

back to live there permanently, some day." Unfortunately, my friend died some months later.

On another occasion, a gentleman belonging to Los Angeles called at the Council Chambers, and asked if he could see "His Honour the Mayor." Mr W. H. Nicholson, who was Mayor at that time, happened to be in the office, and on being introduced, was greeted with—"Waal, Mister, I just want to say you've got something right here, that's not to be bettered anywhere, unless it is by . . . in California. I've been up on those wonderful hills: I've breathed the purest of air: I've seen in the distance, the mountains covered with their mantles of snow—a wonderful panoramic view—I've seen your firm, safe, sandy beach, cosy homes and happy people, and I guess it's God's Own Country right enough."

The foregoing are two of the many sincere tributes paid to Sumner; but why elaborate? Good wine needs no bush!

BEGINNING OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

"O small beginnings, ye are great and strong,
Based on a faithful heart and weariless brain,
Ye build the future fair, ye conquer wrong,
Ye earn the crown and wear it not in vain."

Before attempting to review the work accomplished by those who undertook the responsibility of local government in Sumner, it might perhaps be as well to sketch briefly the history of the development of local government.

As with much else that is close to us—and local government is of the fabric and pattern of our daily life—its proximity dulls appreciation of its merits. We become so used to the processes and results that only occasionally are we conscious of them, or appreciative of the labour of those connected with its administration. This statement may be held by some to imply defects in an estimate of citizenship, a lack of interest in its privileges and perhaps neglect of its responsibilities. On the contrary, however, it may be claimed that this statement really shows that the people generally are appreciative of the fact that the system is free from major defects, and its administration free also, from graft and corruption.

The record of achievements by local governing bodies in New Zealand pays tribute to the democratic principles on which the system is based, supported as it is, by sound and safe statutory control as to the limit of the financial powers which may be exercised. It has brought to the people, amenities and conveniences perhaps not even appreciated to the full. It stands as a guard over the health, comfort, security and pleasure of the people. It makes for responsible citizenship, and in general, is a controlling force endowed or charged with the duty of maintaining a watchful care over the people and their interests.

The foundation of the present form of local government may be traced to Lord John Russell, who in 1835, prepared and conducted, through the English Parliament, a Bill containing

140 clauses, which, when ultimately passed, became the "Municipal Corporations Act of 1835," and applied democratic principles to local government. (Had I been Scottish, I would perhaps, have claimed that the reform of local government really originated in Scotland in 1833, when the "Municipal Reform Act" of that year became law. It definitely abolished the old system of close corporations. Being merely a "diluted Scot," I will let the statement pass.)

However, we are more concerned with the development of the local body system in the Dominion, and its relationship to the progress made under it, in Sumner, but before proceeding further, I wish to pay a tribute to the Hon. Mr. Parry for his valuable and comprehensive address to the delegates assembled at the Municipal Conference held in Wellington in March, 1940. In referring to the preamble to the Bill, which was passed by the Legislative Council on the 9th day of July, 1844, Mr Parry said:

"The preamble is one of the best of the statements of the real place and purpose of local government in a democratically governed country."

Mr Jordan, President of the Association, in addressing delegates on the same subject, said:

"It sets out the fundamental basis of local government, and shows the prime importance of that institution, as the foundation of our democracy."

The Bill provided as follows:—

"WHEREAS it is necessary that provision should be made for the good order, health and convenience of the inhabitants of towns and their neighbourhoods AND WHEREAS the inhabitants themselves are best qualified, as well by their more intimate knowledge of local affairs as by their more direct interest therein, effectually to provide for the same AND WHEREAS the habit of self-government in such cases hath been found to keep alive a spirit of self-reliance and a respect for the laws and to prepare men for the due exercise of other political privileges be it therefore enacted," etc., etc.

Eighteen months after it was passed, it was disallowed by Her Majesty the Queen, and it was not until the "New Zealand Constitution Act of 1846" became law, that power was given to establish municipal corporations in New Zealand.

However, by the 1853 Constitution Act (England), the 1846 Constitution Act of New Zealand was repealed, and New Zealand was divided into six provinces, and it is from this point we begin to trace the institution of local government in Sumner.

The first reference I have seen to works affecting Sumner, is contained in the Canterbury Provincial Council's Ordinance of 16th March, 1854, Session 2, No. 6, which was passed as an ordinance authorizing the Superintendent of the Province of Canterbury to appoint commissioners to report upon the best means of communication between the towns of Lyttelton and Christchurch.

Messrs W. B. Bray (chairman), H. J. Cridland, E. Dobson, R. J. S. Harman, and Edward Jollie, were appointed and ulti-