

III. CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS

The necessary action was taken in regard to the following matters :—

- (a) Summoning and proroguing of Parliament.
- (b) Appointment of a Deputy of the Governor-General on two occasions.
- (c) Appointments to the Legislative Council.
- (d) Leave of absence for a member of the Legislative Council.
- (e) Appointment of Clerk of the Executive Council.
- (f) Retention of the title of "Honourable" by two ex-members of the Executive Council.

IV. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A. GENERAL ORGANIZATION

The services of the Local Government Branch were again utilized to the fullest extent in carrying out the various statutory functions required by the Local Government Acts administered by the Department.

Close contact with local authorities, the Local Government Commission, other Departments, and organizations was maintained, and advice and assistance given when requested with regard to problems confronting local authorities and others interested in this field. Owing to the detailed nature of the work involved, it is not possible to deal with all matters which came before the Branch, but some idea of the more general matters dealt with may be gained from the following

(1) *Boroughs*

The thirty-sixth annual Conference of the Municipal Association was held in Napier from the 15th to 18th February, 1949. The Conference was officially opened by the Hon. W. E. Parry, Minister of Internal Affairs, who spoke on matters of general interest to municipalities. The annual Conference of the New Zealand Institute of Town Clerks was also held at the same time. The Department was officially represented throughout the proceedings of both Conferences. Following the submission of remits from the Conference, the necessary action was taken to circulate the remits to the Departments concerned and to obtain decisions thereon for transmission to the Association.

Questions relating to the financial and economic position of the Borough of Waihi were prominent as a result of representations made to the Government by the Waihi Borough Council. The Council submitted certain proposals with a view to assisting the borough during the period of transition from a mining town to a rural and industrial centre. The finances of the Borough Council have been a cause for concern for some years past, mainly owing to the progressive decline in gold revenue payable to the Council and the fact that the rateable value of the borough is too low to enable the loss to be made up from rate revenue. Other factors relevant to the difficulties of the Council are the large area of the borough, the annual loss incurred in maintaining the gasworks, and the lack of adequate machinery and plant to undertake essential public services. The Government agreed to give every possible assistance to the borough in providing suitable employment in the town in the event of the closing down of the Martha Mine, which employed 350 men. Cabinet further agreed to refer to the Local Government Commission for investigation and report those aspects which related to the local government of the borough. The necessary directive has now been issued pursuant to section 12 of the Local Government Commission Act, 1946, and it is anticipated that the Commission will commence its inquiries in the near future.

During the year the populations of the Boroughs of Timaru and New Plymouth reached the figure of 20,000 required for city status, and Proclamations were issued declaring these boroughs to be cities, thus increasing the number of cities in New Zealand to twelve.