

Mr. ARMSTRONG (Wairau) said that in the Wairau district they had two River Boards and one Harbour Board operating on the same river.

The PRESIDENT.—Under special legislation?

Mr. ARMSTRONG.—Yes.

The PRESIDENT said that was where a Commission would come in, and should be set up.

A delegate: They were always at loggerheads.

The PRESIDENT stated that he had asked Mr. Hislop, Under-Secretary of Interior Affairs, to make a special note of that, and in connection with any legislation that might be brought down he (Mr. Russell) would have that question looked into.

Amendment moved by Mr. Wilson negatived.

Amendment moved by Mr. Stewart—namely, “To add at the end of clause 3, ‘but this shall not apply to a River Board carrying on special work under a special empowering Act’”—negatived.

Mr. Jull’s verbal alteration agreed to, and clause as amended agreed to, namely: “*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 or local committee, as the case may require.”

Mr. JULL (Chairman of Committee No. 3) moved the adoption of the following clause: “*Water-supply Board.*—The Committee recommend that the same provisions of administration as apply to river districts shall apply to water-supply districts.” To make the matter clear in reference to the case which was brought before the Committee last night with regard to the Waimakariri Water-supply District, he moved that the following words should be added to the clause: “but where the operations of a Water-supply Board extend into two or more counties the Board shall continue.”

The PRESIDENT thought the amendment proposed by Mr. Jull quite unnecessary, for the reason that the Committee recommended that the same provisions of administration as applied to river districts should apply to water-supply districts, so that any alteration that was made would only be in cases of those Water-supply Boards which were within a single county.

Amendment proposed by Mr. Jull agreed to, and clause 4 as amended agreed to.

Mr. JULL moved the adoption of the following clause: “*Harbour Boards.*—The Committee recommend that County Councils or Borough Councils be empowered to exercise the duties of Harbour Boards in such cases where there is at present no Harbour Board, but that in such cases the county should do this work in its capacity of a county instead of a Harbour Board.” He moved also to insert after the words “in such cases the county” the words “or borough,” and after the words “of a county” the words “or borough.”

The PRESIDENT suggested, after the words “no Harbour Board,” they should insert “or where the residents so desire.”

Mr. FISHER said it was hardly possible for the Conference to deal with every little thing. Individual cases could be dealt with by special request.

The PRESIDENT thought there was a great deal in what Mr. Fisher had said. They could not deal with every possible exception and every possible case. Naturally a Bill like this would be looked at from its broad point of view, in order to ascertain as nearly as possible the general sense of the Conference and the wish of the country.

Motion to insert the words “or where the residents so desire” negatived.

Mr. Jull’s amendment agreed to, and words “or borough” inserted.

Clause as amended agreed to.

Mr. JULL moved the adoption of the paragraph following the previous clause, viz.: “The Committee recommend that, in the case of the merging into the counties of any class or classes of local bodies, all the powers and duties now exercised by such bodies be given to the County Councils.” This was to provide machinery for carrying on the administration of Town Boards and Domain Boards, &c.

Mr. VENN (Horowhenua County Council) moved, That licensing districts and Licensing Committees be abolished, and that the functions and duties of such districts and Committees be vested in the local bodies. He was credibly informed that the effect of his motion would be the abolition of sixty Licensing Committees, and relieve sixty Magistrates for other work. The Horowhenua County Council had to pay £150 last year for election expenses, and all this could be saved. The local bodies could do the work very much better and cheaper.

Mr. Venn’s amendment negatived.

Mr. FISHER moved to strike out the word “other” before the word “class.”

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. HARLEY (Nelson) said that in many ways County Councils had not had sufficient powers. In passing any new Bill the Government should give them extended powers, similar to those enjoyed by the Municipal Councils. The Municipal Corporations Act gave much more power than the Counties Act. Furthermore, in the matter of making by-laws, in many respects the counties’ powers were very much restricted.

The PRESIDENT asked if it was Mr. Harley’s suggestion that the powers of the counties should be similar to those of the boroughs.

Mr. HARLEY replied that he could hardly say that, because it might not do in all instances. There were many things that County Councils could deal with efficiently had they the power. He would move that sufficient powers be given, namely: That powers sufficiently wide to enable the County Councils to efficiently carry out all the functions now imposed upon them be given them.

The PRESIDENT, referring to the point that had been raised, said that it was a very important one. He proposed to communicate with Mr. Martin, who was solicitor for the Municipal Association and the Counties Association, and would be glad if that gentleman would furnish him with