

When all the meetings it was possible to hold had been concluded the Minister again introduced a Local Government (Amalgamation Schemes) Bill into Parliament. This Bill followed very closely the lines of the one introduced during the 1936 session of Parliament, so does not call for any detailed explanation on this occasion. In view of the important nature of the Bill and of the fact that the Minister's meetings with the local authorities had evidenced a good deal of opposition to some of the proposals, the Government decided to afford every opportunity for local authorities and others interested to represent their case fully to Parliament before the Bill was passed into law. For this purpose a Select Committee of the House of Representatives was appointed to take evidence on the Bill and report to the House. The Hon. W. E. Barnard, Speaker of the House, was appointed Chairman of that Committee. The Committee heard a good deal of evidence on the Bill, but, as there was a large volume of evidence forthcoming, it was not possible within the time at its disposal for the Committee to hear it all before the session closed. Thus the Committee was not able to make any final recommendations on the Bill, and reported back to the House with advice to that effect.

The work in connection with this matter was very heavy. A large volume of correspondence arose out of the whole of the proceedings, in addition to which a number of meetings were held and personal discussions took place for the purpose of exploring the general proposals and particular proposals for individual localities.

TOWN-PLANNING.

The year has been one of increased activity for the Department, and there is definite evidence of a revival of interest in town-planning as shown by the number of requests received from local authorities for the help and advice of the Town-planning Officer. In this way Mr. Mawson was able to make personal contact with three County Councils, nineteen Borough Councils, and one Town Board, all of whom have schemes in course of preparation or contemplation.

It is worthy of note that during the year four County Councils have sought advice in the preparation of extra-urban planning schemes for seven rural townships. Before a County Council can exercise the powers under the Town-planning Act, 1926, an Order in Council has to be issued defining the area to which the scheme applies. One such Order in Council has already been issued for the Town of Pembroke in the Lake County.

The Timaru Borough Town-planning Scheme No. 1 was finally approved by the Town-planning Board.

The Dannevirke Borough Town-planning Scheme No. 1 was provisionally approved by the Town-planning Board and advertised for the receipt of objections.

Schemes for the New Lynn Borough and for the Marewa Area in the Borough of Napier were submitted to the Board for provisional approval and referred to Committees for investigation and report. The latter scheme embraces an area of 475 acres belonging to the Napier Harbour Board, which was reclaimed by the earthquake in 1931, and has since been included in the borough. The area has been laid out by experts and is to be developed under the protection of a statutory town-planning scheme as a residential suburb of Napier. Sixty acres of the area have been acquired and are in course of development by the Housing Construction Department, and over one hundred building leases have already been granted to private individuals.

Only one meeting of the Town-planning Board was held, but the various committees of the Board have been active, including a special Committee set up to report on any town-planning matters in dispute between local authorities and the Housing Construction Department which might be referred to the Town-planning Board as arbitrator. Two such disputes were dealt with. The risk of such disputes, however, has been lessened by the policy of active co-operation which is being pursued between this Department and the Housing Construction Department.

It is satisfactory to note that in addition to the Housing Construction Department there has been active co-operation between this Department and other Departments directly or indirectly concerned with urban land development in its various phases.

Further progress was made in connection with the preparation of model town-planning clauses, and it is anticipated that the new code should be available for the use of local authorities during the coming year.

LEGISLATION.

Sovereign's Birthday Observance Act, 1937.—This Act makes the necessary legislative adjustments arising out of the celebration of His Majesty's birthday, in so far as New Zealand is concerned, on the 9th day of June, 1937, and on the first Monday in June in each succeeding year of the reign of the present Sovereign.

Dogs Registration Amendment Act, 1937.—This Act provides an organized national scheme for effecting a reduction in the prevalence of hydatid disease. On the registration of a dog the owner shall be supplied with a sufficient amount of an approved remedy to enable that person to treat the dog until the first day of January next following the date of registration. An additional fee may be prescribed by Order in Council, and in this event, until the fee has been paid, the dog is deemed not to be registered. The necessary action for the initiation of the scheme, which comes into force on the 1st January, 1939, is being taken by the Department in collaboration with the Health Department.

Physical Welfare and Recreation Act, 1937.—This Act is explained in more detail under the appropriate heading in another part of this report.