

certain land within the Borough of Petone; and approval was given to the setting-apart for recreation purposes of a piece of closed street in the Cambridge Borough which the Cambridge Borough Council did not desire to sell.

The Municipal Conference again met, this time in Wanganui, and, as usual, passed a number of resolutions asking for amendment of the law relating to boroughs and town districts. These resolutions are under consideration.

Town Districts.—One new town district—namely, Te Kauwhata, in the Waikato County—was constituted. A proposal to form the Plimmerton district into a town district was unfavourably reported on by a Commission. The boundaries of the Kamo and Pleasant Point Town Districts were altered.

River Districts.—Two new river districts—namely, Kaipara and Tawaha—were constituted, in the latter case the Featherston County Council being declared to be the River Board for the district. There were no alterations in the boundaries of river districts, but two cases were considered, one being unfavourably reported on by a Commission, and the other being under consideration at the end of the year. During the year you approved of legislation being brought down to consolidate and revise the River Boards Act, 1908, and its amendments, and this work was well under way at the close of the year.

Land-drainage Districts.—A larger number of matters than usual relating to land-drainage districts were under consideration during the year. Three new districts were constituted. The boundaries of two districts were altered. Other alterations were considered, but were not agreed to. The Orton Drainage District was abolished, and action subsequently taken to apportion the assets and liabilities of the Orton Drainage Board. A number of Land-drainage Board elections fell due in the month of November, but for various reasons the time had to be extended in several cases, no less than nine cases being dealt with. The usual action was taken to gazette the result of the various elections held, and in some cases members were appointed. The number of members of the Mangapu Drainage Board was increased. An extension of time was granted for the preparation of the ratepayers list of the Hillside Drainage District. During the year you approved of legislation being brought down to consolidate and revise the Land Drainage Act, 1908, and its amendments, and this work, in conjunction with the River Boards Act and amendments, was well under way at the close of the year.

By-laws of Local Bodies.—Three sets of by-laws were confirmed by the Minister under the By-laws Act, 1910.

Public Bodies' Leases Act.—The Lake County Council and the Te Kuiti Borough Council were respectively declared leasing authorities under this Act.

Rating Act.—Advice was received that the system of rating on the annual value was adopted in the Wanganui City, which had previously been rated on the unimproved value. Subsequently the times for taking the several steps for and incidental to the preparation of a valuation list for the city were extended. A proposal to adopt the system of rating on the unimproved value in the Waitemata County was rejected, and a proposal to rescind the system of rating on the unimproved value in the Borough of Rangiora was rejected. Matters incidental to the poll taken in the Waitemata County were brought rather prominently before the Department, the time for taking the poll being twice extended.

LEGISLATION.

The following important Acts affecting this Department were passed last year:—

Auctioneers Act.—This Act was a complete revision and re-enactment of the law governing generally the licensing of auctioneers and their activities. The infrequency of legislation on this subject makes it interesting to recall briefly its history in this Dominion. The first legislation in New Zealand was the Ordinance (Session II, No. XIII) of the Governor and General Legislative Council which was passed on the 15th March, 1842, and came into force on the 25th April, 1842. This Ordinance was amended in 1843. Among other things, these Ordinances fixed the license fee at £40, which amount is still the fee. From 1853 to 1876 the licensing of auctioneers was generally within the powers of the various Provincial Legislatures, most of which passed legislation on the subject; where they did not the Ordinances of 1842 and 1843 applied. In general, the Provincial Ordinances followed the principles laid down in the Ordinances of 1842 and 1843. On the abolition of provinces by the Act of 1875 the General Assembly did not immediately deal with the question of auctioneers, but the various Provincial Ordinances remained in force in the Provincial Districts, the fees being secured to the local authorities by the Financial Arrangements Act of 1876. There was a short amendment to the law in 1886, relating to fish auctions, but it was not until 1891 that one comprehensive Auctioneers Act was passed, which finally repealed the General Ordinances of 1842 and 1843 and the Provincial Ordinances in force on the abolition of provinces. Thus the 1842 Ordinance, with slight amendments, practically survived for forty-nine years. In 1908 an Auctioneers Act was passed which was a consolidation of the 1891 Act and an amendment of 1894. The 1908 Act was amended in 1910, and in 1915 a temporary war modification relating to patriotic efforts was passed. The 1928 Act, therefore, was the first attempt for thirty-seven years to overhaul the law generally on the subject of auctioneers, and was only the third main piece of legislation on the subject in eighty-six years; and, subject to variations in the Provincial Ordinances, the fee of £40 for an auctioneer's license has been the same since 1843. The scheme of the 1928 Act largely followed the lines of the Land Agents Act, 1921–22, being altered only to such an extent as was necessary having regard to the different nature of the activities of auctioneers and to retain certain principles already the law. The licensing of auctioneers was placed in the hands of Magistrates, in lieu of local authorities as formerly, but the fees remained