

the river or stream in such districts respectively is, in my opinion, a sound one, still some discrimination should be used in applying it where it is manifest that, owing to causes other than natural ones, one district causes the Board more expense than would be the case if such cause did not exist. The question of appeal from the Board's decision will be dealt with in answering Issue V.

*Issue III.—Should or should not the present method of electing the members of the Drainage Board be continued?*

The plaintiffs ask that the law be altered so as to enable the local authorities within the Rural and Sewage Areas to nominate members from among themselves to act on the Drainage Board, as they contend that the Board would then be more in touch with the local requirements, and would thus be much more efficient.

A great deal of evidence was given both for and against this contention, but no evidence whatever was given to show that the Board was wasteful, or that it mismanages its funds or constructs improper or insufficient works, or, in fact, has been guilty of any impropriety or want of tact whatever, save and except that it sometimes tells local bodies who ask for information "to go and find it out from the Board's books for themselves." (See next issue.)

On the other hand we have medical testimony showing that whereas before the Board was set up typhoid and diphtheria were rampant in and about the city and Rural Areas, yet now the city is one of the healthiest cities in the Dominion. Exhibit 14 shows that, whereas in 1875 in the City of Christchurch, with a population of 10,611, there were 49 deaths from typhoid and 21 from phthisis and the general death-rate was 30·4, yet in 1889, with a population of 16,785, there were only 5 deaths from fever, 8 from phthisis, and the general death-rate was 9·77, and the health of the city appears to be as good now as it was in 1889, and the health of the city reflects itself in the Rural Areas.

No doubt it would be a very good thing to have the assistance on the Drainage Board of such a man as, say, the present Mayor of Woolston if he were nominated by his Council, as he has had very great experience in local matters and his ability and knowledge would be invaluable; but all members of local bodies have not the same knowledge, time, and zeal that he has. There are also very serious objections to nominated Boards, and the idea is opposed to the democratic notions of the age.

Under these circumstances therefore, and as the plaintiffs failed to show that the present Board were in any way incapable of fulfilling their trust or had mismanaged it, or were not supported by public opinion, I can only report that the evidence did not support the contention that the present method of electing the members of the Board should be altered. The Board originally consisted of eight members. The Act of 1880 increased the number to nine, and the Act of 1902 increased the number to eleven. It may be that this number requires to be increased to give better representation to some of the more congested districts, but this question was not argued before me.

*Issue IV.—Is or is not the system of book-keeping adopted by the Board sufficient?*

A very great deal of professional and other evidence was given on the subject, and the books themselves and voluminous accounts were produced.

The evidence shows that at the present time the books and accounts of the Board are kept strictly in accordance with the law, and that they fulfil their purposes quite well enough *from the point of view of the Board*.

They do not, however, always disclose in plain form certain information which the plaintiffs from time to time require, although it is not difficult for any one who knows the run of the books or for a trained accountant to find the information therein. Thus the yearly balance-sheet summarises the operations of the Board as an entire district, and, while it gives the principal items of