

*Panic Prevention By-law.*—This code will establish provisions designed to prevent danger from panic in theatres and similar places of assembly due to such causes as earthquake or fire. It will describe the duties of the manager in an emergency, and in appropriate cases will require all performances in theatres over a certain size to be under the supervision of fire-protection watchmen, whose qualifications and duties will be prescribed. Further provisions will relate to panic drill and panic-prevention training of the staff, emergency communication systems, and the display of exit notices.

*Adoption of Standard Code of Building By-laws.*—At the close of the year Parts I–VI of the Standard Code of Building By-laws had been incorporated in the by-laws of sixty-seven cities and boroughs, in some cases with minor amendments to meet local conditions, so that the provisions of the standard code are now in operation in all municipalities with a population of five thousand or more, with seven exceptions, as well as in many of the smaller districts. This means that some two-thirds of the total urban population now have the protection of comprehensive, uniform modern building by-law requirements, while many of the remaining authorities, including four of the seven larger ones already referred to, are known to have the adoption of the Standard Code under consideration. The adoption of Parts VII–IX of the Standard Code by local bodies is now proceeding on a similar scale, and at the close of the year fifty-nine cities and boroughs had incorporated these parts in their own by-laws. From the interest expressed and inquiries received, it is clear that the further parts to be published during the coming year will also be widely adopted as they are issued.

Following representations from the Municipal Association and the Counties Association to the Government, amending legislation was enacted last year to give Town Boards and County Councils the same power to adopt the standard by-laws in respect of buildings as are enjoyed by cities and boroughs, and this will ensure their still wider use in their present, or modified, form. Indeed, the Counties Association has already requested that the Standard Code of Building By-laws should be reviewed in order to ascertain whether its provisions are entirely suitable for adoption in both semi-urban and rural areas, with the object of modifying it, if this is found necessary or desirable, for either or both of these areas. In this way, any variation of the requirements necessitated by conditions in rural and semi-rural areas will be provided for in a way that will not be inconsistent with the remainder of the standard code and will ensure practical uniformity of requirements. The advantage of this is clearly evident when it is realized that, prior to the enactment of the amending legislation last year, some Town Boards and County Councils, as, for instance, the Johnsonville Town Board and the Heathcote County, included heavily built up urban areas which, in effect, were portions of the adjacent cities of Wellington and Christchurch, but, in the absence of the necessary by-law making powers, could not enforce building by-laws in line with those adopted by the adjoining cities. Apart from the conflict and confusion this situation has involved, it has caused serious difficulties when such urban areas have been incorporated in the adjoining cities.

There is a growing weight of opinion in favour of the enforcement of the Standard Code of Building By-laws over the whole Dominion in order to ensure adequate protection for the whole population against avoidable hazards which may arise anywhere, at any time, due to earthquake, fire, and other conditions which constitute a danger to life and limb. The growing weight of opinion supports the recommendation, contained in the report of the Parliamentary Local Government Committee presented in 1945, that—

The Standards Institute should be encouraged to continue its work on the preparation of model local body by-laws, particularly in the field of building by-laws. These model by-laws should be made mandatory throughout the Dominion.

Following the tragic fire in the Ballantyne building in Christchurch last year, similar recommendations were made by the committees of the Standards Council responsible for the formulation of the standard building by-laws and by the New Zealand Institute of