

connection with brigades. I notice that there is no provision for the equipment and establishment of fire police in the different centres, and we want them in the small country places as well as in the large towns. They are almost a necessity now. To keep the crowd back you must have the fire police, and also as a salvage corps, and I consider that these should be provided for. Then there is another matter that we country people would like to have attended to. The country brigades are almost entirely volunteer brigades. The Superintendent would probably be appointed by the Board under the Bill, but the men are almost all volunteers, and have their own work to do. It follows, therefore, that they can pay very little attention to drill; and if we had instructors going over the colony to instruct and organize the brigades it would be a very great help to the country brigades, and would put them on a good footing. I think you would find that the insurance companies, and perhaps the Government too, would contribute more freely if they knew that the brigades were not only being equipped, but were being instructed and made efficient in fire drill.

50. *Mr. Hanan.*] You spoke of getting over the difficulty of paying compensation to the bodies who own fire-brigade services by placing the property and plant in the hands of the Board by way of trust?—Yes.

51. Then I take it that you would have a separate account kept, and the cost would be apportioned between the bodies represented?—Yes.

52. When do you say that the property should be taken over as the absolute property of the Fire Board?—The valuation would be made at the time it was taken over, and when the value was wiped out by the sinking fund or depreciation fund then the property would belong to the Board.

53. And in the meantime would you make your terms for the use of the property?—Yes.

54. Do you think the Corporation would agree to that?—I think an equitable basis might be arrived at.

55. You think the Corporation would agree to the property being taken over by the Board in trust?—I see no objection to that. I am speaking for the country brigades now.

56. What valuation would you assess for the property, at the time when it was taken over as a trust, or the value of the property at the time it was paid for?—You would have to make the valuation at the time it was taken over. You would be gradually creating a fund.

57. You think the City Corporations would be willing to hand over their property—some of it of a perishable nature—for you to look after?—Yes, I think so, provided it were done in the way I mention.

58. By the course you point out they would be sure of getting compensation in time, so that there would be no confiscation?—Yes. The plant is for the use of the city; it is there, and cannot go away.

59. Of course, the city has still the benefit of the service?—Yes.

60. *Mr. Herries.*] You say you object to the district as defined by the Bill?—I do not think I said that. I said that the Fire Brigades Association favoured larger districts: that is to say, divided up into metropolitan and country Boards, and leaving the large centres alone by themselves. Then you have the country brigades coterminous with the old provinces.

61. Supposing the fire district were left as it is, do you think that would be a good thing for the small boroughs?—I would have no objection if the fate of the Bill depended on it. I might say that one of our stations has cost £1,200, another has cost £250, and our plant, a good deal of which was got by the volunteers themselves, cost about £600 or £700.

62. But under this Bill the management would be very much more expensive than that of the boroughs?—I am speaking from the experience I have gained in travelling about the colony and seeing boroughs about our own size, where the equipment is simply a scandal—perhaps some old shed not fit for a dog-kennel, to contain the plant. They cannot get any equipment, simply because the local body says it would be such a terrible drain on the revenue.

63. Do you think it would be wise to combine and have a Provincial Board?—I think so.

64. Is that on the score of expense or better management?—I think it would be less expense and result in better management.

65. *The Chairman.*] Speaking of efficiency generally, do you not think it would be wise if a clause were inserted in the Bill under which the Board should have power to appoint a Superintendent to go round and establish brigades and bring them up to a state of efficiency?—I do; that is just what I suggest.

66. I am speaking of a paid Inspector who would go round the country districts and teach the country brigades in order that they might be brought up to the efficiency of town brigades?—That is so. The country brigades would be in favour of an Inspector who would go round and put them in the proper way to become efficient.

67. That could be better carried out if the districts were made provincial or of larger areas?—Yes.

*Mr. S. R. Webb (Mayor of Lyttelton):* The position I take up in regard to this matter is similar to that of the Mayor of Christchurch. We object to the constitution of the Board under the Bill, and prefer the thirds as formerly proposed. With regard to compensation, I think it would be impossible—ours is an exceptional case—to go in for selling our property, inasmuch as the building in which the Fire Brigade is located is used for the Technical School and for other purposes. The difficulty might be got over by a rental equal to the assessment of its value as a property. What we want to prevent is overlapping. In a locality such as ours it would be unwise and superfluous to have a Board managing our affairs, we having only four thousand of a population, covering an area of one mile and a half each way. Therefore our circumstances are very exceptional. What we want is to prevent overlapping; and in connection with the suggestion which fell from the Mayor of Christchurch, the power might be delegated by some amount of payment, which would have to be assessed, and then you could allocate the sum. The Council could