

decides, it can recommend that the existing procedure be allowed to continue or, alternatively, it can consider the proposal as a proposal under the Local Government Commission Act and adopt the procedure set out therein.

Quite apart from any other factor, this uniformity of procedure has been a very desirable reform. Boundary adjustments, amalgamations, and such-like reorganizations in all types of local authorities can now be dealt with in a similar fashion, and the result has been definitely to simplify the local-government administrative procedures.

Furthermore, where a different Commission is set up for each boundary adjustment there is no guarantee of co-ordinated development. For instance, in Christchurch since 1939 there have been thirty-three boundary adjustments. In 1939 there were three, in 1940 there were four, in 1941 there were three, in 1942 there were three, in 1943 there were none, in 1944 there were four, in 1945 there were eight, in 1946 there were three, and in 1947 there were five. Even during 1947 three further applications for boundary adjustments were received. It must be obvious to even the most casual observer that this condition of affairs in Christchurch indicates the necessity for some thorough-going reorganization of boundaries of the City of Christchurch, quite apart altogether from any reorganization of local government in the Christchurch metropolitan area. The basic reason for these applications is that building activity has "spilled over" from the urban areas into the rural areas, which latter are subject to county control. The powers of County Councils in relation to urban developments are not sufficiently wide to enable them to provide their urban residents with all the amenities demanded by residential development. It is obvious, therefore, that owners of these areas—in many cases the Housing Division—have been desirous of having their areas included within the boundaries of a municipal corporation so that they can obtain the advantage of the services provided by such municipal corporation. Similar developments are taking place in many other areas.

Under the procedure laid down in the Local Government Commission Act, there can be more co-ordination and more long-term provision for development such as is not possible under the statutes previously governing these alterations.

It can thus be seen that the Local Government Commission has, in terms of its enabling statute, three principal functions:—

- (1) To review from time to time the functions and districts of local authorities and to inquire into the proposals and prepare schemes for the reorganization thereof (section 12 of the Local Government Commission Act, 1946).
- (2) To consider proposals for boundary adjustments, amalgamations, and such-like reorganizations of local-authority districts as have arisen under the provisions of any other statute (section 24 of the Local Government Commission Act, 1946).
- (3) To review and report to the Minister upon such matters relating to local government as may be determined by the Commission or referred to it by the Minister (section 12 of the Local Government Commission Act, 1946).

As to (1) above, the Commission has interpreted its responsibilities in this regard as involving the redrawing, where necessary, of the boundaries of local authorities in the Dominion so as to provide a series of administrative areas which will enable the local authorities to give to their inhabitants the maximum service without destroying that important factor of the local self-interest which is the basis of all local government. This is obviously a long-term programme. It cannot be proceeded with except after exhaustive investigations, and it is important to remark at this stage that the Commission has not approached its task with any preconceived idea as to the necessity for any specific change. It considers that the interests of the people of New Zealand as a whole should be paramount. While it does not consider that vested interests should stand in the way of necessary changes, it realizes that local government can become too distant from the people it serves and hence become possibly bureaucratic rather than democratic in essence.

Later in this report we will set out some of the steps we have taken towards the fulfilment of this long-term objective of providing for a better framework within which local government as a whole may operate in the Dominion.