

of the New Zealand Institute of County Clerks was also held. This Conference was opened by Mr. A. G. Harper, Acting Under-Secretary. The Department was officially represented throughout the proceedings of both Conferences. Following the submission of remits arising 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.

It was necessary during the year for further attention to be given to the financial difficulties of the Buller County Council. Owing to a number of factors, such as delay in the revaluation of the county and abnormally heavy expenditure on flood-damage-restoration work, the Council's financial position was seriously affected. Discussions were held with representatives of the County Council, the Treasury, and the bank. As a result of these discussions the bank agreed to fund the excess overdraft liability of the Council, subject to suitable provision being made for repayment over a period of years. This arrangement was subsequently put into legislative effect by section 3 of the Local Legislation Act, 1948. It is anticipated that the rating position of the county will be materially improved by the revaluation referred to.

The usual close contact was maintained with the Matakaoa County Commissioner regarding problems arising in the county. During the year, Mr. J. V. Meech, Officer in Charge of Local Government, made a visit of inspection to the county, when a number of outstanding matters were fully discussed with the Commissioner and the County Council. The collection of rates in the county has been maintained at a high level. In accordance with past practice, the overdraft limit of the County Council for the year was fixed by the Minister of Internal Affairs.

The Department was represented at a conference called by the New Zealand Standards Institute to consider the question of the adoption of the Standard Code of Building By-laws by County Councils. The work of amending the Standard Code to make them suitable for application to county areas is proceeding, and will be circulated in due course for review and comment.

The boundaries of the Counties of Kairanga and Pahiatua were altered by the exchange of areas of land. The boundaries of a number of other counties were redefined consequent on the alteration of the boundaries of cities and boroughs.

The Ellesmere and Rangitikei County Councils were authorized to levy rates on a uniform scale over internal drainage districts. Certain powers of Borough Councils with regard to drainage and sanitation were conferred by Order in Council upon the Amuri County Council. The Hawera, Patea, Waimarino, Waipawa, and Waitotara County Councils passed special orders under the authority of the Counties Amendment Act, 1931, abolishing the system of separate riding finance. A total of eighty-six County Councils have now availed themselves of this legislation. The Egmont County Council was declared to be a leasing authority under the Public Bodies Leases Act, 1908.

An important matter arising from the Counties Conference held in Rotorua is the improvement and development of urban settlements situated in counties. Proposals emanated from the Conference designed to enable such settlements to be provided with the amenities necessary for closely settled areas without the necessity of constituting new local districts and of charging farm lands with the cost involved. The Department is fully in accord with the principle of avoiding the constitution of new districts wherever possible, and it is considered the proposals put forward will form the basis of a suitable scheme to deal with the problem of expanding urban areas in counties. The proposals generally are along the lines of authorizing County Councils, upon a petition of rate-payers, to levy an annual separate rate over urban areas to provide the finance necessary to enable public services and amenities to be installed. The draft proposals have been fully discussed by the New Zealand Counties Association with the Department, and agreement has been reached in regard to the form in which they should be submitted to the Government for legislative consideration.