

### III. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS.

The responsibilities of the Department in the constitutional field included the following :—

- (a) Action by the Under-Secretary as Clerk of the Writs in connection with the issue and return of the writ for the by-election in the Christchurch East Electoral District :
- (b) The terms of appointment of thirteen Legislative Councillors expired and two vacancies occurred through death. Sixteen appointments were made to the Legislative Council :
- (c) Action in respect of the appointment and resignation of members of the Executive Council and Ministers, and the appointment of Parliamentary Under-Secretaries :
- (d) The prorogation and summoning of Parliament :
- (e) Appointment of Deputy of the Governor-General.

### IV. LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

#### A. GENERAL ORGANIZATION.

The services of the Local Government Branch of the Department were, as usual, utilized to the maximum extent in carrying out the Department's statutory functions arising out of the local government legislation and in giving advice and assistance to local authorities and others interested in local government. Amongst the more general matters dealt with were—

- (a) The constitution of new fire districts :
- (b) Alterations of boundaries of various local districts :
- (c) The abolition of the system of separate riding finance in counties. Seventy-three County Councils have now abolished this system :
- (d) Various approvals and other actions affecting the financial requirements of local authorities :
- (e) Miscellaneous activities relating to local-body by-laws, including provision with respect to earthquake conditions in certain districts :
- (f) Rating and valuation questions, including urban farm-land rating :
- (g) The election or appointment of members of local authorities. As a war measure, local authorities were empowered, in lieu of holding by elections, to appoint qualified persons to fill extraordinary vacancies. This does not apply to Mayoral vacancies :
- (h) The continued administration and rehabilitation of Thames Borough and Matakaoa County :
- (i) The proposals of Mr. A. D. Wilson, of the British Fire Service, for the reorganization of the Fire Services generally to meet wartime conditions. The Department was represented on the special Committee set up to report to the Government thereon.

#### B. LEGISLATION.

##### (1) *Statutes Amendment Act, 1942.*

Several sections in this Act amended Acts administered by this Department. One provision altered the period of Fire Board appointments and elections from a biennial to triennial basis.

##### (2) *Local Legislation Act, 1942.*

A total of forty clauses was included in this Bill as finally passed. The Act dealt with a wide range of local government activity.

##### (3) *Local Acts.*

Seven local Bills were submitted to the Department for examination and report, and these were duly passed into law.

### V. TOWN-PLANNING.

Town-planning activities were severely restricted on account of the war. Most attention was devoted to the metropolitan schemes under preparation for Auckland and Christchurch and to matters arising out of certain appeals. The Town-planning Board was reappointed, but no meetings were held.

### VI. LAND-AGENTS AND AUCTIONEERS.

During the year 708 (688) land-agents' licenses were issued and 6 (11) transfers granted ; 432 (466) auctioneers' licenses were issued, 0 (6) transfers granted ; and 31 (74) changes of endorsement of seller made (last year's figures in parentheses).

### VII. PRISONERS OF WAR.

During the year progress was made in obtaining information with regard to persons of New Zealand origin in enemy-occupied territory, including the Far East. The High Commissioner for New Zealand in London was able to secure information as to the whereabouts of a number of merchant service and civilian internees, and in every case the next-of-kin or relatives were advised. Some New Zealanders were repatriated under exchange arrangements with enemy Governments, and the Department assisted them in every possible way on their arrival in New Zealand.

The next-of-kin of the personnel of merchant ships lost by enemy action were advised in every case, and the Department made the necessary transport arrangements on the arrival of the personnel in New Zealand. A number of New Zealand Merchant Service men were also on an allied vessel sunk in the Pacific, and all but one were rescued. Appropriate advice was sent to the next-of-kin.

### VIII. PHYSICAL WELFARE AND RECREATION.

Several of the male officers have been drawn into the armed forces, in which their special qualifications as instructors and demonstrators in physical training and recreation are being put to good use.

As far as conditions have permitted, beneficial activities have been carried on for the Home Guard (particularly in unarmed combat) and various civil welfare units. The main service has been for the Air Training Corps. In addition to the maintenance of full programmes for physical training and recreation (including inter-squadron tournaments), the officers have assisted importantly in recruiting campaigns.