

Waikato County were merged by special orders passed by the Waimea and Waikato County Councils respectively. These special orders were passed as a result of the provision made in section 4, Counties Amendment Act, 1927, for the purpose of facilitating merging. There are now only nineteen road districts left in the Dominion, seven of which are contained in districts where there is at present no other form of local government.

River Districts.—There were several proposals under way for the constitution and alteration of boundaries of river districts, but by the end of the year none of these had been effected.

Land Drainage Districts.—Two new districts—namely, the Tahuna Drainage District, in the Piako County, and the Wiri Drainage District, in the Manakau County—were constituted; the boundaries of three districts were altered; extensions of time for holding the usual triennial elections were granted in a number of cases; and the usual action was taken towards gazetting the results of various elections.

Local Bodies Finance Act.—The overdraft borrowing-powers of a few newly-constituted local authorities were fixed.

War Memorials.—Three local authorities were authorized to erect and maintain war memorials under the powers given by section 15 of the Finance Act, 1919.

By-laws of Local Bodies.—A considerable number of by-laws were passed during the year. Four sets of by-laws (in two cases they were joint by-laws made by a number of County Councils) were approved by the Governor-General under section 109, Counties Act, 1920, and nine sets (also including two joint by-laws) were confirmed by the Minister under the By-laws Act, 1910.

Public Bodies' Leases Act.—The Manakau County Council was declared a leasing authority under this Act.

Designation of Districts Act.—A proposal to change the name of Stokes Valley, in the Hutt County, to Koraunui was not proceeded with.

Rating Act.—Advice was received that the system of rating on the unimproved value was adopted in ten districts, in one district it was rejected, and in another district the continuation of the system was confirmed.

LEGISLATION.

Two important Bills were promoted by this Department—namely, the Counties Amendment and the Local Legislation. The Counties Amendment Act as passed is of considerable importance in county government throughout the Dominion, as, generally speaking, the majority of the clauses conferred wider powers on County Councils in recognition of their greatly increased activities, arising out of the development and closer population of county areas. The Local Legislation Act contains eighty-three clauses, covering a very wide range of subjects. The size of the Act as passed is, however, not a complete indication of the activities of the Department in respect of this measure, as a large number of proposals that were considered were not finally agreed to. Every proposal respecting this measure is most exhaustively examined in order that its merits may be established, and, among other things, it is not the practice to agree to proposals which are of a continuing nature or which justify the promotion of a local Bill.

As usual, a large number of local Acts were passed by Parliament, and the majority of these were first submitted by the Local Bills Committee to this Department for examination and report.

TOWN-PLANNING.

Many local bodies were engaged during the year in the preparation of town-planning schemes, and a number of them were in communication with the Department. In some cases it is evident that the preparation of the schemes is well advanced, tentative proposals having already been submitted. The Director of Town-planning gave considerable advice and assistance to local authorities desiring such. Mr. Hammond resigned the position of Director of Town-planning, and the appointment of his successor was under consideration at the close of the year.

LAND-AGENTS.

During the year 1,143 licenses were issued and fourteen transfers granted, as compared with 1,085 licenses and sixteen transfers last year. There were again cases of defalcation under consideration.

ANIMALS PROTECTION AND GAME ACT.

As usual open seasons for game-shooting and deer-stalking were provided in a number of acclimatization districts. The Government continued to assist, by way of bonus for each deer killed, in the thinning out of deer, bonuses being paid in respect of 16,499 deer killed.

An open season was again fixed for opossums in a number of districts. Eight hundred and seventy licenses were issued to trappers, and 139,300 skins were taken.

It was found necessary to give publicity to the provisions of the Animals Protection and Game Act, 1921–22, and the regulations thereunder requiring persons desirous of importing birds or animals (other than domestic) to obtain prior consent. A practice had grown up of not making the necessary application until shipments had arrived, but as the result of the stand which has been taken the requirements of the Act and regulations in this respect are now generally being complied with. Persons desirous of importing birds and animals (other than domestic) who do not obtain permission prior to arranging shipments cannot be given any guarantee that they will be allowed to land their purchases in the Dominion.

During the year two pairs of nightingales were brought to the Dominion. No authority for their introduction had been obtained prior to shipment, and it was only after due consideration that they were allowed to be landed, but only on the condition that they were not liberated in any sanctuary.