

published and an objection was lodged by the Southland County Council on certain grounds. In view of the issues involved, the Department suggested to the parties concerned that a conference should be held to discuss the question of the future control of river-protection in the river district area. The conference was duly convened and was attended by representatives of the County Council and the River Board. The petitioners were not represented. The County Council subsequently advised the Department that it could not see its way to acquiesce in the abolition of the district. The matter is being given further consideration.

*Land Drainage Districts.*—In terms of section 6 of the Land Drainage Amendment Act, 1913, the Sluggish River Drainage Board presented a petition praying for the inclusion of certain additional lands in its district. Following on the publication of the usual notice calling for objections, a number of objections were lodged against the proposal. A Commission set up to report on the proposal reported that in its opinion the area in question did not, and would not in the future, derive any benefit from the operations of the Drainage Board and accordingly should not be included in the drainage district. No further action was taken on the petition. The boundaries of three drainage districts were altered by the inclusion therein of certain areas of land. A special order was passed by the Ngaroto Drainage Board altering the boundaries of subdivisions and fixing representation therefor. The results of the election of members of several Drainage Boards were gazetted in accordance with law. The time for the preparation of ratepayers' lists was extended in the case of two Drainage Boards. The membership of the Lower Mangapiko Drainage Board was decreased from seven members to five members. In terms of section 13 of the Water-supply Act, 1908, the public office of the Hauraki United Drainage Board at Turua was appointed as the place for the deposit of any plan required to be prepared and deposited by the Hauraki Plains County Council with respect to the East Water-supply District constituted by that Council.

*Rating Act.*—The time for the preparation of the mining valuation roll for the County of Grey was extended by Order in Council.

*Ashburton Borough Rating.*—A case involving some unusual features was that of the Ashburton Borough Council. This Council levies its rates on the annual value, and accordingly a valuation roll is prepared for that purpose each year. When the valuation list was prepared in January, 1938, preparatory to its becoming the valuation roll for the borough for the purpose of the succeeding financial year's rates, for the first time in many years some very material alterations were made in the individual valuations appearing on the list. A statutory right of objection to those valuations is given to the local authority of the district and to any owner, occupier, or ratepayer affected. As, however, the established custom was not to exercise the right of objection, on account of the fact that material changes from year to year were not usually made, the Ashburton Borough Council and others affected did not at first appreciate the full significance of the changes contemplated in the aforesaid valuation list. Accordingly, they did not, within the prescribed statutory period, avail themselves of their rights to object.

When the true position became known the Ashburton Borough Council, as well as a large number of owners, occupiers, and ratepayers, desired the opportunity to object. The help of the Department was sought in an endeavour to find a way out of the difficulty. To this end an Order in Council was issued under the Rating Act, 1925, extending the time within which the Ashburton Borough Council could give notice of its objection to the whole of the valuation list. The lodging of such objection, which was subsequently done, achieves the desired end in that all the valuations on the list now come before an Assessment Court for review.

*Urban Farm-land Rating.*—One Assessment Court was set up, and changes were made in the membership of two Assessment Courts.

*Local Elections and Polls.*—The time for closing polls was extended in two cases.

*By-laws of Local Bodies.*—The by-laws of three local authorities were confirmed under the By-laws Act, 1910.

*Public Bodies' Leases.*—Three local authorities were declared to be leasing authorities under the Public Bodies Leases Act, 1908.

*Designation of Districts.*—The name of Kioreroa Harbour, in the County of Whangarei, was changed to Port Whangarei. The change in name becomes effective as on and from 1st July, 1938. An application by the Raglan County Council for a change of name of Tikorangi Hill to Mount Maunsell was not granted.

*Petitions to Parliament.*—Four petitions presented to Parliament were referred to the Department for report, and the Department was represented at the proceedings before the appropriate parliamentary Committees.

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM.

The subject of local government reform was again amongst the most prominent of the Department's activities, and a great degree of public attention was focussed on it. The Minister of Internal Affairs (Hon. W. E. Parry) continued with his campaign of meeting in their own districts the various County Councils and other local authorities affected by the tentative plan of redistribution of local districts. In the course of so doing he addressed a considerable number of meetings which were largely attended by representatives of local authorities. Much valuable information was obtained during the course of this campaign, and every effort was made to show clearly the manner in which it was intended to pursue the scheme of reform.

In many instances the local authorities followed up the meetings with the Minister by holding further meetings amongst themselves and generally investigating the proposals in more detail. The Department gave a great deal of assistance to the local authorities in this connection, and representatives of the Department attended some of those meetings when invited to do so.