

1924.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1924.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

SIR,—

Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 23rd June, 1924.

I have the honour to submit herewith the Annual Report of the Department for the year ended 31st March, 1924.

I have, &c.,

J. HISLOP, Under-Secretary.

The Hon. R. F. Bollard, Minister of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

REPORT.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

I HAVE again to report a particularly active year in matters affecting local government.

Counties.—The most important move in county government occurred in Marlborough, where the Counties Act was brought into full force. The county was at the same time redivided into ridings, and subsequently the County Council took steps to abolish the whole of the road districts in the county. This marked the culmination of action commenced many years ago, which has at various stages given rise to considerable thought and investigation by the Department. It is hoped that this centralization of local-governing forces, together with the union of the river and drainage districts which occurred some few years ago, will be the beginning of a new era in the Marlborough District.

Five County Councils took steps to alter riding boundaries and adjust representation, and the boundaries of ridings in the Waitomo County were defined by the Governor-General by Proclamation in pursuance of authority given in the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1923. Representation was fixed for the Tahuna Riding of the Piako County.

One County Council had conferred on it certain powers of Borough Councils with respect to water-supply.

The triennial election of Councillors took place during the year, but on account of floods the election in several counties in Canterbury had to be postponed, and this was subsequently validated.

An Order in Council was issued fixing the amount of principal and interest repayable by workers in respect of advances for the erection of workers' dwellings.

With a view to facilitating the union of counties an important provision was inserted in the Finance Act, 1923, providing that when two or more counties are united the subsidy payable to the united county shall not be less in any year than the aggregate amount of subsidy paid or payable to each of the united counties in the year preceding union. It is thought that the present time, with the grouping of counties for main-highway purposes, is a favourable opportunity for bringing about the union of more counties, and the question of what further provision should be made to assist this project is being carefully gone into.

The Counties Conference held a sitting, and as a result a large number of resolutions asking for amendments of the existing law affecting counties, and for new legislation, have been received. These resolutions are all receiving careful consideration.