

18. Has your Council apportioned any of the cost with the view of charging the expenditure in connection with the upkeep of the brigade in Wellington on the boroughs you have recently brought in under the Greater Wellington scheme?—No; there is a uniform rate, out of which it will come.

19. Are you going to increase your rate?—Not for fire-brigade purposes.

20. Then you do not think the outside boroughs will pay more?—No.

21. They will get the benefit of your fire-brigade service without any increase on their part?—Yes.

22. As to the contribution by the fire associations and the Government, do you not think the contribution by those bodies should carry with it the right of some representation?—Yes. I agree in the main with what Mr. Gray has said. Under the present law we allow others to come in, and there is ample provision for that. We have a standing Brigades Committee, and we should be quite prepared to take in some persons representing interests connected with fire-brigade matters specially.

23. Would you give them voting-power?—Yes.

24. What representation would you suggest?—I think the proposal of 3 to 4 is a fair one. The local body ought to have a majority. Supposing the Fire Brigades Committee consisted of seven; four should represent the local body and three the insurance companies; or, say, three representing the Council and three representing the insurance companies, with the addition of the Mayor of the Council.

25. Although you would give representation on your committee as you suggest, it would not follow as a matter of course that they would have the controlling power, because matters would be brought up in the Council relating to the fire brigade that could not be settled by the committee at all?—That is so; but when the committee brings down a report the Council does not care to interfere.

26. But the door would be open to the control of the Council?—I think probably it would work harmoniously. I cannot anticipate any friction occurring. The whole thing would devolve on the official management of the brigade.

27. Would you agree to this: that matters dealing only with fire-brigade affairs should only be dealt with by the committee?—If it could be defined, I think so. When the Fire Brigade Committee want additional plant they must come to the Council for it.

28. The Council really possesses the power to veto, because no matter what recommendation the committee may make the Council may, if necessary, improve or modify it, and its decision is final?—If the committee wanted any more plant they would have to come to the Council to get the money required. There has always been an amount of freedom given to the committee, and the Council has invariably met the committee's recommendations. I notice that it is proposed to pay the Fire Board. Our Fire Brigade Committee are members of the Council and work without fee or reward. If this proposed Board is going to be paid there will be an effort made to get on it. I do not think there is any necessity under our system of local Boards to have a paid Board. There have always been a number of men willing to come forward and work on the Council without any emolument or fee.

29. Do you not think it is necessary, where you have not an amalgamation of boroughs, to have a Board in connection with works, the members of which have a community of action, such as with fire brigades?—If you are going to have Boards over larger areas.

30. You have a city and outside boroughs, and so far as fire-brigade services are concerned there is a community of interest; that being so, a community of action is required, with the result that you should have—should you not?—a representative Board?—How are you going to fix the representation of the local bodies?

31. I would fix it on the proportion of cost. You think that matters are going on very well as they are, do you not?—Yes, so far as Wellington is concerned. The citizens never question the raising of a loan if new buildings are required, and they thoroughly indorse the expenditure for the upkeep of the brigade, and are satisfied with it in every way.

32. You have no suggestion to make for a more efficient fire-brigade system in smaller boroughs?—I think the policy of the proposed Board would meet cases of that kind.

33. Can you make any suggestion as to how compensation could be paid in those places where there are large boroughs and smaller boroughs adjoining, and no amalgamation?—You can take the principle of charitable aid as an example. They make the contribution on the local body in proportion to capital value.

34. In the raising of a loan you will have duplication—you have a loan raised in the cities for fire-brigade purposes, and then you have another loan raised over the whole area?—That is how it would affect Wellington. We should be saddled with two burdens, the present one and the contingent one.

35. You have the additional expense of raising the loan, and also the cost of transferring?—Yes.

36. *Mr. Sidey.*] Have not the small boroughs you refer to fire-brigades of their own?—No; the nearest one is at Petone.

37. Have you considered the provisions for borrowing money?—Yes; and that system would not do for Wellington.

38. Do you think a Board would have any difficulty in raising loans from the public on the security offered to them under the provisions of this Bill?—For small loans there would probably not be any trouble, but there would be if large loans had to be obtained at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

39. Do you think, if the local authority had charge with direct power of levying rates instead of the Board, that the loan might be raised better?—Certainly.