

the heads of different departments of the public service, and he was President of two or three of them himself in his official capacity, some of them having nearly all heads of the Civil Service. Every one of these men exercised his independent judgment with regard to every question that was submitted to the Board in exactly the same way as members sitting round a County Council table. With six or eight men sitting together, they were far more likely to get experience and wisdom in the management of a big undertaking than by depending entirely on the Under-Secretary for advice. The Under-Secretary merely took the papers to the Minister, discussed the situation, and subsequently furnished his report. He did not want to impinge on the rights and responsibilities of the local bodies. He felt that this would be a progressive measure. He would like to refer Mr. Moore and the other gentlemen who were criticizing it to the fact that if there were new functions added to this Board—supposing new functions were proposed to be given to it—every one of those functions had to come before Parliament, and had to be discussed on the floor of the House by eighty members of Parliament, who represented the six or seven hundred public bodies of this country. Questions relating to local government were considered by the Legislature quite independent of party altogether, and that was as it should be. Such questions should be dealt with by the best brains and the united experience of the Parliament of the country. They were setting up imaginary difficulties in connection with this question, and he suggested to the Conference that they negative Mr. Studholme's amendments, because he (Mr. Russell) regarded them as unworkable. The English Local Government Board consisted absolutely of none but ordinary officers, and he had set that out in his speech. The President of that Board was the Right Hon. John Burns. The real work of the Board was done by the permanent Under-Secretaries, who were employed under the direction of the President. His idea was this: that three gentlemen be appointed by the Governor in Council, and if that was agreed to he would give the Conference an assurance that they would be the very best men that could be procured for the work—men entirely free from party or colour; because he wished to see a strong Board established. He suggested that they should negative Mr. Studholme's amendment first, and then pass Resolution No. 1 of the Committee; and then strike out the provision for election by Parliament, and insert in lieu thereof that the appointments be made by the Governor in Council.

Mr. HORRELL (North Canterbury) said he did not agree with the constitution of the Local Government Board. If they were to have a Board, he thought it should consist of men elected by those who were interested. They should not be elected by Parliament, nor be Under-Secretaries.

The PRESIDENT suggested to Mr. Horrell that if a proposal of the kind mentioned by him was given effect to they would be setting up a Parliament consisting of three men who might come in conflict with the Executive of the country, and then there would be untold trouble. Such a Board could accomplish nothing, and it would be drawing salaries and expenses.

Mr. JULL (Hawke's Bay) thought there was rather a reversal of form displayed by members of the Conference to-day. Yesterday, when they were discussing the proposal to set up a Local Government Board, there was a distinct inclination on the part of members of the Conference to agree that something in the nature of a Local Government Board as outlined was a desirable innovation—there was a distinct feeling in that way.

The PRESIDENT remarked that Mr. Jull was quite right. The speeches yesterday were in favour of what he had said.

Mr. JULL went on to say that some gentlemen were anxious to set up a constitution of rigid character and of enormous scope. He did not agree with the President that they should follow entirely the lines laid down by the English Local Governing Board, but he thought the suggestion that a Local Government Board should be established was desirable, and he thought so because they found there were a considerable number of matters which engaged the attention of Ministers, and in addition there were disputes arising between local bodies. Such disputes had to be referred to somebody, and he thought it might be well they should be referred to a Board of this description. The position now was that a proposal was made, after considerable discussion, to set up a Commission to inquire into these matters. Now very often a matter of principle could be decided at once by a Board of this description, and the principle having been laid down that would be made a permanent condition which they would all know the effect of. The number of nominated members the Minister proposed seemed to him excessive. While perhaps the Minister and the permanent heads of the Department should be members of the Board, there should be some representation of the local bodies upon it. He would not say these representatives should constitute a majority of the Board, but they had as a precedent for representation the fact that in the Land Boards the elective member was a man who represented the Crown tenants. There might, he thought, be some simple method for the appointment of one or two representatives to assist the permanent heads in the discharge of these duties, many of which would not be matters that should be shirked. He felt sure they were not likely to allow a Board of this description to override the whole of the local bodies of the Dominion. He did not agree that they ought to establish a Board of this kind, giving it the stability and permanency proposed. They did not want to make Supreme Court Judges of these gentlemen, but what was required was something that would practically oil the wheels and promote the better working of the local-government machine, and they might well appoint a Board of the description he had mentioned, but one which would not have the multifarious duties cast upon it which some people thought should be discharged by this Board. He was going to support the proposal that a Local Government Board was desirable.

Dr. COLLINS (Gisborne) asked if in setting up the Local Government Board they would do away with the Commission of inquiry?

The PRESIDENT was not prepared to give an answer offhand to that question. No doubt a large amount of work now done by the special Commission of inquiry would be done by the Local Government Board. He considered that one of its functions, and in the event of determining to