

setting-up of the Commission, the Parliamentary Select Committee on local government had recommended that the problems of Christchurch should be among the first to be investigated by the Commission.

Prior to the commencement of the inquiry considerable investigation was undertaken by the Commission's investigating staff. This involved not only research into the problems from a factual standpoint, but a survey of the historical background of local government in the area, in order that we should be fully apprised of the progressive development of local government, its functions and areas, and be fully informed as to the future possibilities of further development and growth.

In order to meet such problems Parliament provided machinery to undertake the detailed task of examining such an over-all situation by setting up a permanent Commission in 1946.

Not only were the questions of functions and areas of local government in this instance under consideration, but the desire of certain ratepayers, as expressed in a petition to the House of Representatives, was also considered in regard to the desirability of a change in the basis of rating for drainage purposes. The incidence of the present rating system, based on capital value for drainage purposes, was considered by the petitioners to be inequitable, and a good deal of evidence was heard by us in this regard, with a view to finding a solution which would accord with the wishes of the ratepayers in the area.

One difficulty which confronted us in respect of the major issues was to gauge public opinion. There was little or no objection from the people within the confines of the city, but in the areas adjacent varying views were expressed, both by individuals and by representatives of local organizations. In one area the residents appearing at the inquiry expressed a desire to retain their district as a separate entity, and they pointed out that they had all the services which were required by them. They did acknowledge, however, that they had a proprietary liability for certain other municipal amenities which were provided by the city, and they intimated that they were prepared to contribute towards their cost. No practical method exists, however, for implementing such desires, nor can one be devised in any system of local government. One witness went so far as to suggest that, rather than be incorporated in the city, he preferred to see the establishment of a separate borough from a portion of the riding of his county. This would result in far greater costs to the particular community and would provide no solution in regard to the provision of general amenities to the people in the area. It was also elicited that this particular area, which formed part of the riding of the county, had little interest in or knowledge of the rest of the county, and although credit must be given for the local interest that was taken in this district it appeared to us that this would not be materially affected if the area was incorporated in the city. In fact, it might be developed to a much greater degree for the benefit of the community as a whole.

The matters which were reviewed by the Commission, and the problems involved in such large urban areas, are not confined to New Zealand. These questions, which are of the greatest public interest, have been under consideration and, in some cases, dealt with during the past two or three decades in all major English-speaking countries in the world. Although solutions have differed, in general there has been a recognition of the fact that urban areas which are geographically and economically one have similar problems which are common to the area as a whole. The question has, in most cases, been dealt with by the setting-up of a Royal Commission. This method has been consolidated in New Zealand by the appointment of the Commission, and this will result in a degree of uniformity in reorganization of local government throughout the Dominion. A growing tendency for concentration of population in certain strategically placed localities is world-wide and has been more in evidence in recent years since the