

CONFERENCE OF PATRIOTIC SOCIETIES.

A conference of Patriotic Societies was convened by the Minister and held at the Parliamentary Buildings on Friday, the 19th November, 1915. This was the first conference held after the passing of the War Funds Act, and was attended by delegates from all over the Dominion. Matters of general importance and suggestions as to the functions of Patriotic Committees, the expenditure of their funds, and the responsibility of the Government in connection with returned soldiers were fully discussed.

At the conclusion of the conference the Minister withdrew, and a special meeting of the delegates was held to consider various aspects of the work. Resolutions were carried approving of the desirability of forming a central Board for consultation and advice, representing the whole of the Patriotic Societies.

On the 5th January the Minister wrote to the Patriotic Societies pointing out that as some three thousand soldiers had already returned to New Zealand it had become necessary that steps should be taken to organize the work of Patriotic Societies and to define and agree as to the respective responsibilities of the Government and the Patriotic Societies in dealing with returned soldiers, and also asking for an indication as to whether the societies considered such a conference desirable. The replies received indicated that a very large majority of the Patriotic Societies in New Zealand were in favour of a second conference. Arrangements were accordingly made and a conference, over which the Hon. Mr. Russell (Minister appointed to administer the War Funds Act) presided, was held at Wellington on the 17th February, 1916, where the questions at issue were very fully discussed, and three special committees set up to report upon suggestions and resolutions laid before the conference. On the following day the conference reassembled, and with slight modifications adopted the reports of the committees referred to. It was agreed that an Advisory Board, consisting of twelve members (two from Auckland and two from Wellington Provincial Districts and one from each other district) should be set up, thus giving six representatives for each Island. The members of this first Advisory Board were to be elected at conferences held in the different provincial districts, and to hold their first meeting on the 6th April, when it was hoped that preliminary steps would be taken toward the federation of the whole of the societies in New Zealand.

[The Advisory Board was duly elected, and has already held several useful meetings.]

NATIONAL WAR FUNDS COUNCIL.

Section 3 of the War Funds Act provides that the Governor may by Order in Council establish a National War Funds Council for the purpose of securing the efficient administration and control of war funds, such Council to consist of the Minister for the time being administering the Act and such other persons as the Governor may by Order in Council appoint.

The Council consists as follows: Hon. G. W. Russell (Minister of Internal Affairs); J. H. Gunson, Esq., Mayor of Auckland; J. H. Upton, Esq., Auckland; J. P. Luke, Esq., Mayor of Wellington; W. E. Bethune, Esq., Wellington; H. Morrison, Esq., Masterton; H. Holland, Esq., Mayor of Christchurch; W. Reece, Esq., Christchurch; J. J. Clark, Esq., Mayor of Dunedin; J. Roberts, Esq., C.M.G., Dunedin; J. D. McGruer, Esq., Invercargill.

The first meeting of the Council was held at the Parliamentary Buildings on the 19th November last, all members being present with the exception of the Mayor of Auckland, the Minister presiding. The provisions of the Act were fully discussed, together with the draft regulations, as provided for in section 23 of the Act.

J. W. KINNIBURGH,
Officer in Charge.

The Under-Secretary, Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

VI. REPORT OF GOVERNMENT ASTRONOMER.

Hector Observatory, Wellington, 6th May, 1916.

DURING the ten months ended the 31st January, 1916, Mr. C. J. Westland, F.R.A.S., was in charge of the Observatory as Acting Government Astronomer. For the remaining two months I resumed charge on my return from the Lick Observatory, Mount Hamilton, California.

The year has been a very busy one, for in addition to the usual demands for an accurate time-service, the numerous troopships have required many extra time-signals, which has necessitated much more observing; and the Auckland Harbour Board has now established a similar system for time-signals by electric lights to that in use at the Observatory. At least twice a week the Auckland time-signal lights are extinguished at 9 p.m., New Zealand mean time, by direct connection from the Observatory. This method of signalling time is much more accurate than that by time-ball, and it is one that can be readily extended to all parts in the Dominion.

Admiralty Chronometers.—All the Admiralty chronometers and watches which had been deposited here were, by direction of the Hydrographer to the Admiralty, returned to the Astronomer-Royal, Greenwich.

Donohoe Comet Medal.—This medal is awarded by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific for the discovery of unexpected comets, and the eighty-fifth award is in duplicate to Mr. Leon Campbell, Assistant in Charge of the Arequipa Station of the Harvard Observatory in Peru, for the discovery of an unexpected comet on the morning of the 18th September, 1914, and to Mr. Charles James Westland, Christchurch, New Zealand, for the discovery of the same comet a few hours later.