

Question 16—*continued.*

of the sum voted by Parliament. Along with the financial proposals of the Government we would strongly urge the prayer of the northern counties petition, now before Parliament, with regard to endowing these counties with a landed estate for the reasons set forth in that petition. We are of opinion that no amount of alteration in our institutions will be of any avail unless adequate funds are provided to carry them out. We would further suggest that Parliament at once fix what are to be main roads for the whole colony, so that a struggle need not be constantly taking place as to whether any particular line should be considered main road or district road.

Albertland South—Should road districts be continued, or an amended Road District Act be contemplated, care should be taken to divide the district into wards, as many wards as members. This clause should be mandatory, not left to vote of ratepayers. Reason for above is, that it frequently happens that one portion of a district can and does elect the whole Board, to the manifest injustice of the weaker (in voting power) portion of district, and who thereby suffer in not having a fair proportion of the rates expended on their portion of the district. It is to be regretted that the road districts are so small (in this part) and not continuous. The expenses in printing, &c., are greatly out of proportion to the benefit they confer; some means should be taken to reduce these expenses. The Assessment Court is exceedingly unpopular and expensive, and ought to be done away with; not a Road Board or Council in the northern part of Auckland that would vote for the retention of it; the old system of appeal to the Board was fully as satisfactory, and no expense beyond loss of time to parties concerned. Surely the members of the Board were, and are quite as competent to judge as to the justice or injustice of the rate laid on a person's land as an individual from another district with no qualification beyond the Government appointment, over any member of the Road Board. Annual valuations are unnecessary and expensive; the roll furnished by the Property-Tax Commissioner would be an improvement.

Arai—No answer.

Upper Mahurangi—A Consolidating Road Board Act would be the proper thing. It would simplify matters: at the present time Highway Trustees require to be lawyers. Assessment Courts ought to be abolished—too expensive; in fact, they are a perfect farce. I have known our Judge and his clerk ride thirty miles to hold a Court; all they did was to reduce one man's rate a shilling; this would cost the country about £8 or £9. (Shameful.) The Counties Act ought to be repealed—it is a most expensive Act, and quite uncalled for in the North of Auckland. I know there are some who will call it a good measure, but if you were to take the remuneration from the Chairman and travelling expenses from Councillors, and compel them to work for nothing, the same as Road Board men do, the County Councils would soon die out in this part of New Zealand. As we have no

railways in this county, I consider the Government ought to make special grants to Road Boards in proportion to public works carried on in other parts of the colony. We have to pay our share of the interest on loans, and we ought to share in the expenditure.

Mangawai—That the Road Board receive all fees paid for dogs in the district, under The Dog Registration Act; all fees and licenses paid under "The Licensing Act, 1881;" and all licenses paid under the Protection of Animals Act, in the road district. All fees and licenses paid in outlying districts should be paid to County Councils. If a Road Board or County Council permits a road to get into a bad, dangerous, or impassable state of repair, they should be liable to be summoned by any ratepayer before a Resident Magistrate's Court; if sufficient evidence is forthcoming to secure a conviction, the Resident Magistrate should have power to strike a rate not exceeding £1 per £100 of the value of the fee simple; appoint and employ clerk, collector, engineers, and inspectors, and let the work by contract, and thus cause the road to be repaired, balance (if any) of the rate to be handed to the Board or County in whose district it was collected. No gates should be permitted to be erected across any public road, as per section 67, Highways Act of 1874 (Auckland); they are a great nuisance to travellers. If the value of the fee simple of the property of ratepayers in any road district or riding is less than forty thousand pounds, no ratepayer should be allowed to exercise more than three votes at any election of members of the Board, riding, or Licensing Committee. Any ratepayer should have power to summon owners of pigs doing injury on roads before any two Justices of the Peace.

Omaha—That the ridings in counties be so altered as to return one member each.

Matakana West—That Road Boards with extended powers are more efficient in sparsely-settled districts than County Councils. I beg also to furnish you with some particulars of the position of the Matakana West Road Board, as illustrating the position of the majority of Road Boards in the north of Auckland, and the inability of County Councils with small revenue, in large and sparsely-settled districts, to assist Road Boards—thus unnecessarily taxing for the administration of the dual governments of the County Councils and Road Boards. The total revenue of this Board, to date, was £70, including £36, amount of rates collected; the expenditure legally required was—Valuation, £2 10s.; advertising, £3 10s. A bridge on the Great North Main Road—leading through this district—which was constructed by the Provincial Government before the existence of Road Boards, became unsafe; the Board asked the assistance of the County Council, and have received none, thus compelling the Board to incur the whole cost of construction, amounting to about £100. Notwithstanding that, the Council derive revenue from this district, consisting of one publican's license, £25; and registration of dogs fees, £12. Up to the present

date this Board has not received any grant from the County Council.

Puhoi—This Board humbly suggests that the existence of two local bodies is expensive and unnecessary; but which of these two forms of government is preferable this Board must leave to the decision of the higher intelligence of the most Honorable the Houses of Parliament, only remarking that in case County Councils should be abandoned, an amalgamation of Road Boards seems to be the most beneficial. In conclusion, this Board also suggests that if the number of advertisements required cannot be decreased, the charges for the same might be lowered, as the expenses for these form a considerable item in the accounts of the local bodies.

Tauhoa—No answer.

Wharehine—It is the opinion of this Board that County Councils ought to be done away with, as not being adapted for the North of Auckland; they are too expensive; the mileage fees paid to Councillors would be far better spent on district roads. The clauses for compulsory advertising in the district papers making everything legal ought to be abolished, and simplify this thing by having it posted in a public place in the district, same as is done at Home by Highway Boards. We consider this one of the greatest drawbacks to Highway Boards—the excessive amount of advertising to make everything legal.

Wainui—No answer.

Waitemata—No answer.

Kaukapakapa—In regard to main lines of roads, the Government should take over their construction and maintenance entirely. County Councils might then be done away with altogether; all other local matters could be carried out efficiently by Road Boards under an amended Act. In the accompanying circular the Government propose to make a free grant of three-fourths of the cost of construction of main roads. Better to do the whole; and for after maintenance some combined scheme of rating lands abutting on main roads and setting apart blocks of land in the districts through which such roads run, might be adopted. Road Boards should be endowed in the same way that harbour or other Boards are.

Lake—If County Councils are to be continued as at present, they should have the control of the main roads and have sufficient funds at their disposal for this purpose. Failing this arrangement, Road Board government is, in the opinion of this Board, quite sufficient.

North Shore—No answer.

Waitakerei West—No answer.

Waitakerei West (J. Cottle)—I believe no other system would suit our district so well as the old one of the acreage. But if the obnoxious one of valuation be persisted in I should be in favour of receiving the valuation roll, as it would be an annual saving to the district.

Waitakerei West (H. Hunter)—None.

Whangaparaoa—We believe a great deal of the advertising at present compulsory with Road Boards might be dispensed with; for instance, why could not the Government proclaim a day for the annual meeting for all