

- (2) That all municipal districts (whether boroughs or Town Boards) which are not already fire districts and which have, or are prepared to establish, a water-supply which is reasonably effective for fire-fighting purposes and a fire-brigade organization, be empowered to constitute their districts as fire districts.

NOTE.—It is a matter for consideration whether the legislation should provide for the constitution of fire districts after the taking of a poll of ratepayers, as under the present Fire Brigade Act, by vote of the municipal authority, or, in the event of agreement prior to preparation of the legislation, by inclusion in a schedule to the Act.

- (3) That provision be made for the setting-up by the municipal authority of a Fire Brigade Committee consisting of not less than three members of the municipal authority. Such Fire Brigade Committee would, subject to such modifications as are considered necessary, have all the powers and duties of a Fire Board under the existing Fire Brigades Act. Provision should be made that the Fire Brigade Committee may, and if required by the Minister shall, co-opt not more than two representatives of insurance companies, resident in the district.

NOTE.—The provision regarding the co-opting of insurance members could, if necessary, be made specific by Schedule to the Act in the case of the larger towns, and this arrangement may be acceptable to all concerned in lieu of the retention of the existing Fire Board organization. There would appear to be no objection to a co-opted member being Chairman of the Committee. It is noted that in many cases at present an insurance member is Chairman of the Fire Board, although the local members are in the majority.

- (4) That in order to give the insurance companies the share in the control of the fire service justified by their contributions, a Central Fire Council be established in Wellington, this Council to consist of not less than five representatives elected by the insurance companies, one member nominated by the Municipal Association, one member nominated by the United Fire Brigades' Association, and not more than two members appointed by the Government.

NOTES.—(a) In order to maintain the predominantly insurance character of the Council the provision could be made that a majority of insurance members be included in the statutory quorum. Provision for alternate representation in the event of illness or absence from Wellington might also be considered.

(b) In view of the fact that the Central Council would have general supervision over the whole fire-protection service it would probably involve a considerable number of meetings, particularly during the first few years. The payment of honoraria should therefore be considered.

- (5) The functions of the Central Council would be—

(i) To consider and approve the annual estimates of expenditure in fire districts and the general provisions made for fire-protection :

(ii) To arrange for the inspection of brigades to an extent sufficient to establish a reasonable measure of co-ordination and standardization of plant, equipment, and training :

(iii) To carry out research work with respect to the organization and training of brigades and the development of plant and equipment for fire-fighting purposes.

NOTES.—(a) The provisions with respect to matters which would come under review of the Central Fire Council should be drawn as widely as possible. They should, for instance, permit the Council to make representations to the local committee with respect to matters such as the appointment or efficiency of officers, the character of plant and equipment required, fire-alarm system, and general turnout organization.

(b) The appointment of a technical executive officer will probably be essential both for inspection and general co-ordination work and also to deal with matters such as the service conditions of the brigade staffs. It will probably be found desirable to arrange with the controlling authorities of the senior brigades for inspection work to be carried out by approved officers of these brigades. Provision should therefore be made for payment to the controlling authority concerned for the time occupied in such work.

(c) Investigation and research, suggested as one of the Council's functions, would also probably be conveniently carried out through the senior brigades, and provision should be made for reimbursement to the authority concerned for the costs of these investigations.

- (6) That in order to provide the necessary liaison between the local authority administering the fire-protection service and the Central Council, arrangements should be made that copies of all executive and technical reports submitted to the Fire Brigade Committee, and on which their decisions are based, should be forwarded to the Central Council.

NOTE.—The converse would also apply, and the reports of the inspection and executive officers of the Central Council with respect to individual districts would be forwarded to the local committee.

- (7) That the costs of the local fire-protection service be divided equally between the municipal authority and the insurance companies operating in the district—levies to be made on the latter in the same manner as under the existing legislation—and that the cost of the Central Fire Council be met out of Government grant.

NOTE.—In the case of the smaller districts the saving in overhead resulting from the taking-over of administration by the local authority should compensate for the withdrawal of the small Government grant made under the existing legislation. It is presumed that the Government would be prepared to maintain, or perhaps even increase, the total amount of the existing grant to the service. Some equitable arrangement could probably be arrived at for distribution of this grant between the Central Fire Council and the cities where most of the Government property requiring fire-protection is situated.