

Dannevirke: June, 1908, and December, 1908. Report attached, dated 31st December, 1908.

Feilding: June, 1908, and February, 1909. Reports attached, dated 17th August, 1908, and 30th June, 1909.

Gisborne: August, 1908, and February, 1909. Reports attached, dated 8th October, 1908, and 22nd February, 1909.

Greymouth: September, 1908, and April, 1909. Report attached, dated 14th June, 1909.

Hawera: July, 1908, and January, 1909. Reports attached, dated 7th October, 1908, and 30th June, 1909.

Hokitika: September, 1908, and April, 1909. Report attached, dated 17th May, 1909.

Lawrence: September, 1908, and March, 1909. Reports attached, dated 21st December, 1908, and 30th June, 1909.

Masterton: July, 1908, and January, 1909. Reports attached, dated 15th July, 1908, and 19th February, 1909.

Maori Hill: September, 1908, and March, 1909. Report attached, dated 30th June, 1909.

Milton: September, 1908, and March, 1909. Report attached, dated 30th June, 1909.

New Plymouth: July, 1908, and January, 1909. Reports attached, dated 24th August, 1908, and 19th February, 1909.

Oamaru: September, 1908, and February, 1909. Report attached, dated 3rd March, 1909.

Palmerston North: June, 1908, and February, 1909. Reports attached, dated 20th August, 1908, and 30th June, 1909.

Petone: July, 1908, and June, 1909. Reports attached, dated 20th October, 1908, and 30th June, 1909.

Whangarei: July, 1908, and May, 1909. Report attached, dated 8th June, 1909.

Hastings: As this district does not come finally under control of its Fire Board until the 1st July, no official inspection of the brigade has yet been made, but I have twice visited the town for the purpose of giving advice in connection with fire-brigade matters.

In addition to inspecting brigades under the control of Fire Boards during 1908, the then Minister of Internal Affairs (the Hon. Dr. Findlay) received applications from brigade authorities in Levin, Fairlie, and Taihape, asking that the Inspector might be allowed to visit their respective towns for the purpose of advising them upon fire-brigade matters, and the Minister having given his permission, the visits were carried out accordingly. Also a large number of reports have been made and advice given relating to fire-protection, fire-extinction, and matters in connection therewith throughout the Dominion.

Included in the attached reports are copies of those sent to such of the Fire Boards as made application for them. They contain, in detail, my criticism upon the *personnel* and working of the respective brigades; the suitability of their station equipment and plant; local water system, pressure, and reticulation; suggestions as to future better organization and working of their brigades; the sites and erection of new stations; procuring of new appliances and equipment, &c. Generally after an inspection I gave an address with practical instruction embracing the various subjects in which I considered they were deficient in knowledge, mostly on technical or such matters that it was not necessary to embody in my reports to the Board.

In the course of my inspections it was apparent that almost without exception the officers and men comprising the various brigades are smart, of good physique, take an active interest in their work, and are eager for information. Where I have found it necessary to do so my criticisms have been taken in the best spirit, and any instruction given has been received with gratifying attention, and in a number of cases the hope was expressed that more frequent visits of inspection would be made. Generally I found that, although a lot of attention has been paid to the ordinary routine drill work—and a large number of the brigades are very smart at this—there is a considerable want of knowledge in the practical and theoretical work of fire-extinction and other branches of fire-brigade work. One of the most important subjects—that of life saving and preservation—has been almost entirely neglected.

The present equipment of the majority of the brigades leaves much to be desired, particularly so in the costly matter of station sites and buildings, and all require new plant, &c., in a more or less degree. In a number of cases consideration of these matters had been held over pending the formation of fire districts; and these having now been formed, some of the Boards have decided to put the work in hand immediately, with the consequence that their estimates of expenditure, when compared with the cost of maintaining their brigades in previous years, appear to be unduly high, thus leaving themselves open to the charge of extravagance, and very likely bringing the Act into discredit in the eyes of the ratepayers. In my opinion, with the exception of a few instances, the proposed expenditure is not only warranted but absolutely required; and the necessity for this large increase has been brought about mainly owing to the local authorities in the past not having recognised the importance of efficient protection from large loss in case of fire, and in dealing with the subject—especially when asked by their brigade to be supplied with new equipment, &c.—as in some measure a necessary nuisance, to be dismissed in the most economical manner, or to be held over for consideration in the dim future.

From a fireman's point of view there is a most serious defect in the water reticulation in the majority of those towns throughout the Dominion that have adopted the high-pressure water system, and that is the generally small diameter of the pipe-mains laid down. In reference to 3 in. mains, I have for years advocated that where there is any intention of using them for fire purposes no pipes less than 4 in. in diameter should be employed. Not only is the use of pipes smaller than that diameter a mistake in utility, but it is also false economy, particularly in our quickly growing New Zealand towns.