

The most important development during the year was the unanimous decision of the local authorities in the Auckland metropolitan area to prepare a comprehensive scheme of development for the combined areas, with special reference to land uses and communications. The scheme will serve as a guide for the co-ordination of the separate town-planning schemes within the metropolitan area. In view of this decision, the Town-planning Board decided to postpone further consideration of the Auckland City Town-planning Scheme pending the completion of the metropolitan scheme.

In view of the representations made to the Board as to the difficulty experienced by certain local authorities in securing competent technical assistance in the preparation of their plans and surveys, arrangements were made with the Department of Lands and Survey whereby the Chief Surveyors have been authorized to undertake such work at cost for districts having a population of three thousand and under.

As a result of the circular referred to in last year's report, it has been ascertained that, in addition to the schemes in operation or which have been submitted to the Town-planning Board for approval, there are thirty town-planning schemes and twelve extra-urban planning schemes in course of preparation, many of which are approaching completion.

To meet difficulties which have arisen in the administration of a number of schemes, two amendments to the Town-planning Act, 1926, were included in the Statutes Amendment Bill during last session of Parliament and were placed on the statute-book. One of these enables a responsible authority to raise a loan without a poll of ratepayers to meet payments in connection with claims for compensation for injurious affection, and the other enables a responsible local authority to avoid the payment of compensation by giving notice within one month of the date of an award of its intention to modify its scheme.

The report of the Hutt Valley Development Scheme, which was completed during the year, was printed and published. Unfortunately, owing to the need to economize in the use of paper, a limited number of copies of the report in an abridged form only could be printed. It is satisfactory to note that the major proposals embodied in the scheme have been accepted by the various local authorities concerned as a basis of future planning and development in the valley.

V. LAND-AGENTS.

Seven hundred and four licenses were issued and 7 transfers granted, as compared with 721 licenses issued and 11 transfers for the previous year. One case of a defaulting land-agent came before the Department, and it was still under investigation at the end of the year.

VI. AUCTIONEERS.

Four hundred and ninety licenses were issued and 4 transfers granted, and 114 changes of endorsement of seller made, as compared with 460 licenses, 4 transfers, and 158 changes of endorsement for the previous year.

VII. RECEPTION OF BRITISH CHILDREN DURING WAR.

As the result of offers of suitable accommodation by the Dominions the British Government early in 1940 decided to send out parties of children between the ages of five and fourteen years for safe keeping during the war. In New Zealand the general direction of the scheme was entrusted to the British Children's Reception Committee, and the detailed administration was undertaken by the Department of Internal Affairs in co-operation with the Department of Education. Local bodies throughout the Dominion promptly accepted the invitation by the Government to co-operate in carrying out the detailed work involved in the scheme.

Numerous offers of assistance were received from societies, associations, and private individuals who wished to help in the organizing work. The various religious bodies and many other organizations having a particular interest in the care of children gave their whole-hearted and practical support to the scheme.

With this far-ranging assistance there was quickly set up an organization capable of placing, at short notice, 10,000 children with private families throughout the Dominion.

The response of the people to the call for temporary foster-parents was truly remarkable. Indeed, it required only one day's appeal by the Minister of Internal Affairs through the air and the press to bring in far more offers than were requested. At the outset the New Zealand share of children was to be 2,500, but the offers of homes went speedily beyond 10,000.

Unfortunately, the scheme had barely begun when enemy action checked its continuance. Only two parties of children, 89 and 113, were landed in New Zealand and were placed in suitable homes. On 2nd October, 1940, it was announced that in consequence of the sinking of the "City of Benares" by enemy action at the height of a severe storm, with the loss of many lives, the British Government had decided to reconsider the whole position. Consequently, the transport of further parties of children overseas was postponed.

When the Children's Overseas Reception Board in Great Britain closed the roll on 5th July, 1940, the number of children entered under the scheme exceeded 200,000, of whom about 20,000 had indicated a preference for New Zealand.

The organization set up in New Zealand can be revived at short notice should it be decided to proceed with the scheme at a later date.