

A further means of drawing money from the public that may easily be abused, and which from its increasing use by various bodies needs regulating, is the practice of appealing for contributions to some specific object that has not in itself any connection with the war, on the ground that it is to be dedicated as a memorial to fallen soldiers. The Act as it stands gives no power of control by the Minister over these appeals. This has been noted for attention when an amendment of the Act is being considered.

War Contributions Validation Act, 1914 (No. 2).—Seven funds and the conditions of control and expenditure thereof were approved during the past year.

Gaming Amendment Act, 1915.—Many permits have been issued under this Act, and in a great majority of cases the stringent requirements of the Department have been complied with. It has been found desirable as a general rule to limit the area in which tickets may be sold to the provincial district in which the raffle originates. Since May, 1916, when holders of licenses were first required to furnish returns of receipts and disbursements, 303 licenses have been issued. The net receipts from the raffles total £31,919.

Sub-Departments.—The effect of the war on these branches of the Department is shown in the attached reports from the officers in charge. It is interesting to note that marriages, which showed an increase of 894 during 1915–16, have decreased to below the 1913 figures.

New Zealand Gazette.—Eighty-one *Gazettes* Extraordinary, containing exclusively matter dealing with the war, have been published during the year.

2. THE ORDINARY WORK OF THE HEAD OFFICE.

The ordinary work of the Department has considerably increased during the past year in all directions.

(1.) *Local Government.*

The remark in last year's report that the war had had comparatively little effect on local-government matters, except, of course, that legislation was practically at a standstill, is equally true of the year 1916–17.

Boroughs and Town Districts.—The growth of Auckland City proceeds apace, the Epsom Road District having been absorbed during the year. It is only a matter of time when Eden County will automatically pass out of existence, and the whole of the area within its boundaries will form part of various boroughs and ultimately of the city.

Again there has been no alteration of Wellington City boundaries, but the growth of the metropolitan spirit in the capital is evidenced by the proposal on foot to secure legislative authority for the City Council to undertake the installation of water and drainage at Day's Bay.

There has been marked activity at Christchurch, four petitions having been presented for inclusion in the city of various areas of Heathcote County. An interesting feature of these proposals was the fact that in one instance local opposition took the extreme step of petitioning for constitution of a new borough as a preferable alternative to absorption by the city. The recommendations of the Commissions appointed pursuant to section 14 of the Municipal Corporations Amendment Act, 1913, were given effect to, the result being that the whole of Opawa and St. Martin's Ridings and a portion of Avonside Riding are now part of the city. The fourth petition, that in respect of an area of Bromley Riding, and the petition for constitution of the new borough, were disallowed.

One small alteration of Dunedin City boundaries was made, and the city was declared to be an undivided borough.

Though no new boroughs were constituted during the year, four petitions were received. One (Bromley) was declined; the other three, Featherston, Shannon, and Whakatane, were still under consideration at the end of the year.

After very full inquiry, which clearly showed the handicap and costliness to both of their separate existence, the Boroughs of Frankton and Hamilton were united.

The boundaries of Gore, Bluff, Te Aroha, and Green Island boroughs were altered, and proposed alterations of Ashburton, Marton, Richmond, and Onehunga were under consideration when the year closed. One new town district—Otorohanga—was constituted, and petitions for constitution of town districts at Matamata, Patutahi, and Te Karaka were received, and are under consideration. Upper Hutt Town District was enlarged by the addition of an area of Hutt County. A petition for alteration of boundaries of Waverley Town District was not acceded to.

Counties.—The increased activity of 1915–16 in the movement for readjustment of county boundaries was maintained during 1916–17, the boundaries of Dannevirke, Woodville, Waikohu (twice), Wairoa (three times), and Cook Counties being altered. Except in the case of Dannevirke and Woodville, these alterations were based on agreements between the County Councils concerned.

Finality has not yet been reached in the matter of the petitions presented for alteration of Hokianga and Hobson (petition of Hobson County Council), Hokianga, Hobson, Bay of Islands, and Whangarei Counties (petition of Whangarei County Council). The Commission's reports were strongly in favour of the proposed alterations, but a decision cannot be arrived at pending settlement of protests that the petitions were not signed by the requisite number of ratepayers.

Road Districts.—Five road districts went out of existence during the year by merger in their respective counties, and one (Epsom) by inclusion in the City of Auckland.

Under section 27 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1916, two road districts were constituted in West Taupo County, and petitions are being prepared in respect of three other areas in that county. There being no form of local government in that county, a heavy burden was thrown on this Department in the way of advising the settlers concerned and facilitating their task of obtaining the necessary signatures of occu-