

conflict with the larger schemes either being carried out or proposed to be carried out by River and other Boards. There can be no question that the position will have to be dealt with comprehensively throughout the Dominion, and a scheme on the lines of that recommended by the Auckland Canals and Inland Waterways Commission in regard to the Waikato River Board will require to be adopted in the areas which are principally affected by drainage and river operations.

River Districts.—No new river districts were constituted, and the boundaries of only one district were altered. In addition to this, a united district was formed in Marlborough, involving the abolition of four river and two drainage districts formerly controlling the Wairau River and its tributaries, mention of which I made in my last report. The district was subsequently subdivided, and representation fixed. The union of these districts, it is hoped, will solve many problems in the vital question of river-control in Marlborough.

The control of the Rangitata River was again brought under notice, and legislation was passed constituting the Geraldine County Council a River Board, with jurisdiction over the whole of the Geraldine County, and giving it wide powers, with the object of effectively controlling the river. The legislation brought down involved the repeal of the Orari and Waihi Rivers Act, 1918, and the Rangitata River Act, 1918 (and the abolition of the districts constituted thereunder), these Acts never having been brought into operation.

Despite these few actual results of the administration of the River Boards Act, river-control was the subject of much consideration by the Department's officers, arising primarily out of a petition for the constitution of the Manawatu-Oroua River District, and the dual river and drainage control in the parts of the Waikato district. The Mangawara River District, for example, is also covered by nine drainage districts, this notwithstanding the fact that the River Board possesses also certain powers of a Drainage Board, and should be able to cope with the question of land-drainage. The best means of overcoming this difficulty appears to be in the direction indicated under the heading "Land-drainage Districts"—viz., a comprehensive scheme embracing both river-conservation and land-drainage under one Board.

The constitution of the proposed Manawatu-Oroua River District disclosed a similar position. A further difficulty in this case arose by reason of the fact that the proposed river district is within the Foxton Harbour District, and the proposal was thus complicated because section 73 of the River Boards Act precludes a River Board from exercising jurisdiction over a harbour district. A similar position recently arose in connection with the control of the Kaituna River: in this case the Kaituna River Board found that it was precluded, by reason of the above section, from controlling the river—the very purpose for which it was formed. Legislation was passed last session exempting the Board from the provisions of that section. The section of the Act will be repealed at the first opportunity, as section 86 of the River Boards Act amply safeguards a Harbour Board's powers.

It is very necessary that the River Boards Act be amended, and the exact position of River Boards be defined, both in relation to land-drainage and the necessity for having complete control of the whole of a river from either the gorge or the source to the mouth.

War Memorials.—Fourteen local bodies were authorized to erect war memorials under section 15, Finance Act, 1919.

Local Bodies' Finance Act.—An important measure dealing with the finances of local bodies was passed last session. The law has for many years allowed local bodies to borrow money in anticipation of revenue, but the money had become in many cases practically a permanent debt. From time to time power had to be given to local bodies to borrow money for the purpose of paying off this debt. The last occasion on which this was done was in 1913, but since then the debt has been again accumulating, and many local bodies were in consequence in financial difficulties. The local Bodies' Finance Act compels local bodies which have an overdraft or temporary deposits to capitalize their liability, forming what is known as an "antecedent liability," and to pay off this liability either (a) by seven annual instalment out of revenue, or (b) by a direct loan, or (c) by levying a special rate in each of seven years sufficient to cover each annual instalment. The powers of a local body to borrow by overdraft or by temporary deposit are limited to three-fourths of its total revenue for the preceding year, and at the end of a year there shall not be owing a greater sum than the amount of revenue then outstanding. This will, of course, compel local bodies to live within their income, and will also ensure that money borrowed by overdraft or temporary deposit will simply be a temporary expedient in anticipation of revenue.

Whilst some difficulty is being experienced in complying with the Act, a large proportion of local bodies have already, by one or other of the means provided, taken steps to extinguish their liability, and I feel quite confident that the Act, which is generally approved, will result in establishing a sounder position in local bodies' finance.

ANIMALS PROTECTION AND GAME ACT.

During the session 1921-22 a new Animals Protection and Game Act was passed, and, generally speaking, meets with the approval of all those interested in the matters dealt with therein. The Act contains schedules of absolutely protected birds and of imported and native game, provision being made to enable these lists to be varied by the inclusion of other birds or animals therein or by the exclusion of any now included. Wide powers have been taken to enable regulations to be made, and it is proposed to submit in due course draft regulations to acclimatization societies.

Deer.—Open seasons for deer-stalking were, as usual, provided in a number of acclimatization districts, and it becomes year by year more apparent that a comprehensive scheme of deer-culling will have to be carried out, both on account of the falling-off in the quality of heads and of the damage that is being done in some districts by these animals, it having been found necessary to grant permission in several cases to the occupiers of property to destroy deer committing damage.