

Finance Act, 1937.—Section 46 makes provision for the variation of the prices payable under contracts entered into by local authorities for the supply of goods and materials with a view to granting some relief to contractors from the additional costs involved in the performance of contracts, by reason of increased wages, shorter working-hours, and increased cost of materials.

Section 47 authorizes any local authority to expend moneys in the preparation and passing of Bills through Parliament or in assisting or opposing the passage of any Bill in cases where the interests of that local authority or the inhabitants of its district are concerned.

Section 51 validates payments made by local authorities in connection with the visit of the Australian Squadron.

Section 52 validates payments made by local authorities in connection with the flight of Miss Jean Batten during October, 1936.

Municipal Corporations Amendment Bill.—A Municipal Corporations Amendment Bill was introduced containing thirty-eight clauses and a schedule. Most of these clauses are for the purpose of giving effect to remits passed at municipal conferences. This is in accordance with the Government's policy of giving early legislative effect to such of those remits as meet with its approval. The Bill was introduced for circulation purposes only, so that its provisions could be examined by the local authorities and others concerned during the recess, and it is intended that it be again introduced next session.

Local Legislation Act, 1937.—The consideration of applications made by local authorities for the inclusion of clauses in the Local Legislation Bill and the subsequent preparation of the Bill occasioned a good deal of correspondence, investigation, and discussions. Eighty-eight applications were considered during the year, and of these, fifty were included in the Bill as finally passed. The Bill dealt with a wide range of local government matters and, as usual, local authorities of practically every class availed themselves of the opportunity to apply for special legislation as affecting their individual activities.

Local Acts.—Twenty-three Local Bills were submitted to the Department by the Local Bills Committee for examination and report. Representatives of the Department appeared before the Committee and gave evidence on several of these Bills. Nineteen of the Bills were passed into law, several being amended.

ANIMALS PROTECTION AND GAME ACT, 1921-22.

Shooting Seasons.—Open game-shooting seasons have been declared in all acclimatization districts. An important decision was to exclude Stewart Island from the operations of the open shooting season in the Southland Acclimatization District.

Sanctuaries.—During the year an area of 9 acres in the Waimarino Acclimatization District was added to the list of sanctuaries. In some cases where lands were recommended as sanctuaries it was found that through the carrying-on of farming operations the provisions of the Act could not be complied with, and these areas were excluded from the operations of the game-shooting seasons. Scenic reserves are automatically sanctuaries under the Animals Protection and Game Act.

Acclimatization Districts.—The amalgamation of the Feilding and District and the Wellington Acclimatization Districts was the only progress made towards bringing about a reduction in the number of acclimatization districts throughout the Dominion.

Importations.—As in past years, many applications were received for permission to import birds, principally for aviaries. The ban on the importation of parrots and members of the parrot family is still in force. All applications for permission to import birds and animals are the subject of very special scrutiny, and the list of birds for which permission for importation will not in any circumstances be granted is being constantly added to.

Bird-life.—A very pleasing feature is the ever-growing public interest in our bird-life. All sections of the community are realizing that, apart from the pleasure to be derived from observations of birds and their songs, the birds are of great economic value in keeping down insect pests. The work carried out by various organizations and private persons in impressing on the public the necessity for conservation and encouragement of bird-life is to be commended, and is much appreciated.

Opossums.—Open trapping seasons were declared in twenty-one acclimatization districts. The number of opossum-skins stamped was 138,729.

Stoats, Ferrets, &c.—With a view to testing the possibility of establishing markets, the Marlborough Acclimatization Society obtained a quantity of the skins of these animals, and these have been sent to England. The result of this is being awaited with particular interest, and if attractive prices are forthcoming there will be an added inducement for persons to wage war on the animals, which are undoubtedly making a heavy toll on bird-life. Reports clearly indicate that the animals have spread at an alarming rate high up into bush country, where the principal food available can only be birds and their eggs. Another enemy with which birds have to contend is the wild cat. An earnest appeal is made to the public to refrain from allowing cats to run wild or to desert the animals, leaving them to forage for themselves.

As an illustration of the lengths to which stoats will go in their search for food, a report received discloses that an employee of the Department observed a stoat near the Capells River with what appeared to be a fish in its mouth. The animal was pursued, and the fish was found to be a native trout about 8 in. long.

Fire, Goulard Downs Sanctuary.—In February information was received that a fire on a wide front was raging in this sanctuary. An officer of this Department was immediately sent to investigate and by the willing co-operation of the Lands and Survey Department an officer of that Department