

(12) MATAMATA : ROTORUA COUNTIES

A proposal that an area of approximately 16,000 acres in the Rotorua County on the western boundary should be transferred from the Rotorua County to the Matamata County Council was the subject of an inquiry held by the Commission on the 6th October, 1948. The land was mainly held by New Zealand Forest Products, Ltd., and the basis of the application was that the Rotorua County Council was unable to provide any effective services to the area on account of the fact that access was through the Matamata County. It was agreed that the rating revenue should, in equity, accrue to the benefit of the Matamata County. Although the two counties had agreed in the matter, it transpired that New Zealand Forest Products, Ltd., had not been informed of the proposal, and on this ground the county desired to retract from its agreement and allow the Commission to determine the issue.

We were of the opinion that, from every point of view, the community of interest of the area was with the Matamata County. Production from the area, together with supplies to it, would pass over this county's roads, and we accordingly decided to exclude the area from the Rotorua County, and include it in the Matamata County.

(13) REDWOOD RABBIT DISTRICT

This was the first public inquiry held by the Commission into questions affecting rabbit districts. It arose as the result of an application by the Rabbit Destruction Council for an extension of the boundaries of the Redwood Rabbit District for the purpose of including an area of approximately 59,850 acres which lay between the boundaries of the Waihopai, Awatere, and Redwood Rabbit Districts.

Following preliminary investigation by the Commission's investigating staff, the inquiry was held at Blenheim on 11th October, 1948. Considerable opposition to the proposed extension was expressed on behalf of farmers in the area, through their local branch of the Federated Farmers, on the grounds that the land-holders were in a position to control rabbits on their farms more effectively than the existing Rabbit Board. Control of rabbit-destruction was, in general, undertaken by seven Rabbit Boards in the Marlborough Province, and, with the exception of heavy bush country in the South Wairau Plains and two other small areas, most of the country is within their districts.

The Chairman of the Redwood Rabbit Board indicated that he was in agreement with the proposal, and maintained that the area was relatively heavily infested, while the existing district under the Board's control was being continually invaded by rabbits from the adjacent area. There was evidence submitted as to the number of rabbits that had been destroyed each year in that portion of the Board's district adjacent to the area proposed for inclusion, and it was apparent that the number was increasing considerably from year to year.

The Inspector of Stock of the Department of Agriculture also gave evidence in support of the proposal, and a return showing the result of the Board's activities over a period of twelve years indicated that for the year 1946-47 the number of rabbits destroyed was between 16,000 and 17,000.

The individual property-owners agreed that there was rabbit infestation, but they considered that they were taking satisfactory steps to control it. The main issues which had to be determined were whether there was a problem of rabbit-infestation, existing or potential, and whether the problem could be dealt with more satisfactorily by the Board or by the individual landowners. There were definite indications that the contiguous area was a menace to the existing Rabbit Board's district, and the area as a whole could be more effectively dealt with if under the control of the Board. In general, it was our opinion that co-ordinated activity would be more satisfactory from every point of view and less costly in the ultimate.

The application for extension of the boundaries was accordingly granted.