

What I do think should be done is that the Board should be required to send a copy of its estimates, financial statement, and balance-sheet to each local authority within its district so soon as these documents have been adopted by the Board. Also, the balance-sheet should, either in itself or in schedules attached to it, be made to disclose the position of each of its Sewage and Rural Areas. If these things were done, and if reasonable information were supplied by the Board to the local authorities when they asked for the same, the present cause of complaint as to the insufficiency of the Board's books would cease to exist.

Issue V.—Whether or not there should be any tribunal to which disputes between the Drainage Board and the local bodies representing the Rural or Sewage Areas should be referred to for settlement?

This question refers primarily to the dispute as to the method adopted by the Drainage Board in apportioning the cost of cleansing rivers and streams, referred to in Issue II, and if that were likely to be the only trouble that might arise in future between the Board and the outside areas I should advise that such a tribunal be not set up, because the Board itself is quite competent to settle a matter of this nature.

The Drainage Board opposes the setting-up of any such tribunal as likely to lead to endless disputes between the Board and the Rural and Sewage Areas. This result would, however, not follow, because once a decision had been come to Your Excellency would be no more likely to allow such a decision to be questioned before a Commission, without good *prima facie* evidence having been given, than is now required in similar cases under sections 118 and 119 of "The Public Works Act, 1905"; and if apparently there were good reasons for complaint why should not the Board's actions be subject to review the same as the action of any other local authority? There are several sections in "The Counties Act, 1886," which give a right of appeal, and, in particular, section 321 provides for a general appeal to Your Excellency on several different grounds; but I know of only one instance in which an appeal under that section has been made, and then the case was a strong one.

In the Public Works Act and in most Acts relating to local bodies there are various rights of appeal, and in asking for such a right as against the Drainage Board the plaintiffs are only asking for what is well recognised in the case of most other administrative bodies with even greater powers and responsibilities than the Drainage Board. No doubt the Drainage Board would rather not leave it open that any of their actions could be subject to review or appeal; but had there been a right of appeal with power to make an adjustment there would never have been any necessity for the present expensive inquiry, and the present grave difficulties would not have arisen, because they would long since have been adjusted.

I am of opinion therefore that in the interest of all parties there should be a general right of appeal to Your Excellency, both for the Board itself and for the Rural and Sewage Areas, and that Your Excellency should have power to make such order from time to time as Your Excellency may think fit as being necessary to adjust complaints or difficulties that may arise and to carry out the intent of and purpose of the several Acts that relate to the drainage district.

CONCLUSION.

Coming now to the specific questions to which Your Excellency desires a reply I respectfully answer as follows:—

Question A: Have the various local authorities whose districts are comprised wholly or partially in the Christchurch Drainage District any legitimate cause of complaint by reason of the provisions of "The Christchurch Drainage Act, 1875," or its amendments or of the action of the Christchurch Drainage Board thereunder, and, if so, how should such cause of complaint be removed,