

1949
NEW ZEALAND

FIRE BRIGADES OF THE DOMINION

(REPORT ON THE) BY THE INSPECTOR OF FIRE BRIGADES

Presented to Both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

The INSPECTOR OF FIRE BRIGADES to the Hon. the MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

Office of the Inspector of Fire Brigades,
Wellington, 30th September, 1949.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the thirty-seventh annual report on the working of the Fire Brigades Act, 1926, for the year ended 31st March, 1949.

ADMINISTRATION

No new Fire Boards were created during the year, and the number in operation remains at sixty.

DOMINION FIRE WASTE

The insured fire loss for 1947, the latest year for which the national figures have been prepared, was £1,599,822. This is a very large increase over the loss for the previous year (£764,392), but the figure includes approximately £500,000 in respect of the wool-store fire at Rongotai, Wellington, in 1946, referred to in my 1947 report, and also a proportion of the loss at Ballantyne's fire at Christchurch, referred to last year. The total fire wastage for the year—estimated in the usual way by adding an eighth to the insured loss—is £1,799,800. This is an all-time record for New Zealand, the highest loss previously experienced being £1,636,119 in 1928.

Owing to the new legislation this will be the last year in which this report will be presented in its present form. A brief review of the existing method of preparing fire-loss statistics is therefore justified. The national loss figures are based on returns made to the Government Statistician by the insurance companies of fire-loss payments actually made during the year. In some cases where salvage of damaged material is involved, or where the fire occurs late in the year, the insurance payments may be made in the following or even a later year. This is particularly the case with respect to the large fires which are responsible for the major part of the national fire losses. The result is that the national returns, while they are the most accurate figures available, if taken over a period, are not strictly so (as in the case of the year under review) in respect of any particular year.