

The passing of the Bill caused a considerable amount of work to local authorities and their officers, particularly in the rural areas, owing to the near approach of the local-body elections. A large number of new problems emerged as a result of the legislation, and the Department was continually asked for advice by local bodies and other organizations right up until the day of the election, and, indeed, far beyond that day. In addition, a programme of broadcasting on various features of the Act and the elections was arranged, and the material for these broadcasts was prepared by the Department. It is interesting also to record here that the broadcasting authorities made very full arrangements for broadcasting progress returns and results on election night. The most comprehensive use that has ever been made of the broadcasting facilities in connection with local-body elections took place on this occasion.

IV. TOWN-PLANNING

Town-planning activities were of necessity severely restricted on account of the war. Nevertheless, the Department kept in touch with those local authorities that were preparing or contemplating the preparation of town-planning schemes and gave much advice and assistance in relation thereto. Particular attention was devoted to the metropolitan schemes for Auckland and Christchurch, in respect of which further progress was made, and several consultations took place with the local authorities concerned with those two schemes.

V. LAND-AGENTS AND AUCTIONEERS

During the year 712 (708) land-agents' licenses were issued and 6 (6) transfers granted; 443 (432) auctioneers' licenses were issued, 6 (0) transfers granted, and 112 (31) changes of endorsement of seller made (last year's figures in parentheses).

VI. PRISONERS OF WAR

Some further progress was made during the year in obtaining information with regard to New Zealand nationals in enemy-occupied territory, particularly those in the Far East. This information was received from the High Commissioner for New Zealand in London, from prisoner-of-war cards received by next-of-kin, and from radio messages broadcast from enemy stations. In every case the next-of-kin or relatives were advised, where they could be traced.

Further negotiations took place between the respective Governments with a view to repatriation of British nationals, including New-Zealanders, at present in Japanese hands, but for certain reasons the negotiations did not progress satisfactorily and no New Zealand nationals were therefore released under exchange arrangements. These negotiations are still going on, and it is hoped that they will result in a substantial number of British and other nationals being repatriated at the earliest opportunity.

Where information became available concerning casualties to merchant seamen of New Zealand origin, appropriate advice was sent to the next-of-kin.

VII. PHYSICAL WELFARE AND RECREATION

During the year the organization and control of the physical training and sports programme of the Air Training Corps has been carried out by officers of the Department, resulting in a commendable improvement in the physical effectiveness of the Cadets and a stimulation of recreational interest among the boys. Sports have been arranged and coached for the squadrons and inter-squadron competitions arranged.

Good progress has been made by the Provincial Councils of Sport. The New Zealand Council of Sport, which has now been formed and is operating successfully, is a consultative body on which it is hoped to have represented all the national sports organizations. This Council, like the provincial councils, has no executive power over the member associations, but is a valuable medium for the better correlation of matters of common interest to sport in the Dominion. The Council has made an important contribution to wartime sport by undertaking the allocation of sporting materials available and by arranging with the Departments of Supply and National Service for the release of the material and labour requisite to produce the supplies of sporting material considered necessary for the maintenance of minimum recreation during the war. It is already apparent that the Council's work will be of great assistance to New Zealand sport, and the Department is giving the closest possible attention to all recommendations received from the New Zealand Council of Sport.

Many of the officers of the Department are on active service with the Forces, but where staffing has permitted, recreational activities have been organized for the community. Some clubs which have been in retirement on account of the war have been revived and kept open. In some districts officers also assisted in the developing of inter-house sports, their work being received with enthusiasm, and in conjunction with Inter-house Association and kindred bodies have organized special pageants and displays which were most successful from every point of view.

Considerable attention has been given to the question of public playgrounds in New Zealand and the desirability of promoting recreational interests in young workers and children in order to occupy their leisure hours. Experimental programmes have been organized in various centres and very commendable results achieved. As staffing permits, these activities will be extended.

There has been a great demand for the assistance of physical-welfare officers in the organizing of holiday recreation camps for war workers, and despite travel restrictions it has been possible to promote several camps. Several tramping parties have also been organized for groups of young people.

Many recreational activities have been taken in hand by voluntary leaders trained in previous years, and further leaders have been trained. Several classes of leaders from Church groups are being trained to conduct physical and recreational programmes for their respective organizations.

The Department is building up an information service on all matters affecting sport and recreation in order that after the war it will be possible to assist organizations and individuals by disseminating information on modern recreation trends and programmes, and providing accurate plans and specifications for all types of recreation facilities and equipment likely to be required. This work involves maintaining an up-to-date reference of what is being done overseas in this field, and the making of such knowledge available to community groups, many of which could not otherwise obtain it.