

not restrict them in regard to the expenditure. I can understand this Bill being adapted to meet difficulties in country boroughs where there are not efficient brigades, but when you come to interfere with existing rights you will find great opposition. I say emphatically that, rather than have the Bill—which only came before me this morning—I would be working under existing circumstances. All that we were asking for was to have a certain proportion of the cost of these brigades borne by the insurance companies, which we at one time got in common with Christchurch, and which was withdrawn. Rather than have the cumbrous institution the Bill proposes, we would remain as we are. As far as the constitution of the committee is concerned, I think it should be as indicated by previous speakers. With regard to the question of high-pressure water-supply, that is a factor to be considered when the Bill is passed. Where a city or borough has gone in for a high-pressure water-supply it must be a factor as to how much should be contributed for the water-supply. I hope the Bill will be very materially altered, and that it will be sent back to the local bodies for suggestions.

68. *Mr. Hanan.*] You say that you want contributions from the insurance companies. Do you not think that contributions should carry representation?—They did not ask for representation. They simply gave us money to keep the brigade up to a state of efficiency.

69. But now that they are asked to contribute, should they not have representation?—Yes.

70. Do you not think, from your experience of municipal business, that the undertakings in connection with municipal ventures are so large and so difficult in their operations that really it takes the Council more than the time at their disposal to properly attend to them?—Well, we have such an able Town Clerk that he will not allow us to lag behind.

71. What objection have you, so long as you get the value of your plant, to hand it over to a Board?—We could not very well hand it over. We have the Technical School in our building.

72. But you would get rent for that?—Yes.

73.—*Mr. Herries.*] Are you satisfied with the definition of “district,” or do you think that the district should be a provincial one?—I prefer the local district, decidedly.

*Mr. Brown (Masterton).* I might say that we certainly prefer the districts as proposed in the Bill; that is, that the boroughs with a population such as we have should be constituted districts. There would be very great objection on the part of small boroughs to be combined in any large scheme. I think we are all of one mind with reference to the proposed confiscation. The clause is very vague, but it seems to me that the property would be taken away and vested in the Board. Under the Municipal Corporations Act the Council can appoint committees, and those committees have powers delegated to them. If the special representation of fire brigades consisted of three members, and the Council had an equal number, with the Mayor as Chairman, that would be a means of getting over one difficulty, and probably the property might be vested in the Council as at the present time. There would be considerable trouble in altering the ownership of the property. What we would like with regard to fire police and salvage corps is this: that where a borough has suburbs adjoining they might be allowed to come into the district. In Masterton we have a growing suburb across the river that is in the county at the present time, but we afford it protection from fire and make no charge for the service, and it is only right that that suburb should be allowed to come into a district of that kind. I do not think there is any provision in the Bill except for adjoining boroughs. There is one other point I would like to mention, and that is the principle of rating. Unless the Council levies a rate, it seems to me that the Government will not be called upon to pay anything at all, and it is very objectionable to ratepayers to have so many rates imposed. With regard to raising a loan without polls, that is rather a big order just now.

74. *Mr. Hanan.*] Would your borough have any objection to giving this Board, if constituted, power to rate?—I think they would.

75. *Mr. Hanan* (to *Mr. Devine*).] Would your Council object to the Board levying a rate in the city?

*Mr. Devine.* Yes. You would have to go to the same expense in procuring a farthing rate as a much larger rate.

*Mr. Hanan* (*Invercargill*).] The Invercargill Borough Council asked me to give evidence before the Committee, but as their objections to the Bill have been voiced by the gentlemen forming the deputation, it is not necessary for me to do so.

THURSDAY, 28TH JULY, 1904.

Superintendent HUGO, Wellington, examined. (No. 1.)

*The Chairman.* Mr. Superintendent Hugo and myself have prepared a number of suggestions which we have to submit to the Committee for consideration, and I will call upon Mr. Hugo to read and explain them.

*Mr. Hugo.* In lieu of the provision in clause 2 it is proposed to substitute the following: “There shall be nine fire districts—namely, Auckland, Hawke’s Bay, Taranaki, Wellington, Nelson, Marlborough, Canterbury, Westland, and Otago.” My reason for making this suggestion is that the number of Boards proposed is altogether too many. It would bring into existence at least eighty Boards, and as under this Bill each Board has power to remunerate itself, it means that a very large expense would be incurred in New Zealand for administration. The areas under the control of Fire Brigade Boards elsewhere are very much larger, and have been working very satisfactorily for many years—as, for instance, the six States comprising the Commonwealth of Australia. With regard to clause 10, I would propose that provision be made for the payment of expenses during the interval between the 31st March and the 30th June, as at present there are no means of carrying on the brigades during that interval. Clause 18: The repealing of portions of