

Mr. J. STUDHOLME (Ashburton) asked that Resolutions Nos. 1 and 2 be taken together, as he wished to move an amendment.

Mr. R. MOORE (North Canterbury) thought it would be better for the Conference to decide whether they were in favour of a Local Government Board or not; the question of the constitution of the Board could follow.

The PRESIDENT said that Mr. Studholme's first amendment (notice of which he had given) was virtually the same as the first resolution of the Committee. It would be just as well to take the discussion on the first resolution. The question before the Conference would be whether there should be a Local Government Board or not.

Mr. G. J. GARLAND (Auckland) said he viewed the proposal with a great deal of concern. In discussing the resolution, he desired to look beyond clause 1, and deal with the general principles of the Committee's report as a whole. He did not like the proposed constitution of the Local Government Board. The Committee proposed that it should be appointed "for a fixed term of not less than five years." This meant that it might be for ten years, and it opened up a very serious matter. They all knew what the Minister, by Order in Council, had done in the past, what he had been able to do, and what he might do. If the Minister, whoever he might be, did something that the country disapproved of, they had some chance of getting rid of him; but if members were appointed to the Board, as proposed, for at least five years—it might be ten years—great difficulties might arise. These members would be there by Act of Parliament, and could only be removed, unless their term was up, if Parliament saw fit to terminate their tenure of office. He regarded this as one of the weakest points in the Committee's proposals.

Mr. H. J. MIDDLETON rose to a point of order. Was it permissible for a delegate to traverse all the resolutions of the Committee while only No. 1 was before them?

The PRESIDENT said he had not stopped Mr. Garland because it appeared to him that when they were discussing whether a Local Government Board should be set up or not they were bound to consider what its constitution was likely to be; and on the question of the setting-up of a Local Government Board he would have to allow a wide discussion on the whole question. He would, therefore, not object to any member discussing Mr. Studholme's proposals, or any others, while Resolution No. 1 was before them. By this means, he thought, they would shorten the whole discussion.

Mr. GARLAND did not propose to speak at any great length, so that others might have an opportunity of following him. It would be unwise to pin one down to any particular clause in an Act of Parliament, or a resolution coming before an important Conference such as this, and not allow the whole of the recommendations in the paper to be traversed. He merely wanted to point that fact out—viz., that it was a very dangerous principle, and one that perhaps the Conference in due course might see fit to regret. He would now content himself with voting "No."

Mr. R. MOORE explained that when acting on the Committee he voted against the clause, and intimated to the Committee that he would take that line of action when the subject came before the Conference. In the early part of the Conference he understood the Minister had practically dropped that part of the Bill, that being the tenor of the Minister's reply to the Mayor of Wellington.

The PRESIDENT replied that that referred only to clause 10.

Mr. MOORE here read a short extract from a newspaper.

The PRESIDENT replied that he was not going to be bound by a statement from a newspaper report. When that matter was referred to it had reference to clause 10, and distinctly referred to clause 10. He told the Conference that he did not believe in that clause, and that he would withdraw it. He was rather surprised, after he made that statement, that Mr. Moore should quote a newspaper statement. Newspapers were unable to take verbatim reports of everything that was said.

Mr. MOORE said he accepted the Minister's statement. It was not necessary to have another Board set up. The Minister ought to be held responsible for the work of his Department, and should not have anything acting as a buffer between himself and the local bodies. The Minister could be got at. If he did anything that was not approved of he had to face Parliament, and he was responsible to Parliament. The Minister, in a great measure, acted on the advice of his executive officers, but now it was proposed to give him a Board to act with him. Once that Board was established it would get its powers extended, and thereby overshadow the real work of the local bodies who were elected by the ratepayers who found the money. The object of the Bill was to reduce the number of local bodies, but in reality they would be establishing another local body, and a local body that was not under the control of the ratepayers. As a matter of fact, the Board would be in a great measure under the control of the Minister, although it was suggested it should be elected by Parliament. Parliament was the predominating party, and the Minister of the day had the appointment of three members of the Board. There was this in it: the appointment was for a number of years, and those members could not be dismissed by the sweet will of the Minister. He entered his emphatic protest against the setting-up of the proposed Board.

Mr. McLAREN (Wellington) wanted to be clear as to the cause of the debate. Were they dealing with the first report or with the amendment to the report of No. 1 Committee?

The PRESIDENT said they were dealing with the report of No. 1 Committee. The amendment had not yet been moved.

Mr. STUDHOLME (Ashburton) thought it was desirable that he should move his amendments now. His amendment was not moved in any spirit of opposition to the work of the Committee, but entirely with the idea of improving the Committee's resolutions by suggesting better ones. He asked for the permission of the Committee to move his resolutions, with the view of suggesting their substitution for those in the Committee's report; but that could not be done without the