

Bills were introduced for the constitution of two new counties, proposed to be called "Mount Hutt County" and "Akarana County," and in each case the Bill was held over by the Local Bills Committee at the instigation of this Department. A Commission was set up in each case, and as the report of the Commission on the Mount Hutt case was adverse the Bill was dropped. The report of the Akarana Commission had not been received at the close of the year.

An important move was made in connection with the counties in the Waikato and King-country districts. In consequence of power taken in section 91 of the Reserves and other Lands Disposal and Public Bodies Empowering Act, 1920, a Commission was set up to inquire into the question of an adjustment of boundaries between several counties in those districts, and whether the Counties Act should be brought into force in East and West Taupo Counties, and whether the road districts in the latter county should be continued or abolished. The same Commission is inquiring into the proposed formation of a new county in the vicinity of Cambridge. The Commission had not reported on any of these matters at the close of the year, but it is hoped that as a result of its inquiries a satisfactory adjustment of the boundaries of the various counties concerned will be made.

A step was made to have the Counties Act brought into force in the Marlborough County, and the road districts therein abolished, and petitions providing for this were circulated throughout the county by those interested in the proposal. No finality has yet been reached. Opinion in the district is very divided as to what form of local government should be established; and whilst the Department is generally in favour of the county form of local government, and does not approve of road districts except in special cases, it is not desirous of interfering in any way, and the matter is being left to the discretion of the ratepayers.

The boundaries between the Waikohu and Uawa, Waitotara and Patea, Weber and Patangata, Whangarei and Hobson Counties were altered, and the boundaries of Eden, Levels, Manawatu, Raglan, Rangitikei, Waikato, and Waipa Counties were redefined. Certain areas added to the Wairarapa South and Waitotara Counties were declared to form part of certain ridings thereof.

In consequence of the constitution of the new counties of Hauraki Plains, Inglewood, and Mata-kaoa, the necessary action was taken to divide these counties into ridings, fix representation, and make arrangements for the first election.

Power was taken in the Counties Act to enable the Governor-General to include islands within an adjacent county, on petition of the County Council or of not less than two-thirds of the ratepayers.

The Taranaki County Council passed a by-law in 1919 under the authority of an Order in Council issued under the Counties Amendment Act, 1915, providing for the licensing of vehicles using that county's roads. The passing of this by-law resulted in strenuous opposition by the adjoining local bodies, and a Commission was appointed to inquire into the question of whether the county should be permitted to enforce it. The Commission reported adversely, and an Order in Council was issued revoking the authority under which the by-law was made.

The Counties Act, 1908, and its various amendments were consolidated, and several new provisions of considerable importance to County Councils were included in this measure.

The Bay of Islands, Hauraki Plains, and Inglewood Counties adopted the system of rating on the unimproved value.

Several County Councils passed special orders altering the boundaries of ridings and adjusting representation.

Certain ridings in the Otamatea County were altered so as to bring such ridings into conformity with section 20 of the Counties Act, 1908.

Boroughs.

At the commencement of the present year there was a slightly less number of boroughs in the Dominion than at the corresponding period of the previous year. This, however, does not indicate a retrograde step, but is due to the fact that several of the smaller boroughs adjoining cities amalgamated with their larger neighbour. It is now more and more realized in all branches of local-government activities that a multiplicity of local authorities is not desirable, and where an area can be shown to be more effectively and economically administered by a larger body which possesses better means of administration, then there is little argument for the continuance of the former district.

Amalgamation has taken place principally in the cities, and this all points to the fact that sooner or later the question of the formation of metropolitan areas for the four cities will have to be considered. In the City of Wellington, for example, no less than three adjoining boroughs have amalgamated with the city, whilst others are now discussing the matter. The needs of cities have of late grown, altogether apart from those of other boroughs, and are so peculiarly individual that it is becoming more and more evident, with their continual growth, that some provision must be made for their requirements in the future. The whole question will require to be carefully thought out; and if the principal cities take the matter up it is possible, with the precedents contained in such places as Sydney and Melbourne, to work out a scheme which should suit the requirements of each city. A good indication of the manner in which the needs of the city differ from those of the smaller boroughs is contained in the number of local Acts which have been passed during recent years dealing specifically with the cities.

The Municipal Corporations Act, 1908, and amendments, were consolidated, and, in addition, new provisions were included giving Borough Councils several additional powers. One important new provision empowers Borough Councils to engage in such trading undertakings as are authorized by the Governor-General in Council, but so far no applications have been received for authority to take advantage of this provision.

The boundaries of the City of Auckland and the boroughs of Carterton, Feilding, Marton, Master-ton, Sumner, and Timaru were altered, and the usual notices redefining the boundaries of these