

C. NORTH AUCKLAND HOSPITAL DISTRICTS

The parliamentary Select Committee commented, *inter alia*, that there was an urgent need for the reorganization of hospital control in the North Auckland area, where there were six Hospital Boards in operation, none of the districts of which was of a sufficient size to provide finance adequate to undertake all the services commonly required by the population. Shortly after the Commission took office, a specific proposal was submitted to it by the Health Department asking that the Commission consider the amalgamation of these six northern hospital districts into one district so as to provide the basis on which adequate hospital services could be available to the people of Northland.

On the technical side, the information available through the Health Department was quite adequate. The Commission's own investigating staff made extensive investigations into the financial structure of the various local authorities.

A public inquiry of which due notice had been given to all interested parties was held in Whangarei on 22nd October, 1947, and the succeeding days. The inquiry caused very considerable public interest not only among the local authorities concerned, but also among the medical fraternity. Medical witnesses were available to assist the Commission not only from the Health Department, but also from all the hospitals concerned, and, in addition, some expert medical witnesses were available from other parts of the Dominion.

It should be mentioned in passing that several of the Hospital Boards concerned approached the parliamentary Select Committee on Local Government in 1945 asking that some amalgamation of hospital districts in Northland be proceeded with. Subsequent to these submissions to the parliamentary Committee, the Hospital Boards themselves had changed their attitude, due largely, it is thought, to the existence of the recent legislative provisions providing for the maximum hospital rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound on capital value. In addition, a joint tuberculosis service had been commenced.

All the issues were exhaustively dealt with at the inquiry.

As showing the value of these public inquiries, one County Councillor, speaking on behalf of practically all the County Councils in the North Auckland district, remarked that had the County Councils known all the facts which had emerged during the hearing they would probably have changed their attitude on the question of the amalgamation of the hospital districts.

After fully considering all the evidence and information available, the Commission decided that a case had been made out for the amalgamation of the Hospital Boards, and provided accordingly in its scheme.

There were some objections to the scheme, particularly by one of the Hospital Boards, but when these objections had been considered in detail the Commission issued its final scheme, providing for amalgamation of the six districts. We felt, however, that the principle of local interest was of vital concern. Concentration merely on questions of administrative efficiency may result in local interest being lost, and we felt that the retention of local interest is vitally necessary if the hospitals are to function effectively as part of the amenities available to the local residents. As a consequence, in addition to finding that the whole of this area should be constituted one hospital district, we recommended that for each of the existing hospitals a local advisory committee should be appointed. We are given to understand that it is not possible to implement this recommendation without special legislation, and pending the passing of this special legislation our information is that the scheme has not been implemented.

D. CATCHMENT DISTRICTS

The Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act, 1941, provided for the administration of flood-control measures and the prevention of soil erosion by local Catchment Boards under general supervision of the national Soil Conservation and Rivers Control