

TOWN AND EXTRA-URBAN PLANNING

Following the merger of the Ministry of Works and the Public Works Department, the functions of the Town-planning Section were defined and provision made for the appointment of town-planning officers with professional qualifications in accordance with standards adopted in Great Britain. The work of the Section includes not only planning problems related to Government development works, but also the secondment to local authorities of qualified planning officers to undertake the preparation of planning schemes for these authorities. Secondment in this way is available only to those local authorities who have no qualified staff and who are otherwise unable to secure the services of an outside qualified consultant. The Section, in addition, has been called upon to advise other Departments, and a considerable amount of work was done during the year in connection with industrial areas, the co-ordination of housing proposals with local-body plans, and the development proposals for Departments such as State Forest Service and Maori Affairs.

From information gradually being accumulated the Section is also able to assess developmental trends and is called upon to assist in defining location of Government buildings and educational and other institutions. Considerable progress has been made also in co-ordinating, as a matter of future policy, the administrative activities of the Government in combined centres in the principal cities, and this is being done in the fullest consultation with the local authorities concerned.

The Town-planning Amendment Act, 1948, clarified a number of provisions of the principal Act which in the past has led to uncertainty in the preparation and administration of planning schemes. The Act also provided additional powers for the acquisition of land and other necessary development by local authorities. The Act has given local authorities confidence to proceed with their planning schemes. There is a general realization of the necessity for ordered development in even the smaller towns throughout New Zealand, and the services of the technical staff have been much in demand by these authorities throughout both Islands.

The staff has also undertaken considerable responsibility in preparing the co-ordinating evidence and planning information required for several hearings of the Local Government Commission. During the year these included the very extensive inquiry into the future local-Government administration in the Porirua Basin area.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Regional Councils were constituted by the Organization for National Development to embrace the whole of the country in conformity with the Government's policy of co-ordinated planning, with due regard to observance of all local interests. On taking over this responsibility from the Organization for National Development the Ministry of Works completed, at your direction, schedules of works envisaged by both the Government and local authorities which would require consideration in the period of some ten years ahead. These schedules were announced by yourself in the various regional centres throughout New Zealand. Although considerable interest was at first taken in this approach to a planned development, this interest has not been maintained generally in the rural areas. In one form or another, however, most of the metropolitan bodies have instituted planning authorities in conformity with the Government's intentions, and although many points of dispute have arisen, plans for the orderly development of the larger cities are now well advanced in conformity with accepted town-planning practice and on a much better basis than hitherto.

The lack of interest in the rural areas is attributed largely to conflict with the established procedure of the local bodies included in each region. Regional Councils were constituted on an advisory basis only and hence were divested of any authority to proceed without the concurrence of the local authorities concerned.