

In the case of the harbour loans, the figures were substantially the same, as follows : 81·5 per cent. accepted without reserve, 6·8 per cent. withheld acceptance but offered no objection, and 10·2 per cent. failed to reply. Actual objection to the proposals was made by only 1·5 per cent.

On the basis of these figures, the matter was then put before responsible representative bodies in Thames, and also fully explained to a public meeting of citizens. In so doing, it was pointed out to them that these proposals would mean that the maximum the people of Thames would have to provide annually by way of loan charges would be £12,000. General accord was given in Thames to the proposals.

Other matters discussed throughout the proceedings were the desirability of continuing the system of Commissioner control, the further extension of the period of operation of the special valuation roll, and the election of the Mayor and Advisory Committee. The last-mentioned point was quite a prominent one in the proceedings. Whilst the Mayor and Councillors of Thames are largely shorn of their powers while the Commissioner is in office, nevertheless the people of Thames were feeling somewhat restive at the fact that they had not had a vote on the election of their representatives for some eight or nine years. It was thus felt desirable to give them the opportunity in the future of electing the Mayor and Advisory Committee for Thames.

The Thames Borough Commissioner Act was prepared on the above basis, and was in due course passed by Parliament. The provisions contained in the Act are as follows : —

- (1) Power for the conversion of the whole of the debt of Thames at 3 per cent. over a maximum period of forty years ;
- (2) Extension of the term of office of the Thames Borough Commissioner for six years until May, 1947 ;
- (3) Provision for the election of the Mayor and Advisory Committee ;
- (4) Extension for six years until 31st March, 1947, of the period of operation of the special valuation roll for Thames ;
- (5) Validation of the payment of interest at reduced rates for a further temporary period ;
- (6) Provision for the establishment of a Public Works Reserve Fund to be available for carrying out those urgent public works which may become necessary at any time ;
- (7) Miscellaneous matters of an administrative nature relating to special orders and municipal buildings.

The passing of this legislation can be regarded as a real landmark in the history of Thames, and it is confidently hoped that it will be the final major process in bringing about the ultimate complete rehabilitation of the borough.

E. POSTPONEMENT OF LOCAL-BODY ELECTIONS.

On account of war conditions consideration was given to the question of postponing the local-body elections due to be held in May, 1941. As a preliminary step in the consideration of this matter the Minister of Internal Affairs consulted by letter with the various local-body associations and other interested organizations. As the consensus of opinion expressed by these organizations was in favour of the elections being held, the Government concluded that the elections should be held.

F. ABOLITION OF WAITARA HARBOUR DISTRICT.

An interesting development during the year was the abolition of the Waitara Harbour District. The Waitara Harbour Board had functioned since about 1876, and had done good work in developing the district. With changing times, improved transport, and diminishing shipping returns, the authorities rightly decided that there was no longer any necessity for a separate Harbour Board for Waitara. The bulk of the trade went through New Plymouth, and the New Plymouth Harbour Board, with its modern facilities, was better able to handle the produce which formerly went over the Waitara wharves. There was general agreement on the part of all concerned that the Waitara Harbour Board should go out of existence and that its functions should be taken over by the New Plymouth Harbour Board.

There was some dispute over the disposition of revenues from the Board's endowments. The Waitara Harbour Board possessed a number of valuable endowments, and the annual returns from these endowments was largely instrumental in keeping the Board going and particularly in keeping the Waitara River clear. Some of the parties wanted these endowments to go to the New Plymouth Harbour Board to be devoted towards harbour purposes, whilst others wanted them to remain in Waitara to be used for purposes connected with the Waitara River. As the parties were unable to reach any agreement on the point, the Minister of Internal Affairs was called upon to adjudicate. His decision, in general terms, was that the revenues from these endowments should in the meantime remain in Waitara and should be used for the general purposes of protection and clearing of the Waitara River.

The Waitara Harbour Act, 1940, gave effect to the aforementioned decisions to abolish the district and utilize the endowment revenues in the manner indicated. The abolition of this district was another step towards the goal of having one harbour authority for the whole of the Taranaki District.

IV. TOWN-PLANNING.

There has been no appreciable slackening in town-planning activity during the year. Five meetings of the Town-planning Board were held, and the agendas covered a wide range of town-planning activities. Final approval was given to the Matamata and New Lynn Borough Town-planning Schemes, and provisional approval accorded the Christchurch City Scheme. Permission was granted to the Dannevirke Borough Council to bring down a scheme in terms of section 23 of the Town-planning Act modifying the scheme now in operation.