

protection. No fire district will be created in future unless the water supply is so approved (*clauses 10 and 18*). Urban areas in which there is no reticulated water supply or where the water supply is below the approved standard are to be classed as secondary urban fire districts. The Bill varies the basis of contribution of revenue (*clause 53*) for these districts and limits the expenditure in view of the smaller size of the towns and the lesser standard of protection possible.

Urban Fire Authorities

4. The existing legislation under which fire brigades are established and maintained is repealed (*clause 87*) and all fire brigades will come under the Bill. The existing system of local administration of brigades is retained. The controlling local authorities are designated Urban Fire Authorities (*clause 22*) to distinguish them from the corresponding Rural Fire Authorities set up under the Forest and Rural Fires Act, 1947. The existing Fire Boards are to be retained but, except where united urban fire districts are constituted, no more Fire Boards will be set up. Instead of this the territorial local authority will be established as the Urban Fire Authority. It will set up in each district a Committee to control the fire brigade or brigades, which will be financed as set out below. In urban fire districts this Committee will have the same membership as a Fire Board (*clause 23 (3)*) and will exercise most of the powers of the Authority (*clause 22 (3)*). In secondary urban fire districts a similar Committee is to be set up containing a representative of the brigade, but it will have only such powers as are delegated by the local authority (*clause 23 (4)*). The duties prescribed for these Authorities (*clause 32*) extend the existing provisions of the Fire Brigades Act, 1926. All Urban Fire Authorities are required to conform with the scheme of fire defence and rural fire protection provided for in *clause 9* of the Bill.

Volunteer and Industrial Fire Brigades

5. Provision is made (*clauses 41 to 43*) for the registration of all volunteer and industrial brigades. The purpose of this so far as the volunteer brigades are concerned is to ensure that when the members of the brigade are not individually employed (*clause 40*) the agreement of service and the brigade rules and regulations will ensure the operation of the brigade under proper conditions of discipline and efficiency. It is contemplated that industrial brigades will in future function to some extent under the rural fire protection and emergency scheme. It is therefore proposed that they shall be registered and their conditions of service approved on the same basis as the volunteer brigades. *Clause 40 (6)* restricts the operation of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act, 1945, in its application to volunteer fire brigades.

Financial Provisions

6. The Bill increases considerably the Government contribution to the cost of the urban fire services. It provides that the expenditure in fire districts shall be contributed (*clauses 50 to 53*) in the proportions, Government 10 per cent., underwriters 50 per cent., local authorities 40 per cent. (The respective contributions payable under the Fire Brigades Act, 1926, for the current year are 1·2 per cent., 49·4 per cent., and 49·4 per cent.) In secondary fire districts the local authority is required to pay at least half the costs. This is in recognition of the fact that a water supply adequate for fire protection has not been provided. A subsidy at the rate of pound for pound (*clause 53 (3)*) is payable by the Government and the underwriters, who contribute in the proportions of 1 6th and 5 6ths respectively (*clauses 50 (1) (a)* and *51 (1) (b)*). The amount of the subsidy is limited to £150, except in special cases where a direction is given by the Minister. The local authorities pay no contribution to the costs of the Fire Services Council. These are divided between the Government and the underwriters. Provision is made that the cost of special fire protection required for property of the Crown (such as Devonport Naval Base and Trentham Camp, and certain of the forestry areas) shall be paid from the funds of the Fire Service Council.

Fire Defence and Rural Fire Protection

7. The Fire Service Council is required (*clause 9*) to prepare and administer a scheme for fire defence, rural fire protection, and reinforcement between brigades at large fires. It may provide equipment for this purpose or, in the case of the larger Urban Fire Authorities, may require the latter to make provision in accordance with the scheme. Regulations are to be made (*clause 84*) for the registration of both residential and commercial buildings in rural areas, and the Council will provide for the protection of these by fire brigades located in the vicinity and for the payment to the Urban Fire Authorities of the registration fee. The costs of the actual fire protection will be borne by the territorial local authority of the rural and provision will be made for co-ordination with the activities of the Rural Fire Authorities established under the Forest and Rural Fires Act, 1947.