



A KORERO Report

STRICTLY SPEAKING, a Borough Council is the highest unit of local government in New Zealand and the title of "city" is a courtesy one to those boroughs whose populations exceed 20,000. So inevitably there is a good deal of similarity in the affairs of cities and those boroughs who cannot claim that rank. But there is this difference. A community of under 20,000 is compact, its legislators easily accessible, and because of the smaller area controlled expected to know its every road and street intimately.

And so let us consider what is ahead of a Borough Councillor on his first election to the Council. He is, of course, a resident and a well-known one, and his conduct, in and out of the Council Chamber, will be the subject of public scrutiny. Probably he will be appointed to at least two Committees, where the spade-work of local government is done. One of these Committees will be an important one, public works or finance, and one of less importance. As he gains experience he may be appointed to additional Committees, and perhaps be elected by its members as Chairman of one of them. Also he may serve on an "outside" Committee—that is, one which deals with a matter of concern for an area larger than the borough. An Electric-power Board is a good example.

As soon as possible after election he must make himself familiar with the local body's standing orders which govern the conduct of meetings and procedure generally. Before a Council meeting he will receive the order paper, which tells him what business is to be transacted at the meeting in two days' time. That must be studied carefully in order that he may know whether to support or

oppose the proposals of his fellow-Councillors.

Nor is that the end of his study. Everything from the care and health of babies to the efficiency of a heavy motor pump comes within the purview of a Borough Councillor, and if he is to discuss intelligently and vote with authority on the innumerable matters that occur in the work of local government he must know something about it. Something of everything and everything of something would be a good objective for a Borough Councillor.

At least once a year the whole Council makes a tour of its area and sees what work has been done and what still needs doing. And Coal Committees, milk zoning schemes, Fire Board meetings, street days for various organizations (the Plunket Society is one example) go on all year. Even Sunday brings its quota of work with a civic church service at intervals.

So when next you see your local Councillor at some public function, before you fling a shallow gibe, reflect. He probably earned his meal, and not the way Tommy Tucker earned his, but by hard and diligent work on your behalf.

