

CENTRAL AUTHORITY

17. With one exception all the major submissions to the parliamentary Committee recommended that the administration of the Act should be carried out by a central authority instead of by the Minister as at present. These representations were subsequently confirmed in detail by a deputation to the Minister representing the Fire Service organizations. The draft Bill provides for the constitution of a Fire Service Council with the membership and the powers recommended. This Council will elect its own Chairman (except for the first term—see paragraph 20 below), it will regulate its own procedure, and appoint both technical and administrative officers. Provision is made for payment of fees to members of the Council. The Council is required to submit annual estimates of expenditure to the Minister. Its duties are defined as follows:—

- (a) To administer the legislation.
- (b) To guide and supervise the Fire Service for the purpose of maintaining the maximum efficiency.
- (c) To co-ordinate the Fire Service units for purposes of rural fire protection, reinforcement at serious fires, or for war or other emergency.
- (d) To encourage, supervise, or carry out experimental or research work with respect to Fire Service methods, equipment, organization, or co-ordination with other services.
- (e) To publish reports, information, and advice on Fire Service matters.
- (f) To establish courses of training and generally direct the training of the Service, particularly of officers.
- (g) To provide for the inspection and training of brigades, and for such degree of standardization of plant, equipment, and training as may be deemed necessary for combined operations.
- (h) To classify fire districts and secondary fire districts for the purposes of this Act.
- (i) To provide reserves of plant and equipment for emergency and for their storage, maintenance, and distribution.
- (j) To approve or determine annual estimates of expenditure submitted by brigade-controlling authorities.

18. The Dunedin Metropolitan Fire Board recommended in its submissions to the parliamentary Committee and in a subsequent circular sent to all Fire Boards that the Fire Service should be controlled on a provincial basis. The combined deputation to the Minister referred to above suggested that this principle should be investigated. The proposal would involve a more complicated financial structure than that proposed under the central authority and there would be much the same objections from the individual Fire Boards. If the central authority, however, is to avoid the setting-up of a costly organization it will be convenient, if not necessary, for it to utilize the existing organizations in the larger fire districts for some of its functions, including for instance, those set out in clauses (d), (e), (f), and (i) of the preceding paragraph. It would also appear that the organization of the emergency service could most effectively be carried out on a provincial basis. The draft Bill therefore provides that the Council may delegate to any brigade-controlling authority such of its functions as it thinks fit and may pay such amount as may be agreed upon for any services so rendered.

19. It is proposed that the Civil fire service should, wherever this is practicable, take over responsibility for the protection of Government property and also in certain towns make special provision for forestry fire-protection. In some cases this will require expenditure by the brigade-controlling authority additional to its ordinary Civil requirements. Machinery provision is therefore made in the draft Bill for the Council to make appropriate special contributions to the authority concerned to meet this extra cost, following on the issue of a special requisition.