

TIME-LIMIT FOR SPEECHES.

Mr. H. J. SLADE (Hobson County Council) moved, That there be a time-limit of five minutes for speeches.

Mr. R. MOORE (North Canterbury; Deputy Chairman of the Lyttelton Harbour Board) thought ten minutes little enough for the proper discussion of such an important matter. If they were only to have five minutes in which to discuss a Bill of that importance they might as well go home.

Dr. J. C. COLLINS (Cook Hospital Board) said it was not a question of discussing the entire Bill in five minutes or ten minutes. There were many points in connection with the Bill, each of which they would have to consider carefully. If seventy delegates were going to speak on one point, surely five minutes was quite sufficient.

Mr. R. MOORE said he would agree to ten minutes on the general principles of the Bill and five minutes on the details.

Mr. G. J. GARLAND thought five minutes quite sufficient.

The PRESIDENT thought they might arrange it in this way: fix a limit of five minutes, and if any gentleman at the expiration of his time was developing a line of argument which the Conference desired to hear continued, his time might be extended.

This was agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

The PRESIDENT thought it would be well if they elected an Executive for the Conference, consisting of, say, seven members, in order that they, with himself, might consider the order of business, and endeavour to simplify the procedure. If they all sat there for two or three days and did nothing but talk, they would probably be no nearer their goal than they were at present. He would suggest that the Conference talk to-day right up till 10 or 11 o'clock at night.—(No, no.)—Well, whenever they finished the talk the Conference could divide itself up into, say, eight different Committees, every delegate being placed on one or more of these Committees. He would suggest that the Committees should be as follows—and he would like the assistance of an Executive to further consider this matter; (1) Local Government Board Committee; (2) a Committee to consider the abolition of Road and Town Boards and the Local Committee proposal; (3) a Committee regarding subsidies and grants; (4) a Committee with regard to Provincial Councils—as to their desirability, functions, &c.; (5) a Committee with regard to the functions and powers of the County Councils; (6) a Committee regarding the relation of the local governing bodies to Parliament and the Government; (7) a Municipal Committee, with special relation to the inclusion of contiguous districts and town-planning; (8) a Committee regarding the rating-powers and the exercise of the rating-powers of local bodies. If Committees were set up on these lines they would, he thought, enable the Conference to concentrate its efforts on broad phases of the question. These Committees would virtually cover the entire Bill. The Conference could cease altogether its session to-morrow, in order to give the Committees the fullest opportunity of dealing with their particular subjects. Then on Thursday the full Conference could again meet for the purpose of receiving and considering the reports of the Committees. Each Committee should also be empowered to make general recommendations, regarding local government, outside the scope of its own work. That was his idea of how they could best proceed to reduce their work to a minimum, and get satisfactory results.

A DELEGATE: How do you propose to elect a Committee?

The PRESIDENT said most of the gentlemen there had something more than a local reputation, and were known, and it was possible to select them for the Committees in that way. If there were any difficulty they might select members of the Committee from provincial districts, allowing a delegate from each district on each Committee. For example, it would be desirable that Mayors of cities should be on the Municipal Committee. Those gentlemen who had taken an active part in county matters should be on the Counties Committee; and they should endeavour to get men of the widest experience in public affairs to deal with large questions such as the Provincial Councils.

Mr. W. S. MASLIN (South Canterbury Hospital and Charitable Aid Board) did not think the Minister's proposal would facilitate the business, because after a Committee had come to a decision the whole matter would have to be reopened and discussed by the Conference. He would move, as soon as he got an opportunity, that the whole of Part X of the Bill be deleted. Then, if education were eliminated from the Bill, there was no good in having a Committee to discuss it. A great deal could be pulled out of the Bill before they started to build up.

A DELEGATE took it that this could very well be done during the rest of the day. What the Minister suggested for the present was that he should get the opinion of the gentlemen who had been summoned upon matters which they themselves were most conversant with, and this could be done by setting up Committees. He supported the proposal. He understood that the Minister merely wished to get an idea as to the setting-up of the Committees, and then proceed to the discussion and deal with the questions raised by Mr. Maslin. By that time they might have narrowed the Bill down to a few general principles, and the detail work could be left to the Committees.

Mr. E. N. LIFFITON (ex-Mayor of Wanganui) thought a Committee should be set up to report as to what amendments were required in the various statutes under which local bodies were at present working. He took it that if that were done it would narrow down their work considerably. He moved accordingly.

The PRESIDENT said, with regard to the proposal that had been made by the delegate who had just sat down, he would point out that if this Conference reviewed the whole of the legislation in relation to local bodies at present on the statute-book of the Dominion, it would lead to disappointment, and there would be no result at all. That was not the object of the Conference, because such investigations had already been made, and they had the information. There were