

Question 16—*continued.*

Boards throughout the colony? As Chairman of Board I may state that I come from a large agricultural district in the centre of England where the rates collected are £4,000 and there is no such thing as this excessive advertising. The rate-payers must elect their officers, strike rate, &c., all on 25th March in each year. Why could not it be same here? Ten per cent., and in some cases 20 per cent., of rates collected, as is the case at present, is far too much. These answers were given at a meeting of the Board held for the purpose, 5th June, 1882.

Eden—No answer.

Epsom—The circular herein referred to was considered by the Epsom Road Board on the 2nd instant, when the following resolution was unanimously carried: "That this Board considers the Counties Act as applied to this district a cumbersome piece of machinery, and should be repealed with a view to substituting in lieu thereof extended powers to the Road Boards, which is the only really useful form of local self-government in the country, more especially in its general application to the Auckland Provincial District."

Mount Roskill—It is to be regretted that laws are so frequently altered. The session before last a useful Dog Act was passed, in which a uniform tax of 10s. was imposed; last session it was amended, giving the Road Boards the power of fixing the tax, now one Board fixes the tax at 10s., another at 5s., while owners of dogs residing in districts where the tax is 10s. obtain collars from a district in which the tax is 5s., and great confusion is the consequence.

Mount Wellington—No answer.

Newton—Where the Counties Act is suspended extended power to be given to Road Boards to compel the adjoining Road Boards to make and maintain a fair share of boundary roads. The cost of advertising under the present Rating Act is excessive.

Panmure—None.

Ponsonby—No.

Waikomiti—No answer.

Manukau—No answer.

Mercer—In small town districts like ours it would be advisable to lessen as far as possible the cost of advertising meetings, valuation lists, &c., since more publicity would be given by posting notices at several points within the district.

Hunua—Yes. (1.) Our district is in favour of Road Boards and against County Councils. (2.) That the financial year should close when the Trusteeship closes, namely, on the 30th June instead of the 31st March. (3.) Consolidate all the power to Road Boards. (4.) We endorse your suggestions with reference to valuation. It would save the Road Boards a lot of unnecessary expense.

Karaka—Each district should be allowed to choose its own form of government, *i.e.*, either County, Road Board, or dual government. A consolidating Road Board Act is greatly needed; provisions might be made for a less amount of advertising, which at present costs nearly as much as all other working expenses. The proposed power of selling or letting land for non-

payment of rates, to be vested in a Public Trustee, is essentially necessary. It ought, however, to be left to the discretion of the Boards to decide when sale is to take place; meanwhile arrears of rates from absentees (*i.e.*, owners out of the district) might be registered against the land at the District Court; all expenses caused therefrom to be charged to the owner.

Maraetai—Rate all Native lands; and rates should be paid by Natives where they derive a direct benefit by roads passing through their lands; as, for instance, Maraetai District, where hundreds of pounds have been spent improving their property and they not contributing towards the same.

Opaheke—A consolidating Road Boards Act is much wanted, and I would suggest that, as the financial year ends on the 31st March with Road Boards, the annual election of Trustees should be in the month of April, instead of the month of July, as at present. The Trustees not to be paid or have their travelling expenses paid, or have any interest in contracts. The yearly valuations are a very heavy drain on the resources of Boards, and Assessment Courts every year are useless and a heavy expense. In my district there has been no objections for the last two years, but yet the farce of holding an Assessment Court was gone through, although the Judge got notice there were no objections. The only business to be done was to sign the valuation list, and sign cheques on the Government Treasury, one for the Judge himself, and another for his clerk. The list could have been sent to his residence for 1s. to get signed by him. Adopting the property-tax valuation is a decided improvement; would save a lot of money to the Boards, and also to the Government Treasury.

Otahuhu—Many districts throughout the colony are now in a position to do without the aid derived from borrowed money. Cities, boroughs, and suburban districts, at least, should not receive grants of money in aid of making roads out of borrowed money; and I hold it to be bad policy to tax the people and gather it into a central treasury, and afterwards re-distribute the money again in the forms of grants-in-aid. I believe that, practically, the appointing of a valuer, as required by the Rating Act, has not been any protection to the individual ratepayer against improper valuations. The members of Road Boards are intelligent enough, and as a rule willing enough, to make the valuation of their several districts. It should be optional to appoint a valuer. The several local bodies are sufficiently well-informed of any change of ownership, or value of property as to be able to make a valuation rate, without having recourse to the Property-Tax Commissioner. The present Assessment Court is a sufficient protection to the ratepayers against any attempt to over value, whether designed or not. As the boundaries of the County of Manukau are at present defined, the Counties Act cannot be worked without inflicting an injury on the ratepayers of the northern portion of it—that is to say, the southern por-

tion having a large portion of their roads to make yet, and having a preponderance of members in the Council, the natural result would be that an undue share of the rates would be appropriated to the south. There are road districts in the north-west portion of the county that would be rated in the proportion of fifteen to one over other portions, and that have treble the number of miles of road to make.

Papakura—No answer.

Pollock—No answer.

Pukekohe East—We would suggest that the day of election of local bodies be appointed and advertised by Government; also, that the financial year terminate in March, and election be held in April. That in districts where no other buildings are available, public schoolhouses be open for meetings connected with district matters.

Pukekohe West—No.

Waipipi—No answer.

Wairoa—No. The circular, on the whole, is highly approved of in this district.

Thames—No answer.

Parawai—No answer.

Waitoa—No answer.

Piako—No.

Waikato—The Waikato County Council is of opinion that, with extended powers, Road Boards might perform all the duties at present performed by County Councils.

Kirikiri—We would suggest that the local governing bodies should not be subsidized from loans, but that the Land Fund or Property-tax, or both, should be permanently allocated for local purposes, to be distributed on a basis liberal to new districts. The financial year should terminate on the 31st March. The present mode of debiting counties with an indefinite sum for the maintenance of hospitals and charitable aid is considered very unjust. It is presumed that by this time the cost of treating a patient in the Auckland Hospital, Lunatic Asylum, &c., has been ascertained, that being the case, what would be easier than to debit Waikato County, say, with the cost of treating persons from Waikato, and give the county power to recover from persons or their relatives who are in a position to pay?

Waipa—No answer.

Hamilton—No answer.

Kihikihi—Main roads, especially in outlying districts, should be undertaken by the colony. No Trustees of Road Boards should be allowed to burden the district with more debt than one year's rates, and only that on the approval of the rate-payers expressed at a meeting called for that purpose. Colony should make roads through districts adjoining Native or Crown lands, when such roads are intended principally to give access to such lands. Revenue raised by the property-tax should be available for public works in the district wherein it was levied: Approves of bringing and consolidating the Road Boards Act into one statute. Approves of Public Trustee paying the local bodies the road-rates due by absentees.

Rangiaohia—Whether it be the Crown or Natives that are benefited by the construction of public works, I would suggest that they be rated accordingly, as such enhances the value of the property by opening it