

A detailed procedure is then set out for giving full publicity to any amalgamation scheme so initiated, for consulting the various parties affected by the scheme, and for ultimately referring to a Commission of inquiry any scheme to which there is objection. It should be stated that all schemes, whether prepared by local authorities themselves or by the Minister, are to be referred to the Commission for investigation if objected to. Elaborate provisions are set out in the Bill for a very careful review of the position to be made by the Commission to which a scheme is referred, and the ultimate fate of any scheme is dependent entirely upon the nature of the report of the Commission.

The Bill, admittedly, is mainly of a procedure nature. Nevertheless, it is a highly important Bill, as it forecasts a very necessary reorganization of the structure of local government, so that local authorities will be able to play their proper part in the full development and government of New Zealand.

As the Bill was introduced into Parliament at the close of the session it was introduced for circulation purposes only. In the meantime it was expected that local authorities and others interested would examine the Bill carefully and comment on it where desired. In addition, it was intended that the Minister of Internal Affairs should take every opportunity of explaining to the country the nature of the tentative plans for reorganizing local government.

It is obvious that an important matter such as this must be approached with care from the angle of a well-prepared plan. Furthermore, after careful thought to the subject, it was felt that the key to local government reform lay in the direction of first reorganizing the county and rural local bodies of the Dominion. With this purpose in view, towards the end of the year the Minister of Internal Affairs embarked on a campaign of meeting in their own districts the various county Councils and other local authorities affected by the tentative plan of redistribution, and explaining to them the provisions of the Bill and the tentative schemes for their own districts. Before the close of the year the Minister had met a large number of local authorities in the South Island. As a result of the progress he had then made a fairly clear conception of the ultimate aim in regard to local-body reconstruction was becoming apparent to local bodies and others.

TOWN-PLANNING.

Several local authorities were in contact with the Department with a view to taking steps for the preparation or further advancement of the town-planning schemes which they are statutorily required to prepare. It was decided during the year to prepare a set of model clauses as a guide to local authorities in the preparation of town-planning schemes, and progress is being made on this work.

Three meetings of the Town-planning Board were held.

A number of objections were received to the Timaru Borough town-planning scheme, and a committee appointed by the Town-planning Board held a local inquiry in Timaru. The committee subsequently reported to the Board on the scheme and objections, and the Board formed its conclusions thereon. These conclusions were transmitted to the Timaru Borough Council to embody in the scheme and then resubmit same to the Board for final approval. This work is nearing finality.

The Papatoetoe Town Board town-planning scheme was finally approved by the Board. Prior to this approval being given a committee of the Board held a local inquiry in Papatoetoe and reported to the Board on the scheme.

The Dannevirke Borough town-planning scheme was the subject of considerable correspondence and discussions. This scheme is nearing the stage when it is anticipated provisional approval can be given to it.

Further progress was made with the City of Christchurch town-planning scheme, but that scheme was still the subject of consultations with the Christchurch City Council.

Five appeals under the provisions of section 34 of the Town-planning Act, 1926, against certain decisions of local authorities were dealt with by the Board. These appeals were all disallowed.

The term of office of the nominated members of the Board expired during the year, and the necessary appointments for a further term of three years were made. All the retiring members were reappointed with the exception of Mr. T. C. A. Hislop, C.M.G., Mayor of Wellington, one of the nominees of the Municipal Association of New Zealand, who was replaced by Mr. J. W. Beanland, Mayor of Christchurch.

Mr. R. B. Hammond, F.N.Z.I.A., M.T.P.I. (N.Z.), A.M.T.P.I. (Lond.), who had occupied the position of Town-planning Adviser to the Department since February, 1935, was transferred to the Department of Housing Construction. A new position of Town-planning Officer was created in the Department, and Mr. J. W. Mawson, Dip. C.D., F.R.I.B.A., M.T.P.I., was appointed to this position in February, 1937. Mr. Mawson had previously occupied the position of Director of Town-planning from 1928–1933. The intention behind the appointment was that he should devote his whole time to town-planning matters with the idea of having a more vigorous town-planning policy pursued in the future than has been the case in the past.

ANIMALS PROTECTION AND GAME ACT, 1921–22.

Shooting seasons.—It was agreed to increase the shooting license fee for native and imported game in a number of acclimatization districts from £1 to £1 5s. for the 1937 shooting-season. This will provide the acclimatization societies concerned with additional funds for the raising of further game for liberation. It was also decided, that in acclimatization districts where a shooting-season for godwits would be held, that the period was to be for a fortnight only, and not two months as previously. There is a growing public opinion that the godwits should be placed on the list of absolutely protected birds.

Bird-life.—The public interest in our wonderful bird-life has been well maintained during the year. Many reports reach the Department as to the pleasure which many people derive in feeding birds in their wild state. The presence of tuis and bell-birds in localities where they had not previously been seen for years, has been a pleasing reward to those enthusiasts who have been planting suitable trees and in other ways providing for the needs of these birds.