

member. Members representing districts not subdivided, or only divided into two, to have one vote; of districts with more than two subdivisions to have two votes; and of shires four votes. The General Road Board to meet once in every six months. Its functions to be the settlement of all road board and shire disputes, and to appropriate certain funds as next described.

5. In regard to endowment, the subscribers recommend that there should be an allocation of a considerable portion of the Territorial Revenue. Twenty per cent. of the whole should be devoted to purposes of Immigration, and should be set apart as a separate fund for that object. Forty per cent. should be set apart for the construction of roads: of this amount three-eighths should be left to the Provincial Council to appropriate for the object named; the remainder, which will be equal to one-fourth of the entire Territorial Revenue, exclusive of Gold Duty and Gold Fields Revenue, should be set apart for the endowment of road districts and shires—three-fifths to be given to road districts and shires for district roads, the other two-fifths to be given to shires for expenditure on main roads.

6. The district road portion of the endowment to be dealt with as follows: two-thirds of it to be divided amongst the districts and shires proportionately to the moneys they raise by a shilling rate, the balance to be appropriated for district roads purposes by the General Road Board, to be spent by the District Boards and Shire Councils.

7. The main road portion of the endowment to be thus disposed of: two-thirds to be divided amongst the shires in proportion to the tolls on main roads collected within their limits, to be expended on main roads; the remaining one-third to be appropriated by the General Road Board for main road purposes, to be expended by the Shire Councils.

8. The subscribers strongly recommend that it should not be competent to include towns or boroughs in road districts or shires.

9. The Act should come into operation in the several Provinces in respect to the endowment, at the commencement of their respective financial years.

F. D. BELL,
JULIUS VOGEL,
D. REID.

No. 2.

MEMORANDUM by Mr. BELL.

I HAVE gone through the Bill with great care, in order to see whether it would be practicable to alter its construction so as to make it more workable as well as more intelligible.

It appears to me that the first thing to consider is, that the Bill will have to be worked by people who, for the most part, will neither have the time nor the inclination to learn the immense mass of detail with which the Bill, as it now stands, is overloaded. If the measure is to be a success, it must be one that can be easily understood, and the provisions whereof can become familiar to the class on whose exertions and personal interest in it the experiment really depends. The small farmers, the ratepayers, the busy and industrious yeomen, will have it in their hands; and if the law they have in charge is cumbrous and verbose, as well as redolent of legal subtleties and technicalities, they cannot be expected to become really interested in it. Its administration will gradually fall into the hands of the very few who have time or leisure to study it, and in the end a class will arise which, as is admittedly the case in Victoria, will make the measure a trade. It is crowded with clauses and provisions which not only will hardly ever be understood, but which, in their nature, seem to me wholly unnecessary to be introduced into a measure the essential requirements of which are that it should be terse, condensed, and free from technical verbiage. It abounds in descriptions of duties which are not to be executed by Road Boards at all, but are to be performed by other authorities. It provides minute machinery of administration entirely unsuited to the circumstances of the country, and certain (if attempted to be enforced) to disgust the agricultural communities for whose benefit it must be mainly set in motion. And when it is considered that in order to raise a rate of £100, property to the extent of from £30,000 to £40,000 must be assessed, this complicated and detailed machinery becomes not only hurtful but absolutely ridiculous.

Now it seems to me that, in order to carry into real effect the intentions which the Executive Government announced on the introduction of the Bill, it must be entirely reconstructed; and I suggest the following as one of the modes by which this may be done:—

1. The Road Boards Act itself should be a skeleton Bill. Its framework should be very simple, and the object should be to make it a kind of hand-book which every Road Board member should easily understand and recollect. It should be confined to declaring how districts may be constituted, the qualification of members, the qualification and voting power of the ratepayers, the principle and mode of election, the powers of the Board to make rates and enter into contracts and make bye-laws, how property is to be rated, what endowments are to be granted in aid of rates, and what are the powers of the Board as to construction of roads, bridges, and other works. I do not mean absolutely to say that these are the only provisions which the Bill should contain, but I indicate as closely as I can what I think is sufficient to tell the Road Board members what each of them ought familiarly to know.
2. On the other hand, all provisions relating to scrutiny of rolls and votes, to the creation of vacancies, to the revision of the voters' and ratepayers' rolls, to the nomination of and polling for candidates, the duties of auditors, the legal formalities to accompany proceedings of the Board, the duties and liabilities of officers (treasurers and the like), the preparation of accounts, the duties of Superintendents, the legal effect of bye-laws, the mode and conditions of appeal against rates, and every regulation as to penalties (including, of course, the inevitable Sunday clause), and the powers of the general Executive, &c.;—all these provisions, I say, which relate not to Road Board members but to other and distinct authorities, ought to be treated in a wholly separate measure, and the Road Boards Bill (proper) be completely relieved from them.