

Amendment agreed to, and clause as amended agreed to.

Mr. JULL moved the adoption of clause 2—namely, "*Road Districts*.—The Committee recommends that the present dual system of control by counties and road districts should cease, that the county system be the system that should be retained, and that due regard should be given to the interests of the districts now under the control of Road Boards with regard to representation and otherwise. The Committee also recommend that in the meantime some simpler method be adopted for merging Road Boards into counties than at present exists, such as by taking a poll."

Mr. PARR (Auckland) took it that the Committee had in mind only the Road Boards of country districts. How about road districts that were in the cities, and that were really carrying on city functions? They could not amalgamate them with any County Council.

The PRESIDENT explained that they were under clause 3 of Mr. Parr's Committee's report.

Mr. PARR said the President had deferred that, and he (Mr. Parr) took it that this recommendation applied only to country districts.

Mr. VENN (Wellington) thought the resolution was too sweeping altogether. It was all right in old-settled districts, where the Road Boards had done their work. The question should come before the Commission, who could say what Road Boards should be left and what should be merged. He moved, That the question of merging Road Boards be left to the Commission of inquiry.

Mr. EVERETT (Nelson) said that in many cases Road Boards were doing good work, and should not in such cases be abolished. There were six members on each Board, and they gave their time gratuitously. They got the kind of road they wanted, and they alone used the roads. It was entirely different with trunk roads passing from end to end of a county. He failed to see any valid reason why such Road Boards should be abolished. Their abolition would result in much expense to the country in the way of inspection, &c. The least the Conference could do was to support the setting-up of a Commission of inquiry to investigate the matter. He took the liberty of saying that many representatives would lack the minute knowledge of country affairs that would enable them to vote intelligently. Concentration sometimes was good and sometimes was not. Road Boards were scattered over the country doing their work well, and costing the country nothing. Why did they want to abolish them? It would cost a large sum of money to the various counties. By all means let the matter be referred to the Commission.

Mr. M. J. COYLE (Mount Albert, Auckland) thought they should have some definition of what was meant by country Road Boards. He might remark that there were Road Boards that were larger than some boroughs. The Remuera Road Board, for instance, had a capital value of a million and a half, and there were several Road Boards the capital value of which varied from half a million to a million and a half; and these Boards, he thought, ought to be taken into consideration. These districts might be told they could go into the boroughs, but the reason they did not was that they believed they could manage their own affairs more economically as they were. He thought they ought to say that a country Road Board should be one within ten miles radius of a city.

Mr. JULL (Hawke's Bay) said the matter had been debated before the Committee at length, and he was quite satisfied they have given ample consideration to the views of the opponents of the absorption of road districts. As a matter of fact, the motion that had been carried had been moved by the representative of a county in which there was a very large number of road districts. He would like to say a word or two in reference to remarks that had been made. In one case a gentleman had stated that the road districts were doing the work of the backblocks. Now, he submitted that nearly all the road districts were in those portions of the counties that had been settled for a long time, and the people were retaining the Road Board system, probably considering it the best; but the experience of the country generally clearly indicated that the county system was preferable. In reference to this subject, they had been told that one of the purposes of the Local Government Bill was to simplify the procedure and to reduce the number of local bodies they had in the country. The figures quoted by the President indicated that there was very considerable divergence in the cost of the administration of the different bodies. Speaking of the Eden County, with its Road Boards, he wished to point out to the Conference that the Eden County had a total area of forty-three square miles, and within that area there were twelve or fourteen road districts. He appealed to the Conference to consider if these were a class of bodies that ought to be administering Road Board functions. Then, take the adjoining county of Manukau: there were twenty-seven road districts, two town districts, and two drainage districts, or thirty-one districts, with 155 members of local bodies, administering the affairs of one county.

A delegate: They do not get anything for it.

Mr. JULL replied that neither did the members of County Councils get anything for their services. He would take a case in point. The Southland County had an area of 4,000 square miles and a revenue of £40,000, and its affairs were administered, and well administered, by nine persons. Then the County of Hawke's Bay had an area of 2,000 square miles, and its affairs were excellently administered by nine persons. Could it be really necessary, at this stage in the experience of the country, to cite cases of this kind for the purpose of securing the abolition of such a multitude of local bodies? He thought not.

A delegate: They are not paid local bodies.

Mr. JULL was not suggesting that they were paid, but the probability was that the affairs of a number of these local bodies, such as those that were administered by Road Boards in the County of Eden, could well be brought under municipal administration; and, at any rate, so far as the counties were concerned, the Committee considered the time had arrived when the Road Board system should be abolished. With reference to the question of main roads, Mr. Everett had feelingly portrayed the iniquity of taking away the Road Board administration,