

It is admitted there is no sufficient statutory or municipal regulation covering, to sufficient extent, the construction and design of building in relation to the safety of the public. In particular, there were no regulations framed to regulate construction in relation to floor areas and occupancy as are adopted in other countries.

The only by-laws which deal with the general construction of buildings are By-laws No. 1 made in 1916 and No. 15 made in 1930. These provide for provision of fire resistance and prevention in a general way, but do not cover specific matters now considered necessary in overseas countries in respect of the situation of a building in relation to other buildings; the manner of construction in reference to spread of fire; the occupancy of the building, and the manner in which the building is used; the limiting of fire areas or fire loads.

ORDER OF REFERENCE (6)

The desirability of applying to existing buildings any present or future statutes, regulations, or by-laws providing for adequate means of egress from buildings in case of fire.

115. The Egress Code, as prepared by the New Zealand Standards Institute, makes, in our opinion, proper and efficient provision for egress, and should be made compulsory throughout New Zealand to all buildings except private residential property.

Whether under the Standards Institute statute the Minister has power to make it compulsory or not is not a question for us. If legislation is required to make it compulsory, then, in our opinion, legislation should be passed immediately to make its adoption compulsory.

116. Despite approval of the Egress Code by the Christchurch City Council, it has not been adopted by it, and of the two hundred municipalities in New Zealand we are informed no more than some fifty-two have adopted it. It has been adopted in Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin, and, in our opinion, its adoption should be made compulsory throughout New Zealand and applied to existing buildings as well as new buildings, with the exception of those specifically exempted in clause 704 of the Code itself.

We were not in a position to take evidence regarding any particular buildings in Christchurch which it was alleged would, in the event of fire, owing to the absence of proper egress, prove perilous to staff or customers on the premises, as the admission of such evidence would have entailed the owners of such premises being represented before the Commission, and it would be invidious to choose a few buildings as examples when it was obvious many other buildings would be in the same category.

117. We have come to our conclusions on this question knowing full well that considerable expense will be thrown on to the owners of existing buildings if the Egress Code is applied to them. We are also aware that so many buildings will require structural alterations and installations of schemes for fire-prevention that delay may be expected from shortage of materials and labour, but these questions have to be faced, and we think the Egress Code so important that all owners of buildings should at once be made subject to it. It may be priority for labour and materials in administration should be given to buildings within inner or brick areas and to other commercial, industrial, institutional, and educational buildings wherever they may be located.

118. We think it advisable that the scope and purpose of the Egress Code should be more generally appreciated. We think it best to quote some extracts from its author's view, as set out in the Preface to the Code. After stating that the Egress Code, as we have already pointed out, applies to new buildings save private dwellinghouses and