

powers as to the granting of loans, the rights of each local body to obtain grants of the money provided by the Bill being clearly defined by it. But the reason for proposing a Board was that without it the powers proposed to be conferred on it would have to be conferred on the Government of the day, and this especially as to the enforcing repayment of loans seems objectionable.

Then the Bill provided £150,000 out of loan, and a yearly grant of surplus Land Fund up to £150,000, for giving aid to main roads, which were roads declared to be such by the Board, with the approval of Parliament.

Any County Council or Councils which desired to construct a main road, and which could have provided a fourth of the cost, could at once have got the other three-fourths from the Board as a free grant in aid.

If such Council was not in a position to provide the fourth, then, if the ratepayers approved by a poll the levying of a special rate to repay such fourth, the Board were to supply the whole of the money necessary for the construction, three-fourths of it as a free grant in aid, and the other one-fourth being repayable by twenty half-yearly debentures of the Council, which were not to bear interest.

In order to show the working of this part of the Bill I will give an instance. Suppose a road from A to B had been declared a main road. The Council was desirous of constructing the whole, or a portion of it, which would have cost, say, £10,000. The Council could, on finding £2,500 themselves, at once have got £7,500 as a free grant in aid, or else they could have got the whole £10,000 on giving debentures for paying £125 every half-year for ten years, to be secured by the levying of a rate which would every half-year for ten years have produced £125. Of course the amount of this rate could have proportionately diminished if the County could or chose to furnish a part of such £2,500.

The other works to be aided by the Government were river works and district roads, which were all roads not main roads. Aid could have been given under this part of the Bill to Road Boards or River Boards as well as County Councils. To start with, it was proposed that the Board should be provided with £200,000 out of loan for these purposes.

Any such local body had a right under the Bill to obtain an advance of the whole or any portion of the cost of such works, if the ratepayers had by poll approved the levying of a rate to secure the repayment of the amount advanced in the following manner. It was to give debentures for the whole amount advanced, paying principal back with interest by twenty-seven half-yearly payments of £4 10s. for every £100.

In order to show the working of the Bill as regards river works or district roads I will give an instance. Suppose a Road Board required £500 to construct a district road. It could, on complying with the necessary conditions, have obtained the whole of the money on giving debentures for twenty-seven half-yearly payments of £22 10s. each. On the payment of the last of which the whole debt, principal as well as interest, would have been extinguished.

The Act contained a number of machinery-provisions for insuring that the estimate of cost on which moneys were to be advanced were reasonable; that the moneys could have been applied only to the works for which they were obtained; for taking the poll of the ratepayers; for enabling local bodies to unite in an application; and for the making and collection of special rates, &c.

If the applications for the year had exceeded the money at the disposal of the Board such money would have been divided *pro rata*, the Board having no power to grant the application of one body in preference to that of another.

It should be mentioned that the definition of road given by the Bill included bridges, and that priority was given to the applications of bodies desirous of reconstructing roads suddenly destroyed by flood.

Another part of the Bill provided a scheme for constructing roads through Crown lands, either before or shortly after sale, out of the purchase-money to be received therefrom, thus throwing the cost of the construction of all main roads through lands now in the hands of the Crown upon the Land Fund.

It will be seen that by the proposal it was suggested to provide at once half a million of money for road-making; but, of course, if adopted and found to answer, it could have been expanded to any extent required for settlement, if