

after the date of the final approval of the scheme by the Commission. Such poll must be taken within three months of the date of the approval of the final scheme, and if the electors decide that such local authority should not be joined or merged to another or not be abolished, then the Commission's scheme is of no effect, at least as far as the abolition of that local authority is concerned.

It can thus be seen that the Commission's procedure gives ample opportunity for every phase of a particular problem being examined, while the fullest publicity is given to the proceedings of the Commission. This procedure may be summed up as follows:—

- (1) A full investigation by its staff as to the necessity for the change proposed. Only if these investigations establish a *prima facie* case does the Commission proceed to the next stage.
- (2) A full public notification to all parties interested, and an individual notification to all those specifically interested, at least one month before the public inquiry is held. This notification sets out in detail the proposals which the Commission is investigating, and gives an indication that all persons or parties interested may, if they so desire, submit evidence at the inquiry.
- (3) A public inquiry, open to the public and the press, at which all parties have the right to submit evidence, and at which authorized representatives of the various parties (whether counsel or not) have a right to examine their own witnesses and cross-examine witnesses of other parties.
- (4) Verbatim reports of the evidence are prepared and distributed not only to members of the Commission, but also to the principal parties engaged in the inquiry.
- (5) A report setting out the reasons for the Commission's decisions, and, where necessary, a provisional scheme, is issued to all parties concerned and is publicly notified in the press.
- (6) One month's opportunity is available for objection to the provisional scheme by any interested party.
- (7) A final scheme is notified in a manner similar to that for a provisional scheme.
- (8) The final scheme is forwarded to the Minister of Internal Affairs for implementation by His Excellency the Governor-General by Order in Council.

IV. BASIS OF COMMISSION'S DECISIONS AS TO PRIORITY OF BUSINESS

In view of the above statements as to the types of investigations which the Commission would have to undertake, it became a question at an early date to determine the order or priority of the various inquiries. Although the report of the parliamentary Select Committee on Local Government was not binding on the Commission as to the order in which it undertook its various inquiries, it did form a very satisfactory background against which the Commission considered the importance of the various problems at issue. The parliamentary Committee had indicated that the reorganization of local-authority districts was very important, particularly as regards the Auckland and Christchurch metropolitan areas and the reorganization of hospital districts. It further stated that county boundaries required some fundamental adjustment.

The Commission has always been desirous of avoiding any action unless thorough investigations by its own officers have proved the necessity for action in any particular case. It will be realized that, as far as the reorganization of county boundaries is concerned, this cannot proceed on a piecemeal basis, but must be part of a definite plan, the basis of which is the constitution of a series of counties large enough to undertake efficiently all the services required by rural residents and yet not so big as to divorce the administration from local interests and local control. The intricacies of the problems in Auckland and Christchurch are such that extensive investigations are required, since there is involved in these cases not merely the question of amalgamation of a series of territorial local authorities, but the possible absorption of certain *ad hoc* bodies so as to create in these areas local authorities able to undertake practically all of the services required by the urban agglomerations. The Commission desires to ensure that every step is soundly based.