

ing the form in which county accounts shall be kept, and the Audit Office has been asked to draft suitable forms.

In view to its importance to public health the Minister has approved legislation being prepared to allow County Councils to supply water for domestic purposes. Nothing in the Counties Act, the Public Health Act, or the Water-supply Act authorizes this.

Road Districts.—The following road districts were merged: Waitara West, Matakana East, Matakana West, Upper Wangaehu, Wairoa, Oero, Patangata, Porangahau, Mangatarata, Taumarunui, Wanstead, Wallingford, Papakura, Parihaka, and Purimu.

The constitution of road districts in Taupo West County, referred to in last year's report, has produced good results.

It is proposed at the first opportunity to bring down an amendment of the Road Boards Act, similar to section 27 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1916, to enable the Governor-General to constitute road districts in parts of New Zealand at present not included within the boundaries of any county.

Land-drainage and River Districts.—One new drainage district—Norfolk Downs—was constituted, and a petition for another—Mangaorongo—is receiving consideration. The boundaries of Kirikiriroa, Oroua, Elstow, Hungahunga, Huntress Creek, and Oanui Irrigation Districts were altered.

Three petitions for constitution of river districts—Mangawara (Waikato), Matau, and Tokomairi (Otago)—were received, and are now under consideration.

A Commission was appointed to inquire and report on the Palmerston North-Kairanga River District, consequent upon the presentation of a petition praying for abolition of that district. Its report recommended the carrying-out of certain works by the River Board, failing which the district should be abolished. The Board expressed its willingness to carry out the works, and asked for the help of the Public Works Department in drawing up a scheme. This request was granted.

A Commission under the River Boards Amendment Act, 1917, was appointed to inquire and report respecting allegations that the Otatau River Board had failed to protect certain lands in its district. The Board has undertaken to carry out works recommended by the Commission.

The culmination of some four years' work by the Department and various Commissions was the introduction into Parliament of three Bills—the Wairau River Bill, the Orari and Waihi Rivers Bill, and the Rangitata River Bill—each providing for the constitution of a large river district comprising practically the whole of the watershed of the rivers affected, thus ensuring a single body having undivided control of each river from source to mouth. The distinctive features of the Bills were that the Public Works Department should in each case draw up a scheme of protective works, and an estimate of the cost of carrying it out, and submit the same to the River Board; that the scheme should be available for public inspection and the Board should call for objections, which were to be forwarded to the Minister of Public Works, who, after considering them, was to approve a final scheme; that the approved scheme should be submitted to the River Board; that if the Board adopted the scheme it could submit a loan proposal to the ratepayers of the district; that if the poll was carried, the loan-moneys were to be paid into the Public Works Fund, to the credit of a special account, and that the Public Works Department should carry out the scheme, handing over the completed works to the Board, which was then to be charged with the maintenance thereof, the employment of a duly qualified engineer approved by the Minister of Public Works being mandatory.

The scheme of the Bills was not a hastily concocted thing but the result of long and thoughtful consideration of every practicable alternative. It was finally adopted after submission to the local authorities concerned and in the belief that they concurred in it. The Orari and Waihi Rivers Bill and the Rangitata River Bill were passed without opposition, but the Wairau Bill was withdrawn as the result of strong opposition.

Public Works Engineers are now busily engaged preparing schemes for both the Orari and Waihi and the Rangitata districts.

Representations made by the Hurunui Rabbit Trustees respecting inroads made by the Waiaru River at Spotswood give an idea of the damage that is being caused daily in New Zealand by the lack of proper river-control. Floods in the past eighteen months have washed away much land as well as several chains of costly rabbit-fence, and about 3,000 acres of valuable leasehold lands worth between £30 and £40 per acre and four miles of rabbit-fence will be carried away in the future unless adequate protective works are constructed. The Public Works Department is reporting on the matter.

The decisions of the Commission appointed under the Hawke's Bay Rivers Board Amendment Act, 1917, were gazetted. A petition received for alteration of boundaries of this district could not be dealt with under the River Boards Act.

Balance-sheets of Local Bodies.—Warrants varying the mode of publication of balance-sheets were issued at the request of the following local bodies: Amuri, Bruce, Cheviot, Clutha, Levels, and Mackenzie County Councils; Auckland City Council; Blenheim (2), Eastbourne, Invercargill, Matakana, Mosgiel, Palmerston, Pukekohe, Sumner, Timaru, Waimate, Whakatane, and Waikouaiti Borough Councils.

By-laws of Local Bodies.—By-laws were approved, confirmed, gazetted, or disallowed as under:—

Approved under section 107, Counties Act, 1908: Manawatu, Hutt, Inangahua, Kairanga, Ohinemuri, Whakatane, Whangarei, Mangonui, Patangata, Waipukurau, and Waitomo Counties.

Confirmed under By-laws Act, 1910:—

Borough Councils: Lower Hutt (two), Thames, Waimate, Hastings, Shannon, Ohakune.
Town Boards: Ngaruawahia, Otorohanga, Bull's.

County Councils: Kairanga, Patea, Ohinemuri, Whakatane (two), Awakino.

Gazetted:—

Fire Boards: Waihi, Balclutha.

Road Boards: Huntly, Avondale, Mangaorongo, Upper Ashburton.

Disallowed under Motor Regulation Act, 1908: Clause 5 of schedule to Lake County Motor By-law.