

were appointed in two cases for the purpose of hearing appeals against the decisions of Borough Councils with respect to applications under section 335, Municipal Corporations Act, 1920, for approval to the subdivision of certain land. The New Lynn Borough Council was authorized to make by-laws fixing water charges according to the quantity consumed. A financial adjustment respecting the Te Kuiti Borough and the Waitomo County, following on certain alterations of boundaries of those districts, involved several important questions. The regulations formerly issued authorizing the investment of Renewal Funds and Reserve Funds in certain securities were revoked. The biennial general election of members of Borough Councils throughout the Dominion was held during the year.

The Municipal Conference again met, this time in Invercargill, the holding of the Conference coinciding with the proclaiming of Invercargill to be a city. The Conference was of more than usual importance, several proposals of a far-reaching nature being discussed. An officer of this Department attended the Conference and remained throughout the whole of the proceedings, thus enabling the Department to have a better knowledge of the proposals discussed. As usual, the report of the proceedings of the Conference is being printed by the Municipal Association, and will be submitted to the Government for consideration of the several remits and resolutions passed.

Town Districts.—Petitions for the constitution of the Paibia Town District, in the Bay of Islands County, and of the Mount Maunganui Town District, in the County of Tauranga, were received during the year, and are under consideration. A petition for the alteration of the boundaries of the Papatoetoe Town District was not granted. The Papatoetoe Town Board was authorized to make by-laws fixing water charges according to the quantity consumed.

Road Boards.—As the number of Road Boards throughout the Dominion has rapidly decreased within recent years, the Department is not now called upon to consider many questions relative to this phase of local government. Following on the legislation passed in regard to the Sounds County, the Croixelles Road District was constituted in that county and arrangements made for holding the first election of members of the Board. The new borough of One Tree Hill was formerly a road district.

River Districts.—A petition for the constitution of the Motueka River District, in the Waimea County, is under consideration. The boundaries of three river districts were altered. The powers of a Drainage Board were conferred on the Mangawara River Board. The triennial general election of members of River Boards was held during the year, and the results duly gazetted in accordance with law. The time for holding the election was extended in four cases. Certain appointments of members of River Boards were made by the Governor-General.

Land-drainage Districts.—The boundaries of three land-drainage districts were altered, and petitions for the alteration of boundaries of two other districts were under consideration. A proposal to abolish the Kimihia Drainage District, in the Waikato County, was also under consideration. Special orders were passed by two Drainage Boards relative to subdivisions and representation. The general election of trustees for several districts was held during the year, and the results duly gazetted in accordance with law. The time for holding the election was extended in four cases, and an irregularity in the holding of it validated in one case. Certain appointments by the Governor-General were also made.

Taupiri Swamp.—The Department was particularly concerned with a matter of local interest to several River and Drainage Boards in the Waikato district—viz., the control of the area of approximately 100,000 acres known as the Taupiri Swamp. Several Boards are at present operating over this area, but it is realized that united control is necessary before the land can be adequately drained and protected. The Lands and Survey Department has prepared a suggested scheme of land-drainage and river protection for the area, and officers of that Department and of this Department met in Hamilton the representatives of the Boards with a view to bringing about a united control of the district. Legislation was found to be necessary. This legislation was prepared by this Department in conjunction with the Boards concerned and then submitted to the Law Drafting Office to draft the necessary Bill. It was subsequently introduced into Parliament, and became law under the title of the Taupiri Drainage and River District Act, 1929. The Act makes provision for the formation of one Board to control the whole of the area, makes it incumbent on that Board to prepare a comprehensive scheme of drainage and river works for the district, and confers on the Board sufficiently wide powers to enable the scheme to be adequately carried out and for the cost thereof to be apportioned equitably over the district. The Department is in close touch with those concerned, with a view to putting into operation the provisions of the Act.

By-laws of Local Bodies.—Three sets of by-laws were confirmed by the Minister under the By-laws Act, 1910.

Rating Act.—The system of rating on the unimproved value was adopted in the Ohinemuri County. Proposals to adopt that system in the Mount Eden Borough and the Makara County were rejected.

Local Elections and Polls Act.—Extensions of time were granted for the taking of certain steps in connection with the election of certain members of the Cambridge Electric-power Board and for the hour of closing of a poll in the Waitemata Electric-power District.

LEGISLATION.

Reference has already been made to the legislation passed relative to the Taupiri Swamp and to local government in the Sounds County.

The following other legislation affecting this Department was brought down last session :—

Counties Amendment Act.—This is a short Act simplifying the procedure for the making of separate and special works rates by County Councils. Under the Counties Act these rates may be made so that funds may be obtained for carrying out special undertakings, but the procedure was too costly and cumbersome, as a petition and a special order were necessary each year ; furthermore, ratepayers