

VII. OTHER INQUIRIES

Under section 12 of the Local Government Commission Act the Commission is enabled, either at the request of the Minister or of its own motion, to report to the Minister of Internal Affairs on other matters relating to local government.

The parliamentary Committee on Local Government made some comments on the problems of rabbit-destruction throughout the Dominion, and suggested that possibly this could best be undertaken by existing County Councils, involving the elimination of existing Rabbit Boards. For some time a revision of the Rabbit Nuisance Act to provide for better administrative control has been in contemplation. A draft Bill in this connection was prepared early in 1947 and was referred by the Minister of Agriculture through the Minister of Internal Affairs to the Commission for its general comments. The Commission heard evidence relative to the problem from the Department of Agriculture, the North and South Islands Rabbit Boards' Associations, individual members of Rabbit Boards, the New Zealand Counties' Association, and also from several members of County Councils. It also considered the draft Rabbit Nuisance Bill. After a full investigation, the Commission decided that the provisions of the Rabbit Nuisance Bill did provide a more adequate administrative structure for rabbit control than was at present in existence. Its report on this question was referred through the Minister of Internal Affairs to the Minister of Agriculture.

VIII. INVESTIGATION WORK

The staff of the Commission are actively engaged in investigations for forthcoming inquiries. Special attention is being paid to the present structure of county government in the Dominion, but it is expected that this work will take some considerable time. The Commission desires to complete these investigations before it undertakes any specific reorganization of counties.

When the parliamentary Select Committee on Local Government was sitting in Christchurch, evidence was placed before it by the Banks Peninsula Electric-power Board pointing out the economic difficulties under which that Power Board was operating. Evidence was also available to show that the Malvern Electric-power Board was also under severe economic stress. Malvern Power Board is one of the few remaining Power Boards which still has to levy a rate in addition to the ordinary electricity charges in order to maintain its operations. Shortly after the Commission took office, it was approached by the Malvern Electric-power Board with a view to ascertaining when the Commission proposed to take action in relation to electric-power distribution in these areas. The Commission's jurisdiction is restricted because of the provisions of section 13, subsection (3), of the Local Government Commission Act, 1946, which provides that the Commission cannot transfer the trading undertaking of any county, borough, or town district unless such local-governing authority itself is abolished or dissolved. It would appear that, although the Springs-Ellesmere Power Board is financially fairly stable, the position of the Banks Peninsula Power Board and Malvern Power Board is less satisfactory, due largely to the scattered nature of the settlement in these areas and difficulties of the terrain.

The Commission's investigating staff have made exhaustive inquiries into the financial position of the Power Boards in this area, and it is proposed to discuss the results of these investigations with the Ministers and Government Departments concerned prior to any action being taken.

A proposal has been submitted to the Commission that the Waihi Beach Township, which administratively is part of the Waihi Borough, should secede therefrom and be formed into a separate township. This area is some seven miles from Waihi Town and is connected thereto by a road, the road only being in the borough, not the adjoining land.