

Mr. MASLIN (South Canterbury) desired to move an amendment, and one of his reasons for moving it was that they had proposed the abolition of Road Board districts. It was very necessary that the interests of Road Board districts should be safeguarded, as they would be if the present law were retained—that moneys raised in particular areas should be expended mainly in the districts in which it was raised.

The PRESIDENT.—The amendment moved by Mr. Maslin, which will take priority, is this: That the following words be struck out: “for representation purposes,” and “and the County Councils have the option of keeping riding accounts or not, as they think fit.” The clause will then read, “That the present system of riding in counties be retained.” The question is, “That Mr. Maslin’s amendment, ‘That the present system of ridings in counties be retained,’ be a resolution of the Conference.”

Amendment (Mr. Maslin’s) agreed to on the voices, and clause as amended agreed to.

Mr. JULL (Chairman of No. 3 Committee) moved the following recommendation of the Committee: “That a uniform system of accounts be adopted for local bodies.”

The PRESIDENT.—If this is passed and put into law I will put myself into communication with the Audit Department to have a uniform system of accounts for all local bodies in the country—to have only one system throughout New Zealand.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. JULL (Chairman of No. 3 Committee) moved the following clause: “That the present system of triennial election be retained in the counties, and be made to apply to all local bodies, the elections to be held on the same day.” He thought they would agree that the whole system should be made uniform—that was, triennial—and that one day once in three years there should be an election of all local bodies.

Mr. McLAREN (Wellington) was sorry he could not concur in this matter. It dealt with municipalities as well as counties. It was a matter that would be discussed at the Municipal Conference in July. The question had already been discussed by his Council, and while it was deemed desirable that the Mayor should be elected for the same term as the Councillors, it was maintained that the term should be two years. He regarded it that no alteration in the law should take place without the electors themselves being consulted. A merely abstract decision that all elections should be triennial did not appear to him to carry any weight in the matter. The position with regard to parliamentary and local body elections was not entirely similar. The oftener they went before the people the better it was for the administration. He thought that the people themselves had a duty to perform with regard to civic life, and that we should take every opportunity of demanding that it be fulfilled. He could not support the proposal, and would move as an amendment, That the words “and be made to apply to all local bodies” be struck out of the clause.

Mr. NASH (Palmerston North) seconded the amendment. He did not think it was to the interest of the people that the Mayor should be elected for three years. He thought two years was quite long enough.

Mr. PARR (Auckland) was of opinion that there were too many elections in New Zealand altogether. He was strongly in favour of the triennial period. His experience of municipal matters confirmed the view that a good man just got into his stride when he was called upon to face another election. He was quite in favour of having Mayors elected for three years. With regard to the general principles, he was inclined to think that the public would view with favour an election held once every three years. That was sufficiently close for practical purposes, and would be a relief to the trouble and expense of too frequent elections. It would be found that the last of a man’s three years would be the most useful.

Mr. TREVOR (Wellington) thought it was the wish of the Wellington Council to go for three years rather than for two. It would work for economy, and he also thought it would tend to usefulness in the work of the Councils.

Mr. McEWAN (Petone) was of opinion that the people should declare annually on the question of the Mayor. The people appreciated a good man when they got him, and he thought they might be trusted on the matter. With regard to the Councils themselves, he thought a certain number of the Councillors should retire every year.

Mr. G. J. GARLAND (Auckland) supported the motion. His Council had long been of the opinion that triennial elections were the best for all concerned. The question of the election of the Mayor was not affected by the motion, because that was fixed by the Municipal Corporations Act, which fixed an annual election. The people generally who were best qualified to judge whether a man was worthy to fill the Mayoral chair were those who were sitting around the Council table with him. That was done with the election of the chairmen of most other local bodies, and he did not see why it should not also apply in the case of the Mayors of cities and boroughs. With respect to the Councillors, he thought it was better that the whole Council should be elected, and that after that so-many should retire every year. By that means a continuity of policy would be assured.

The PRESIDENT said he did not regard this resolution as having any reference to the election of Mayors. He regarded it as having reference to local bodies’ elections, but the election of Mayor stood quite different and apart. He agreed with several of the remarks which had been made that there was a danger of allowing these elections to run away with useless expenditure. He would just instance one matter. A year or two ago the mode of electing Charitable Aid Boards was altered. The election throughout the country must have cost a considerable amount of money, of which the Government paid half, and he was not sure but that in most instances the same gentlemen as had previously sat on these Boards were returned under the new system.

The amendment, “That the words ‘and be made to apply to all local bodies’ be struck out,” was put and negatived.