

Land-drainage Districts.—The Hillside Drainage District in the Waikato was abolished. Four alterations of boundaries of drainage districts were made. The Elstow, Hungahunga, Tahuna, and Waitoa Drainage Districts in the Piako and Matamata Counties were united under the name of the Thames Valley Drainage District. The acceptance by the drainage districts concerned of the policy of the Department to encourage amalgamations of districts which are contiguous to one another, in order that one comprehensive scheme may be adopted for the whole area, is very satisfactory.

Taupiri Swamp.—In the last report reference was made to the continued efforts on the part of the Department to bring about one control of the Taupiri Swamp. The Taupiri Drainage and River District Act, 1929, was duly amended so as to provide for rating in the Taupiri District to be on an acreage basis. Following on this legislation, and in accordance with the decision referred to in the last report, the district was constituted under the name of the Taupiri Drainage and River District, and the necessary arrangements made for the first election and first meeting of the Board. The Department also gave what assistance it could in other questions which arose relating to the preliminary activities of the Board. Following on the constitution of the district, some of the existing drainage and river authorities in the area have been abolished, and the question of abolishing others is under consideration. Here again the efforts of the Department to effect amalgamation were successful, notwithstanding the existence of problems of a complex and controversial nature. It is to be hoped that the example shown in this case and in the other recent case of the Thames Valley Drainage District will induce similar localities to aim at obtaining unity of control instead of multiplicity of control.

By-laws of Local Bodies.—By-laws of two County Councils were approved in terms of section 109 of the Counties Act, 1920. Four sets of by-laws were confirmed under the By-laws Act, 1910.

Public Bodies' Leases Act.—Three leasing authorities were declared under this Act.

Rating Act.—Polls relative to unimproved-value rating were taken in four districts. A proposal to adopt the system of rating on the unimproved value was carried in the Wanganui City and defeated in Dunedin City. A proposal that the system of rating on the unimproved value should apply to all rates was defeated in Petone Borough. A proposal to rescind the system of rating on the unimproved value was defeated in the Henderson Town District.

Local Elections and Polls Act.—The time for closing a poll in the Auckland Transport District was extended. Irregular proceedings in connection with the election of certain members of the Teviot Electric-power Board were validated.

Designation of Districts.—The name of a locality known as White Hills was changed to Pine Valley, and that of Little Murray's Bay to Mairangi Bay. Both these localities are in the Waitemata County. The residents of a locality in the Waitomo County requested that the name Kokako be assigned to their district. After investigation of the request the name Pukemoe was suggested and adopted.

Chartered Associations (Protection of Names and Uniforms) Act, 1930.—This Act provides for the protection of the name, uniforms, badges, &c., of any association incorporated by Royal Charter and not being an association representative of any profession or business. An application for such protection was received from the Girl Guides Association for the protection of the name of that association and names, badges, &c., associated with it. After certain essential inquiries had been made, the association was granted the protection it desired.

Local Government Reform.—The Government made further references during the year to a proposal to set up a Commission to inquire into local-government control, and the Department has engaged in work incidental thereto. Although a Commission has not been set up, it has been announced that the Minister of Internal Affairs will investigate the matter to determine what reforms are deemed necessary, and the best method to give effect thereto. It is not necessary to quote particulars herein of the local authorities in this Dominion as such information is contained in various publications, including the Local Authorities Handbook. It is, however, appropriate to mention that the number of local bodies actively functioning at 31st December, 1930, was 689, in addition to which there are other authorities intimately connected with certain aspects of local government, and it is reasonable to assert that this number is much in excess of the requirements of a Dominion with a population of a million and a half.

LEGISLATION.

Counties Amendment Act.—This Act empowers County Councils, if they so desire, to abolish the system of separate riding finance in counties. This system has operated in counties for a long time past, and in its day played an important part in the development of country areas. The changed conditions of recent times have removed the necessity for such a rigid method of operating accounts, and the passing of the Act provides a means of enabling County Councils to meet these changed conditions.

Sections 26 and 27, Finance Act, 1931 (No. 4).—These sections authorized local authorities, with the concurrence of the Unemployment Board, to undertake work for the benefit of private property and for the cost of such work to be recovered as a rate from the owner or occupier of any lands benefited thereby.

Local Legislation Act.—The usual Local Legislation Act contained 55 clauses affecting the activities of numerous local authorities and public bodies.

Local Acts.—Fifteen local Bills were examined by the Department, and reports thereon submitted to the Local Bills Committee. In several cases a representative of the Department appeared before the Committee and gave evidence.