

1. A united district could be more systematically, economically, and efficiently managed under one control than under divided authority.

2. An efficient engineer could be appointed for a joint Board who would carry out a combined and comprehensive scheme for the benefit of all interested at a cheaper rate than could be done if two persons were employed; and this would prevent works being done on one side that would clash with the requirements of the other side.

3. The Taieri River is the common enemy of both sides, and this fact supplies the strongest reason why, in our opinion, there should be a united district. So long as there is a separate authority on each side of the river, so long will one side seek to throw the water on to the lands of the other side, and the friction between each side, which now exists, will continue. There should therefore be one central authority who would have it in its power to deal justly with both sides, and this would probably stop the antagonism.

4. Works may require to be done from time to time at the mouth of the river, or on the banks of the river, or at some distance up the river, to prevent floods, or for this purpose the river may require to be dredged or deviated, or openings may require to be made into it, and such works can only be satisfactorily done by one paramount authority. To give two conflicting local authorities power to do these things would be disastrous and unworkable. Some of these works are now required, and the others may be required at a future time.

5. The extended powers which we hereinafter recommend be granted to a United Board could not, in our opinion, be safely intrusted to two Boards, for each would be almost certain to use some of these powers to the detriment of the other, and endless litigation would follow.

6. The present condition of the drainage and consequent loss on both sides of the plain is an eloquent and unanswerable argument against divided control, and the fact that a strong feeling exists in the minds of settlers on the east against those on the west shows that it would be dangerous to set up two Boards.

The boundaries of the proposed united district are set forth in the First Schedule and map attached hereto. As any lowering of Waiholo or Waipori Lakes or any improvement of the outlet of the Waipori River would benefit certain lands in the Bruce County, we have decided to so extend the boundaries of our proposed district as to include these lands. These boundaries may include some lands that are not subject to flood, but it is impossible without a careful survey to define a boundary that shall only include flooded land. This the United Board can do, and as it has power to put into a class by itself all lands that will not, in its opinion, benefit by the drainage-works and free them from rates, no one will be injured by including this land in our proposed boundaries. Besides this, it is necessary that the boundaries should be plain and easily understood, and that they should include all lands that are probably affected by flood to some extent.

Having thus decided to recommend the dissolution of all the present existing River Boards and Drainage Boards on the Taieri Plain and the creation of one United Board to control the drainage of the plain, it becomes necessary to make several minor recommendations to enable our proposal to be carried into effect.

The existing law, in the opinion of your Commissioners, is not sufficient to meet the requirements of the situation, and we recommend that special legislation be passed to enable the proposed amalgamation to be made.

As already mentioned, we found considerable hostility on the part of the settlers to the suggestion of combining the eastern and western districts in one Board. To secure fair representation, we have cut the proposed district into six ridings of about equal area, and each riding will return one member to the Board. There will thus be four ridings on the west side and two ridings on the east side.

Having the aforementioned diversity of interest and the inequality in representation of east and west in view, we recommend the strengthening of the Board by the addition of three of the permanent Government statutory officers stationed in Dunedin. These officers, being quite independent and free from all local bias, and having no special interest to serve, would take a broad comprehensive view of all proposals and, by having the balance of power in most cases, would be able to secure the adoption of that which will make for the general betterment of the whole plain, and prevent anything which was unjust or unfair from being forced on a minority. We suggest that, as the Government has special interests in the plain in the shape of railways and Momona and Janefield Settlements, and for other obvious reasons, one of these Government officers be Chairman of the Board.

Your Commissioners considered carefully the question of handing over the entire control of the river drainage of the plain to the Taieri County Council on the dissolution of the present Boards, instead of to the United Board. We found, however, such solid opposition to the proposal that we have not recommended it. We do not, however, recommend any step that would make the ultimate merger of the Drainage Board into the County Council impossible when the time is ripe for such a happy consummation. For this reason we therefore recommend that provision be made so that at any time after five years the Board may, with the consent of the Bruce and Taieri County Councils, upon such terms as may be agreed upon by a two-thirds majority of the members, dissolve itself and become merged in the Bruce and Taieri County Councils respectively.

By the end of five years the comprehensive scheme which we anticipate will be undertaken by the Board for the drainage of the whole plain will probably have been carried out, and all the necessary primary things requiring engineering and financial skill will, we hope, have been done. The duties of the Board may then be reduced to maintaining the works and collecting the rates, which could easily be done by the County Council.

To further allay any feeling of uneasiness which may arise in the settlers' minds as to the expenditure on the respective sides of the river, we recommend the following provision, which explains itself, and carries its own weight in argument: the cost of all works carried out by the