

On the 5th May, 1900, the Wellington Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Minister of Railways urging him to reduce the curves on the railway, and suggesting that the carrying-out of this work would afford an opportunity to widen the road.

In September, 1900, Mr. Field, M.P., asked the Government to undertake the work, and pointed out that it was impossible for the local bodies within whose districts the road was situated to do it.

On the 17th September, 1900, a conference of local bodies and district members of Parliament was held at the Wellington Chamber of Commerce, when resolutions were carried requesting the Government to widen the road from Wellington to Petone to not less than 40 ft., and to arrange for the apportionment of a reasonable share of the net cost of such work among the local bodies concerned in the traffic on the road. The resolutions of this conference were signed, *inter alia*, by the Mayors of Wellington, Petone, and Onslow, the Chairmen of the Hutt County Council and the Johnsonville Town Board. I mention this because, as these persons represented all the local bodies then in existence which were interested in the road, it follows that, at this time, all were in agreement that the Government should undertake the work and apportion the cost of a 40 ft. road.

Nothing seems to have been done at once in pursuance of this request; but at the instance of the Borough of Onslow the Government appointed Mr. Haselden, S.M., on the 7th December, 1901, to be a Commissioner to apportion the cost of maintaining the portion of the road which runs through that borough. He reported on the 19th March, 1902, that in his opinion the cost of maintaining this portion of the road should be borne in certain proportions to be hereinafter mentioned, and effect was given to his report by a Governor's Warrant dated the 13th May, 1902. The Wellington City Council subsequently refused to pay its quota, and litigation followed, and it was ultimately decided by the Supreme Court that as the road was technically a street, and as the statute only referred to a road, the Warrant was *ultra vires* and inoperative.

To remedy this difficulty, and to enable Mr. Haselden's report to be given effect to, the Hutt Road Act, 1903, was passed, fixing the proportions to be paid by the parties, as arranged by him, as follows: Wellington City and Petone Borough, seven twenty-fourths each; and Onslow Borough and Lower Hutt Borough, five twenty-fourths each. It is necessary to remember in this connection that this apportionment related only to the part of the road (100 chains) in the Borough of Onslow.

Later in the same session of 1903 the Hutt Railway and Road Improvement Act was passed. This Act abolished the apportionment, and empowered the Minister of Railways to construct the road, and then to have the cost of same reapportioned among the Wellington City, Onslow, Petone, and Lower Hutt Boroughs, and the Hutt County Council.

After the Hutt Railway and Road Improvement Act, 1903, was passed, and the road had been assured, a conference of delegates from the local authorities was held, and among other things they suggested to the Government,—

- (a.) That the road should be formed 100 ft. wide, and that it should contain a roadway 50 ft., cycle-track 15 ft., heavy-traffic track 25 ft., and footpath 10 ft. wide, the cycle-track to be in the middle of the road:
- (b.) That the water-tables, footpath, cycle-track, roadways, and land be raised to such a level above high-water mark that proper drainage shall be assured:
- (c.) That the gradients of the road be in no case flatter than 1 in 200, so as to give efficient drainage along the water-tables.

These proposals were a very great departure from the original proposal for a road 40 ft. wide, and it is apparently due to the requests of this conference that such an expensive road was afterwards constructed. The Railway Department did not, however, do all that was requested. It made the road 60 ft. wide and the footpath and cycle-track 20 ft. wide, total 80 ft.; and it would appear that the enormous quantity of 523,000 yards of earth, spawls, and metal used in the actual formation of the road was to some extent at least required to meet the wishes of the conference. This part of the work alone cost nearly £82,500.

After the Act of 1903 was passed, Makara County and the Boroughs of Eastbourne and Miramar and the Upper Hutt Town Board were constituted and separated from the Hutt County, and the Hutt Railway and Road Improvement Amendment Act, 1911, provided that all these bodies, together with the Johnsonville Town Board, should contribute to the cost of the road.

It was pleaded before me that none of the original local bodies had the remotest conception that the road would cost anything approaching to what it has cost, or they would never have agreed to the provisions of the Act of 1903. I believe that these statements are absolutely true.