

128. Do you think there is any desire for amalgamation?—Yes.

129. In the case of the amalgamation of two small road districts, would any good purpose be achieved?—I think so, sir; but not being on any of the small ones I have not worked it out; but it is my idea to merge some of the local bodies.

130. Are there any duly qualified engineers assisting these Road Boards?—We have qualified surveyors on some Boards, but if anything special crops up we get a certificated engineer to carry out the work for us.

Mr. GEORGE WITTY examined. (No. 8.)

131. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I believe you are a member of the Templeton Road Board, and also a member of the Selwyn County Council: can you tell the Committee what the feeling of the people in Canterbury is?—The feeling is very much against it. They certainly think that most of the work could not be done for anything like the cost it is done now for. We are working on a $\frac{7}{16}$ d. rate, and no one can look after that district better than those who are now doing it.

132. Speaking for the Templeton Road Board, could you give the Committee any idea of what your total expenditure is and the cost of management?—We collect about £1,400 in rates now, and we can rate up to £1,656, and all our expenses amount to about £150.

133. What is your total expenditure?—£1,479.

134. Now, with regard to the question of the franchise, what is the opinion of the people down there as to its remaining as at present?—Ours is a floating population, and on that account alone the present Bill would be unsuitable from beginning to end.

135. Is there anything else you wish to say on the salient points of the Bill?—Only to emphasize what Mr. Morgan stated with regard to each Road Board having a direct representative on the Council. There are six Road Boards who have not £1,000 in rates all together.

136. Then, you believe in the principle of amalgamation, where circumstances make it desirable?—Yes.

Mr. WILLIAM BOAG examined. (No. 9.)

137. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I believe you have been for a number of years a member of the Selwyn County Council and Riccarton Road Boards; will you kindly tell the Committee what you think as to the desirability or otherwise of retaining the Road Board system?—I have thought it over in many ways, and I can hardly come to any conclusion that it is going to be amended in the way the Bill suggests. I was in the Council for ten or twelve years. The Council has nothing whatever to do with Road Boards or road districts. It only collects a certain amount of rates and taxes, which I think should be left in the hands of the Road Board. I do not wish to be opinionative, but how it can be worked without Road Boards I can hardly understand.

138. Do you think the Bill is necessary or desirable at all?—Well, the only thing I see is necessary is to give the Road Boards a little more power. Let us speak of the Riccarton Road Board. I think they have managed that body well, and if the whole of the funds were vested in them they would have considerably more income than they have.

139. Are you in favour of altering the franchise?—No, I think not. We prefer to leave it as it is. I think this franchise a little bit dangerous. For instance, there are lots of people about who have no interest in the district.

Mr. J. H. SHARP examined. (No. 10.)

140. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I believe you have had large experience in the Oxford District as clerk to the Road Board, and you are now clerk to the Riccarton Road Board: can you give the Committee some idea of the cost of management as compared with the expenditure?—As far as the Oxford Road Board is concerned, I think about 12 per cent. is about the average. Riccarton is something less—about 11½ per cent. Riccarton is a small district and a rich district. It is splendidly managed by the Road Board, and if any alteration is to be made in the existing state of things, I think the County Councils should be abolished. If the road districts are made a certain size so that they can be properly located, my opinion is that the Road Board system is the best form of local government you can have.

141. Do you think the affairs of the district could be more economically managed under the control of the county?—Certainly not. For instance, under the present system the members themselves act as a kind of inspectors. They have a special knowledge of the district, and if they do not know it themselves the ratepayers soon let them know. Now, if it were in a big district, the ratepayers would not be able to get hold of members, and they would have to employ inspectors.

142. As a matter of fact, you act as clerk, surveyor, and engineer?—Yes, at a salary of £200 per annum; and the total expenditure is about £3,000.

Mr. FRANK EAST examined. (No. 11.)

143. *Mr. G. W. Russell.*] I believe, Mr. East, you have been connected with the Lincoln Road Board for about eighteen years; what is the feeling throughout Canterbury as to the proposal to abolish Road Boards?—The feeling is in favour of retaining Road Boards.

144. What is the expenditure of your Board in a year?—We spend about £1,000 per year from rates, and about £150 from other sources, at a cost of about 10 per cent.

145. What is the feeling with regard to the franchise?—We are strongly against any alteration of the franchise.