

CHARLES HAYWARD IZARD examined. (No. 2.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Charles Hayward Izard.
2. And you are a Councillor of the Wellington City Council?—I am one of the Councillors for the City of Wellington, and also Chairman of the Fire Brigades Committee.
3. I take it that in giving your evidence in the form of an examination you will give the Committee an outline of what you intend to say?—Yes. I would like to go through the Bill, as I have it before me, from beginning to end, making such comments as have occurred to me after careful perusal. The first difficulty that presents itself to me arises under the definition of “fire district,” in clause 2. The apparent object there is to create a fire district in each borough in New Zealand. Now, I believe there are some eighty boroughs at least in New Zealand, and that is without taking into consideration those parts of New Zealand outside of boroughs, which the Governor may from time to time declare to be fire districts. Now, if in reference to that one considers that these Boards are to be paid, and one puts down for each Board the sum, say, of £20—which is almost ridiculously small—that will make an increased cost of £1,600; but it is almost impossible to say what the cost of these Boards would be. One would like to see, if possible, the four cities constituted Boards of their own, and some other scheme adopted by which the fire districts could be made into large areas. That is, of course, a matter of policy, but it occurred to me after a conference I had with the Superintendent of our brigade. Coming to clause 3, with regard to representation, I notice that three members are to be elected by the insurance companies, three by the local authority, and the seventh to be appointed by the Governor. One would have no objection, and could not urge any objection, to the appointment of one member by the Governor, were it not for the fact that the Government will be acting as an insurance company; and whilst the object of appointing the seventh member was to see that there was never a deadlock in the proceedings of the Board, it might be a little unfair to the municipality to find when they came to vote that the appointee of the Government might be influenced indirectly as a representative of an insurance company. How that difficulty is to be got over I do not know, and I have no suggestion to make. If we turn to clause 4, subsection (b), I think that after the word “each” in the twenty-sixth line the word “insurance” should go in. The words in the clause at present are “each representative having one vote only, whether he represents one or more than one company.” I suggest that it should read “each insurance representative.”
4. It does not follow that if these districts are altered to take in a larger area, such as a provincial district, they will send representatives to elect three of their number. They will be representatives of the people, while the other three will be representatives of the insurance companies?—Are you not, by section 3, providing for the manner in which the representatives shall vote? What about the representatives of local bodies?
5. The representative will not represent two or three boroughs, although he comes from them?—I think the word “insurance” ought to be added after the word “each.” The next point I come to is clause 10. There seems there to be a difficulty, if you look back for one moment at clause 5, referring to the date of the appointment and election of members, and clause 10, seeing that the estimate has to be put in before the 30th June. There seems to be a hiatus.
6. We propose to strike out the word “March” in clause 5, and substitute the word “June.” That will alter what you are now going to suggest?—That will alter one point. With regard to the finance, it is always very difficult for a body to estimate what is likely to be sufficient annually. I think there should be power given to these Boards to borrow by way of overdraft. As showing the difficulty of estimating ahead, I might mention the Charitable Aid Boards as an illustration. In such a case the Board prepares an estimate, and afterwards finds that the expenditure exceeds the amount of the estimate, and has to go to the bank and borrow sufficient money to carry on with on the security of members of the Board. I do not know whether the Committee can see its way to give to the Boards some power of raising money to meet this difficulty. Now we come to clause 11. I do not quite see how it is proposed that these contributions shall be levied from the municipalities. I quite understand this: that if the suggestion is that the four large cities should themselves be Boards, there would be no difficulty in ascertaining and levying the amount required under sections 11 and 14. I am referring to section 14, because it says: “The amount of the contribution payable by each insurance company and by the local authority shall be determined by the Board, but so that the aggregate amount of such contributions shall not exceed the amount payable as appearing in the estimate hereinbefore mentioned.” There may be difficulties where you get two or three bodies, as is apparently intended in the Bill, which are not municipalities but country districts, as to what rate and upon what system those bodies are to be levied upon. So far as Wellington is concerned, if we had such a fire district there would be no difficulty. Passing on to section 15, subsection (2), it says: “If any local authority liable to contribute under this Act fails to pay any such quarterly payment within thirty days as aforesaid, the amount of such payment, together with interest thereon at the rate and computed in manner aforesaid, may be paid to the Board by the Colonial Treasurer, and deducted by him from any moneys payable to such local authority by way of subsidy under any Act.” Well, Sir, I do not know what amount some local authorities receive by way of local subsidy.
7. *Mr. EU.*] Four hundred and fifty pounds is the limit?—I submit that is not sufficient. If it be necessary to have some clause compelling payment, it is no use having a clause unless the amount is sufficient, and I would suggest that, if they do not pay their contribution, the Board should have the right to put in a Receiver. The next clause I desire to refer to is clause 17, in which I think you will find there is missed out the word “buildings.” I have considered this Bill, and cannot at the present time find that the Board has any power to construct buildings. It is intended, no doubt, that the Board should, and I think the word “buildings” should be added in the thirty-ninth line, after the word “such,” otherwise the Board has no power to erect buildings.