and as settlement advanced the roads, properly formed and metalled, should be handed over to the local Boards. In that way the country would become immediately productive; but as it was they had to wait ten or twenty years before getting any rating value. His proposal would be very beneficial to the State by increasing the progress of the country generally, and it would do away with the whole vicious principle of political grants. That seemed to be the great trouble. The only other point he desired to mention was the question of subsidies, though he was not going to refer to that at length. Some reference had been made to this, but it was not a question for local government. The Central Government should set up a non-political Board, appointed by Parliament, and independent of the Ministry of the day, to decide what public works were necessary and what grants should be made to the various bodies. They would then really get local government

The PRESIDENT (the Hon. G. W. Russell) said,—Gentlemen, I think before putting the question to you—namely, That the Bill be considered—it may not be improper if I make a few remarks, after listening very carefully to the discussion which has taken place. I would like, first of all, to refer to two or three points that have been raised by various speakers. Regarding what the gentleman who had just sat down—Mr. Maxwell—has stated, as to the proper roading of the land before it is settled, I think you will agree with me that the principle that should be laid down respecting that matter is this: that the main roads to the block should certainly be opened out before the settlers are placed upon the land, and that the opportunity should be given to the settlers of making the side roads and the district roads, so that they may be helped in the early stages of the settlement to pay for their lands. I think that is a sound principle upon which the work should be carried out. I would now refer very briefly to one or two other matters in the discussion that took place this morning. First, I should like to refer to a remark by Mr. Corbett, the delegate from Ohinemuri, who said that his district desired an assured finance. Now, I think that if every district in the country had such an assured finance as the Ohinemuri County has there would be no need for a Conference of this kind. You are no doubt aware that there is a law under which the goldfields districts take the revenues that are received from gold duty; and when I tell you that the county which Mr. Corbett represents received during the year ending 31st March, 1911, £7,942 for gold duty, and that its interior borough of Waihi received £23,004, or a total for the whole county and its interior borough of £30,946 in one year, you will see that they have a pretty well assured finance. And now I want to refer for one or two minutes to a speech made by Mr. Allen, because in that speech we got so near to party politics that I think it only right I should refer clearly and pointedly to the position that was then set out. Mr. Allen stated that the Government sent round requests to the public bodies to state what their requirements were, and after it had obtained the lists of those requirements those bodies heard nothing more of the matter. Some gentleman in the audience—I do not like to say, but I think I know who it was—said, "Who is your member?" and when the request was made I was not at all surprised to hear the reply that came back—that his member was Mr. Massey. It looked, though I do not like to say so, as if there had been a little prearrangement in that case.

A voice: No, no.

The PRESIDENT.—Well, I am going to deal with the position from the suggestion made by that question, and the answer given. It is but right, on behalf of the Government of which I am a member, and the party to which I belong, that the position should be clearly stated. During the year ending 31st March, 1911, the Manukau County, which was the county under discussion, received in subsidies from the Government, in ordinary subsidy and special subsidy, the sum of £1,500; and there were only forty-three counties in the entire country which received more than £1,500: all the rest received less. I will take the electorate represented by one of the leading members of the Opposition—I refer now to Mr. Herries—and I find that in the electorate he represented at that time there were the Counties of Opotiki, Whakatane, and Tauranga. These three counties received in subsidies and grants £7,545 in one year. Now, *per contra*, I take the case of the part of the country from which I come. The County of Manukau, in which Mr. Allen resides, has a rateable value of £4,211,739, and received £1,500 in subsidies and grants in that year. The County of Selwyn, which happened then to have been broken up, and which returns to Parliament four or five members who were supporters of the Government, at that time had a rateable value of £8,715,971, and it received the munificent sum in subsidies and grants from the Government of £244. I think I have now said sufficient on that point to clear up any idea such as that there has been a differential treatment unfavourable to Opposition members, and I may say, to the credit of the members of the Opposition, that it has been recognized in the