

2. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

(i) ABOLITION OF CATCHMENT BOARDS

Having regard to all the above considerations, we think that Catchment Boards have no essential functions to fulfil. We therefore recommend that Catchment Boards be abolished. In correcting one extreme, however, we do not wish to be carried away too far to the other extreme. The work of soil conservation must go on, but should be the responsibility of the Lands Department. As regards rivers control, we wish to say that the work already done is good and has been well done. It must be extended, but only in the limited areas where it is necessary and not to any extreme extent. We should mention the particularly good work done on the Otaki River and on the Waimakariri, the latter a continuation of the work done by the previous River Trust. Credit is due to the Minister of Works for the machinery which has been brought to river-work, and for the amalgamation of small River Boards.

(ii) DIVIDING LAND CONSERVATION AND RIVERS CONTROL

It may be asserted that soil conservation and rivers control are one integral problem, that they cannot be separated, and that they must therefore be administered together. If this were the case, then it must also be held that both are only a part of a larger integration of interests, land occupation. In that case the whole subject would be a matter for the single administration of the Lands Department, aided, as it always is, by the Department of Agriculture. However, we do not view soil conservation and rivers control as integral parts of one subject. We believe they are two separate subjects divided as follows :—

Soil Conservation.—The maintenance of the land in such a condition that it will maintain permanent productive pastures. We consider the correct term should be “Land Conservation.”

Rivers Control.—The maintenance of rivers in such set courses that they will not endanger farm lands or towns and cities.

3. METHOD OF ADMINISTRATION

The technical problems of erosion we will consider under clause (2) of our order of reference later ; we are here dealing with administration, to which end we recommend :—

(i) RIVERS CONTROL COUNCIL

The Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act should be amended considerably. The questions of soil conservation and of rivers control should be divorced and a new Act should be a Rivers Control Act and the Council should become a Rivers Control Council. As probably by far the greatest proportion of the work of the existing Council is rivers control, and this work has been well done, we consider that the constitution of the Council should remain as at present and that it should have all the powers considered necessary to do rivers-control work.

(ii) RIVER CONTROL AUTHORITIES

In most areas throughout New Zealand we consider that adequate rivers control can be practised through the local county organizations and the Ministry of Works without any need for special authorities. In some areas, however, it is obvious that the task of confining rivers to their courses is