

SESSION II.
1923.
NEW ZEALAND.

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

(ANNUAL REPORT OF THE) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1923.

Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.

SIR,—

Department of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 26th June, 1923.

I have the honour to submit herewith the annual report of the Department for the year ended 31st March, 1923.

I have, &c.,

J. HISLOP, Under-Secretary.

The Hon. W. Downie Stewart, Minister of Internal Affairs, Wellington.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

I HAVE again to report a particularly active year in matters affecting local government. Financially the year has been one of unique importance to local bodies, inasmuch as the first year of operation of the provisions of the Local Bodies' Finance Act brought home to local bodies the necessity for the strictest economy in framing their estimates of expenditure.

Counties.—Certain necessary adjustments arising out of the Waikato and King-country Counties Act, 1921–22, were completed by the division of the Otorohanga, Taumarunui, and Waitomo Counties into ridings, and the making of arrangements for holding the first election and first meeting of the Council in each case. Special provision was made for the control of the Waitomo County until the new Council came into office; for taking a poll to determine the system of rating to be adopted in that county; and also fixing the antecedent liability of the former Awakino County Council. The Waipa County was redivided into ridings and representation fixed. Financial adjustments arising out of the Act were being dealt with at the close of the year.

No new counties were constituted, but the question of constituting the Akarana County was the subject of considerable attention. A report on certain matters connected with the administration of the area comprising the proposed county was being obtained. The question of bringing the Act into force in Marlborough County, and the establishment of local government in the Sounds district, continued to give rise to considerable thought, but so far it has not been found possible to solve these difficult problems.

The boundaries were altered between four counties, and the necessary action taken to adjust riding boundaries of those and other counties. The boundaries of six counties were redefined consequent upon the alteration or constitution of boroughs.

Riding boundaries in the Waitemata County were altered under the provisions of section 21 of the Act, and fourteen County Councils passed special orders altering riding boundaries. The special order made by the Waipawa County Council resulted in considerable opposition from certain rate-payers, whose representations were very fully considered before the special order was gazetted. The question of bringing these special orders into force is now a matter which rests in the hands of the Minister, and through an amendment to the Act and by arrangement with the Valuation Department the matter has been considerably simplified. It is now possible to bring such special orders into force within a reasonable time after passing thereof, and leave the adjustment of valuation rolls to be made subsequently. In anticipation of the amended rolls County Councils may amend the electoral rolls from the valuation rolls in possession; but the part of the proceedings which should be carefully watched by Councils is that, when a general election is pending, the special order should