

Some County Councils have been placed in a somewhat awkward position in view of doubt which has arisen as to the power of a County Council to raise a special loan for the purchase of a recreation-ground and the erection of a public hall thereon. In order to overcome the doubt one case was validated by legislation, and another Council was authorized to raise a loan to acquire land as a site for a public hall and other purposes. Cases of other counties meeting the same difficulty were under consideration at the close of the year, and in order to put the matter beyond doubt it is proposed to make general provision at the earliest opportunity.

*Boroughs.*—There were several alterations of borough boundaries made—namely, Avondale, Blenheim, Feilding, Gisborne, Masterton, Mount Albert, and Oamaru. Others were under consideration at the close of the year. The boundaries of those boroughs altered were redefined. There were two alterations involved in the case of the Gisborne Borough, and both these alterations gave rise to lengthy consideration, resulting in one of the cases in a poll being taken before the alteration was made. On account of certain irregularities this poll was subsequently validated. One of the alterations involved the inclusion of a considerable portion of the Mangapapa Town District in the borough, and as a result thereof the Town Board was dissolved and the remainder of the district merged in the adjoining County of Cook.

No new boroughs were constituted, but four proposed new boroughs were considered. In two of these cases, Kaikoura and Rongonui, the Commission reported adversely; in one case, One Tree Hill, the poll resulted in the proposal being rejected; and in the fourth case, Castlecliff, the petition was not proceeded with in view of other arrangements being made for the area concerned.

An important move was made in Wanganui by the union of the Wanganui Borough with the town districts of Gonville and Castlecliff. The effect of this was to give the borough the necessary qualifications to be raised to the status of a city, and although this is outside the scope of the past year's activities I think it is fitting to mention here that action has subsequently been taken to proclaim it a city.

The Avondale Borough Council passed a special order dividing the borough into wards, and fixing representation. The Thames Borough Council passed a special order altering the number of Councillors for that borough. The preparation of the district electors-roll for the Borough of Te Aroha was validated. The operation of heavy-traffic licenses issued by the Taihape Borough Council was extended so as to be available within the district of every local authority any part of which is within five miles of any part of the borough.

An Order in Council was issued fixing the amount of principal and interest repayable by workers in respect of advances for the erection of workers' dwellings.

The biennial election of Mayors and Councillors was held during the year.

The Municipal Conference held a sitting, and as a result a large number of resolutions asking for amendments of the existing law affecting boroughs and town districts, and for new legislation, have been received. These resolutions are all receiving careful consideration.

*Town Districts.*—The boundaries of the Amberley and Otane Town Districts were altered. A petition to alter the Helensville Town District was not granted. The Otorohanga Town District was declared not to form part of the County of Otorohanga. The Gonville and Castlecliff Town Districts were united with Wanganui, and the Mangapapa Town District was included in the Gisborne Borough and Cook County.

*Road Districts.*—In previous reports I have made reference to the steady decrease in the number of road districts in the Dominion. The past year has been no exception, and all the road districts in the Rodney and Marlborough Counties, together with the Huntly Road District in the Waikato County, thirteen in all, were merged. This leaves only thirty-five road districts in the Dominion, thirteen of which are contained in districts where there is at present no other form of local government. The operation of the Main Highways Act has given rise to consideration of the desirability of the abolition of further road districts, and it is possible that the day is not far distant when the existence of Road Boards, at all events where there is no other form of local government, will be wholly discontinued. The Tamaki West Road Board was authorized to exercise the powers conferred by the Road Boards Amendment Act, 1914. The same Board was authorized to increase the number of its members, and the name of its district was altered by deleting the word "West." There has been considerable correspondence concerning a proposal to form a new road district in the One Tree Hill Road District, but so far a petition in proper form has not been presented.

*River Districts.*—The boundaries of one district were altered. Petitions were received for the abolition of the Mangawara River District, or, alternately, the exclusion of two subdivisions therefrom. A Commission was appointed to go into the matter, but when that Commission sat the petitioners did not appear before it. The petitions were not granted.

The triennial election of River Boards was held during the year, and the time was extended in two cases. Trustees were appointed for three districts.

The Geraldine County River Board was given special power in the "washing-up" Act to petition for the inclusion in its district of such portions of the adjoining County of Levels as is thought necessary, and also to subdivide the district for purposes of classification and rating.

The Manawatu-Oroua River Board found that the powers contained in the River Boards Act, 1908, were insufficient to enable it to deal effectively with river protection in its district, and the Board promoted a somewhat comprehensive local Bill, which became law. The principal parts of the Act which departed from the existing law are contained in section 34, which gives the Board more extensive classification powers, and section 37, which provides for rating on an acreage basis.

*Land-drainage Boards.*—One district was constituted, one abolished, and the boundaries of two altered. One district was subdivided and representation fixed for subdivisions in two cases.

The general election of Drainage Boards throughout the Dominion was held during the year, and trustees were appointed for one district.