

Mr. FISHER said if this were the law he would be inclined to vote for the clause, but he thought it would cause a great deal of expense and trouble if counties administered cemeteries scattered throughout the district.

The PRESIDENT said that what Mr. Fisher suggested would be provided for in any Bill dealing with the matter. The County Councils would have authority to delegate the management of cemeteries, so there would be local control.

Mr. J. W. McEWAN (Petone) asked if the mover would agree to this addition to the clause: "except that when a cemetery is situated in a county, and serves one or more adjacent boroughs, provision should be made for joint control."

Mr. JULL said he had no objection to this.

The PRESIDENT said this matter was covered by what he had stated. The proposal was that the law relating to Cemetery Boards should be the same as that relating to Domain Boards, and the position now placed before the Conference would be provided for in any legislation that might be brought down.

Clause as corrected—namely, "The Committee recommend that the same provisions of administration as recommended to apply to domains should apply to cemeteries"—agreed to.

"*River Districts and Drainage Districts.*—The Committee recommend that river districts and drainage districts that operate within the confines of a county be abolished, and the duties of existing Boards be carried on by the County Councils or Borough Councils or a joint committee, as the case may be."

Mr. A. E. JULL (Chairman) moved the adoption of the clause. There was a verbal alteration needed. After the word "joint" it should read: "or local committee, as the case may require."

Mr. F. W. VENN (Horowhenua County Council) thought this clause too sweeping. He came from a district where a Drainage Board had added thousands of pounds to the wealth of the country. These Boards had their particular advantage. He would like the clause amended so as to abolish forcibly only those Drainage Boards that had practically finished their construction-work, and existed simply for maintenance purposes. Some of the River Boards, he understood, existed simply in order to collect the rate to pay interest on their loans. All these might well be abolished, but Drainage Boards in active operation, borrowing money and building new drains, it would be a mistake to do away with. Their duties were very peculiar. They were small bodies, the members of which had a most intimate knowledge of every section of land the drains went through. They knew the geography of the country, and all the little details it was necessary to know in carrying out land drainage on a small scale. In his county all the drainage districts had been very small ones, and the Boards had had a most intimate knowledge of their work, and this was a thing that no County or Borough Council could have, unless it went to an immense amount of trouble. County Councillors could not spend the time to fossick out all the little details. He would move the following amendment: "That where Drainage and River Boards exist only for maintenance of constructed works, or for the collection of interest on loans, these Boards should be abolished, and their duties carried out by the County Council or Borough Council, or a joint committee, as the case may require."

Mr. J. BAILEY (Waikato County Council) seconded the amendment. He came from a district where there were eighteen or twenty Drainage Boards. These Boards understood thoroughly what they wanted. They raised the money and drained the land, and had increased values in the Waikato by thousands of pounds. They should be left alone. They were quite satisfied, and did not want to be absorbed.

Mr. R. EVANS (North Canterbury) said that in dealing with this matter in the Committee they were trying to do away with the multiplicity of Boards. There was one of these Boards in the district he represented, and he was sure it would be very much better to place it under a larger body. A County Council had power to do special work in a particular district, and control that work.

Mr. D. STEWART (Balclutha) said there was a local body in his district which would come under the clause they were considering. One of its functions was to run two steamers for the benefit of the settlers. It was not a Harbour Board or a River Board; it was really a River Settlers' Board. It had five members, three of whom were elected by three County Councils, and two were appointed by the Government. It did not levy rates, its revenue being derived from the earnings of the steamers and from an endowment. This Board was therefore in a different category from the River Boards intended to be effected by this recommendation of the Committee. There might be some other Boards of the same kind in the Dominion, but he did not know of any. He intended to move to add at the end of the clause: "but this shall not apply to a River Board carrying on special work under a special empowering Act."

Mr. VENN's amendment negatived.

Mr. WILSON moved the following amendment: To strike out the words "that operate within the confines of a county," with a view to inserting other words.

The PRESIDENT said that Parliament would not attempt to interfere with special legislation passed in the interests of a particular district. He did not think, therefore, that Mr. Stewart's proposal was necessary, although it might stand as an expression of opinion. It would be almost unheard of if in a measure dealing with the general question of local government there were to be direct interference in the way of a repeal of special Acts of Parliament that had been passed for a particular purpose. He was inclined to think he ought to rule out of order both amendments that had been proposed as not coming within the scope of the Conference.

A delegate remarked that nearly all River Boards were regulated by special Acts of Parliament.

The PRESIDENT said there were very few of that kind, and they would only be in cases of very special and peculiar interest, where special legislation was required for the purpose of dealing with something that was not covered by general legislation.