

laying before him in writing their views on the recommendations of the Commission. If the Minister considers that the objections are well founded he is required to refer the report back to the Commission, together with the objections, for further inquiry and report by the Commission. After considering the objections the Commission may make an alternative or supplementary report or may advise that it has no recommendations to add to its original report. When the Commission has made its final report on any amalgamation scheme the Minister shall notify all the local authorities affected of the terms of the Commission's recommendations, and thereupon effect shall be given to those recommendations.

(c) *Endorsement of Amalgamation.*—As stated above, there was general endorsement by the principal local government associations of the proposals outlined in the Bill. Mr. T. Jordan, President of the Municipal Association of New Zealand, Incorporated, speaking on behalf of that association, stated, "I am justified in saying that the association as a whole definitely approves of the Bill." Mr. G. J. Talbot, President of the New Zealand Counties' Association, speaking on behalf of that association, stated that the Counties' Association "approved of amalgamation." Mr. G. Manning, on behalf of the Christchurch City Council, stated, "The Christchurch City Council definitely desires to support the Local Government (Amalgamation Schemes) Bill." Similar sentiments were expressed by the representatives of the Auckland and Wellington City Councils. Several other witnesses expressed their opinion, or the opinion of their association, that amalgamation was desirable in certain circumstances. Practically all witnesses expressed opposition to compulsion being exercised in relation to the proposals; although all agreed that some compulsory powers were necessary to prevent a recalcitrant body holding up a scheme generally approved. Further, it was pointed out that the Minister himself was bound by the Bill to accept the recommendations of the Commission which the Bill provides for. We suggest, therefore, that the objections to the compulsory clauses in the Bill are based on a misapprehension of the contents, and that they have, therefore, no foundation in fact.

(d) *Lack of Design.*—Several witnesses, in particular Mr. I. J. Goldstine, Mayor of One Tree Hill, speaking on behalf of the Auckland Suburban Local Bodies' Association, stated that "The first point to be noted, and a very important point, too, is the complete absence of design in the Bill." All the witnesses who spoke in this strain were anxious that a survey of the economic and social facilities should precede the formulation of any definitive amalgamation schemes, and stated that the Bill did not provide for such a survey. We desire to point out, however, that we think this objection is based on a complete misapprehension of the powers of the Commission as provided for in the Bill. In no place in the Bill is there any limitation of the powers of the Commission to make such inquiries as "may be necessary." It is not conceived that the Commission will confine its inquiry merely to the hearing of evidence from interested parties, but will be expected to make a very comprehensive social and economic survey of the area under consideration in order that any amalgamations proposed or recommended by it will, in effect, provide for the effective government of that area. In other words, the Commissions as proposed by the Bill are, in effect, regional Commissions, and will carry out in the manner desired by Mr. Jordan and Mr. Goldstine, the regional surveys which they advocate.

(e) *A Royal Commission.*—Several of the witnesses, in particular, the Counties' Association and the Auckland Suburban Local Bodies' Association, desire the institution of a national Royal Commission on Local Government in New Zealand prior to the formulation of any definitive amalgamation schemes. For several reasons we do not think there is any necessity for the setting-up of such a national Commission. In the first place, the necessity for and desirability of some reduction in the number of local bodies in the Dominion has been acknowledged and recognized by every Government in power and by every important local-body organization in the Dominion. No national Royal Commission, even if it could sit continuously for a period of years, could be expected to do anything more than reiterate the necessity for some such reorganization. We would mention in passing that a recent Local Government Commission in England sat continuously for seven or eight years, and its final report dealt solely with general principles and not with detailed plans.

Another important factor against a national Royal Commission, however, was well stated by the Hon. T. Bloodworth, M.L.C., in evidence on behalf of the Auckland City Council. He stated that the amalgamations proposed in the Bill were essentially questions involving a detailed and close knowledge of and investigation in a particular locality, and would necessitate a detailed local inquiry such as no national Commission could possibly be expected to undertake. The interests of the local bodies concerned would be much better served, he stated, by a separate commission for each area or amalgamation scheme proposal than if the matter were left to a national Royal Commission. He also emphasized that since the Bill provided for the appointment of a representative of the local authorities concerned in the proposals as a member of the local Commission, the interests of the local authorities were much more likely to receive sympathetic attention than if all the members of the Commission were entirely strangers to the district. In any case, it must be apparent that even though the national Royal Commission set out a definite series of desirable amalgamations, some form of local inquiry would be absolutely necessary before the scheme was put into operation. Questions of adjustment of boundaries, adjustment of loan liabilities, and the hundred and one questions which would need to be solved in every amalgamation scheme could not be dealt with by a national Commission. Further, there is a distinct possibility that a national Commission may propose amalgamations which are wholly undesirable. As has been stated above, it is fairly obvious that a national Commission could not make the detailed inquiry which the circumstances of the case demand, and consequently it may, on purely academic grounds, suggest a reorganization which would be quite detrimental to the interests of the nation as a whole. The evidence produced, therefore, did not convince us as to the necessity or desirability of a national Royal Commission prior to the passing of the Bill.