

1937-38.
NEW ZEALAND.

FIRE BRIGADES OF THE DOMINION

(REPORT ON THE) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1937, BY THE
INSPECTOR OF FIRE BRIGADES.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

THE INSPECTOR OF FIRE BRIGADES TO THE HON. MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS.
Office of the Inspector of Fire Brigades,
Wellington, 6th December, 1937.

SIR,—
I have the honour to submit the twenty-ninth annual report for the year ended 31st March, 1937, on the working of the Fire Brigades Act, 1926.

FIRE DISTRICTS.

The Borough of Whakatane was declared a fire district during the year, and the Morrinsville Fire Board, which was gazetted last year, commenced operations. The number of fire districts in operation at the end of the year was fifty-five.

DOMINION FIRE WASTE.

The loss by fire in New Zealand during 1936 estimated on the usual basis—i.e., the actual amount paid out by insurance companies plus 12½ per cent. for uninsured loss—was £524,029, being a decrease of £83,381, or 13·7 per cent. In view of the improvement in the method of collecting statistics which has taken place during recent years this almost certainly represents the lowest fire loss on record per head of population, which is the only satisfactory basis for comparison. The following table shows the fire losses in New Zealand, Great Britain, Canada, and United States of America for the past ten years :—

	New Zealand Fire Loss.	Fire Loss per Head.			
		New Zealand.	Great Britain.	Canada.	United States of America.
	£	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Average (1927-31)	1,332,032	18 1	5 0	17 5	16 0
1932	867,714	11 5	3 9	16 8	13 2
1933	644,781	8 4	4 7	12 11	8 10
1934	566,112	7 3	4 1	10 0	8 7
1935	607,410	7 9	4 0	8 9	8 1
1936	524,029	6 8	4 5	8 0	8 5

It is difficult to give a satisfactory explanation for the exceptionally low loss recorded for 1936. The view is largely held by insurance companies that high fire losses tend to come in cycles, and the above table would certainly indicate that the notably high-fire-loss countries, amongst which New Zealand for some time held pride of place, are experiencing a low-loss period. So far as New Zealand is concerned, the low losses for the year are in no way due to a lessening in the number of outbreaks of fire, since the Government Statistician's returns show that insurance was again paid on more than five thousand fires, the number reported during 1936 being the highest on record. Most of these outbreaks are, of course, small fires, only involving a loss of less than £10 and not requiring the services of the fire brigade.