

Board which benefits solely all or any parts of the ridings on one side only of the river shall be paid for out of the portion of any loan or rates raised or struck over such ridings or parts of ridings on that side only. By this provision the east side will not be paying for works which will solely benefit the west side, and the west likewise will carry its own share of the burden entirely—no more and no less.

The United Board will perform all the functions of all the dissolved Drainage and River Boards, so it must have the powers given by both "The Land Drainage Act, 1904," and "The River Boards Act, 1884," with extra special powers as well, justified by the circumstances of the situation. We propose the Board to have the following additional powers, so that no legal obstacles may be found barring the carrying-out of any comprehensive scheme: (a.) Power for the Board to erect dams and do any other thing in, across, or about the Taieri or the Waipori River or any of their tributaries, and generally to exercise all the powers of a Drainage or River Board, and for that purpose to enter upon any land within the watershed of such rivers or tributaries, notwithstanding that the site of such proposed works is outside the district. (b.) Power for the Board to divert any drain, stream, or river, or to close up the outlet or inlet to or from the same within the district without payment of any compensation for loss of riparian or other water-rights, and the owner or other person to be prevented under a penalty from taking water from any such river, stream, or drain, for any purpose, contrary to the Board's by-laws. The last power may be regarded by some as drastic, but it is not so. The problem in the Taieri, on the west side particularly, is to deal with the internal drainage after the Taieri River is kept out by means of watertight banks. During a dry spell some of the farmers let the water in from the river through the banks into the drains or ditches, with which to water their stock. When a fresh comes, the water backs through these outlets and soaks the plain, and makes the problem of the internal drainage more difficult than ever. This must be stopped. We understand that the settlers may now get artesian water anywhere on the plain, so there is no need to tamper with the banks and play with such a dangerous element.

Your Commissioners have considered and discussed the question of rating, and recommend that the United Board levy all their rates on an acreage basis, irrespective of capital value. The Drainage Act provides for classification of the lands in the district into four classes according to the degree of benefit received from the drainage-works, the fourth class being exempt from paying any rates whatever. Your Commissioners think that this differential system of rating would enable the Board to place the rating burden upon the land most justly entitled to bear it, when the rating is calculated upon an acreage basis. This cannot be done under a valuation basis, because the lands to be most benefited by the drainage are at present the least valuable.

We recommend that the Government Valuation Department, immediately upon the appointment of the Returning Officer, furnish him with a list of the occupiers of all the land in each riding, with their respective areas, and such shall be the electors roll for the election of the Board.

As to the maximum rating-power for general rates, your Commissioners point out that under the Drainage Act the Board could levy a six-farthings general rate, and the River Boards Act enables the Board to levy a further general rate of the same amount. We find the land is valued at from £12 to £20 per acre in many parts, so that the present rating-power under both Acts enables general rates from 3s. to 5s. per acre to be levied. We therefore recommend that the general rate in any one year do not exceed the sum of 4s. per acre.

Taking the principle from "The Local Government Voting Reform Act, 1899," we recommend that the voting for election of members, and also for polls, be as follows: The occupier of an area not exceeding 50 acres to have one vote; exceeding 50 acres but not exceeding 250 acres, two votes; exceeding 250 acres, three votes.

To enable the Board to carry out a comprehensive scheme of drainage, your Commissioners recommend that the Board have statutory powers to raise loans from time to time, but the total of such loans not to exceed in all the sum of £75,000, without having to take any poll of rate-payers. We have had no estimate of probable cost of any scheme or schemes put before us, but we think the amount suggested leaves a sufficiently wide margin. The reason why we make this recommendation is because, although your Commissioners are satisfied the bulk of the settlers must see that a loan is necessary to carry out any comprehensive scheme, still, owing to the diversity of opinion, the success of a poll might be jeopardized and so hamper the financial arrangements of the Board.

As previously mentioned, the beds of Lakes Waihola and Waipori are silting up steadily, but without being optimistic in the matter your Commissioners realise the possibility of something being done in the way of cutting a channel through these lakes to dispose more quickly of the water from the Waipori River and Lee Creek. The effect of such a work would be to lower the water; and the rest of the bed of the lakes might then be drained or turned to some profitable account. We would recommend, therefore, that the soil or bed of these lakes be vested in the Board as an endowment, giving the Board extensive powers of reclamation, letting and leasing such parts of the lakes for any term of years at a nominal or other rent to induce some enterprising person to do something in the way of assisting to get the water off them.

On the dissolution of the existing Boards, we recommend that the following provisions take effect: (a.) All property, real and personal, belonging to any of the former Boards shall become vested in the United Board. (b.) All rates or other moneys payable to any of the former Boards shall become payable to the United Board. (c.) All the liabilities of all the former Boards shall become liabilities of the United Board. (d.) All actions, suits, and proceedings pending by or against the former Boards may be carried on and prosecuted by or against the United Board. We would, however, further provide that the liabilities of the present respective Boards, whether for loans or otherwise, remain a charge upon the area of land comprised in the district of each respective Board, and the United Board to continue to levy such special and other rates as may be necessary to liquidate such liabilities in the same manner as the dissolved Board could do.