

1940.

NEW ZEALAND.

PREPARATION OF EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS SCHEMES

STATEMENT BY THE HON. W. E. PARRY, MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS.

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Leave.

INTRODUCTION.

FOR some time past the Government have recognized the necessity for a Dominion-wide organization for the control in any locality of all essential services when these have been suspended or dislocated as the result of any natural disaster or by enemy action. The first necessity in such a case is the provision and distribution of food and other supplies, of public services such as water, gas, and electricity, the maintenance of medical and health services, of communications, of transport, and of some financial system. The second task is the gradual restoration of the normal activities of the community.

Within comparatively recent times New Zealand has been subject to two such disasters on a major scale, the Murchison and Hawke's Bay earthquakes. It is to be hoped that similar visitations may not come upon New Zealand in the future, but nevertheless experience has shown that we must be prepared for them. Other disasters of a lesser nature arising out of flood or fire may at any time cause a temporary suspension of normal activities in a locality. In addition, during a period of hostilities such as we are engaged in at the present time, it is absolutely vital to have adequate provision for meeting the civilian needs in any emergency situation arising in any locality as a result of enemy action. The events in Europe during recent months, illustrating the modern concepts of warfare by certain peoples, have made this clearly evident.

PROVISIONAL EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS SCHEME.

Having in mind factors such as I have mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, the Government set up a Committee to prepare a provisional emergency precautions scheme to be used as a basis for framing schemes for all localities, where necessary, throughout the Dominion. The scheme prepared by this Committee was, in turn, circulated to certain selected local authorities for their comments and criticisms. Among other local authorities to whom it was forwarded were those situated in the Hawke's Bay earthquake area, and in this respect it is noteworthy to record the opinion expressed by one of those local authorities—namely, the Hastings Borough Council—as follows :—

“The Council states that, in the light of its experience in the 1931 earthquake, in its opinion the proposed scheme is very complete, and accordingly has no suggestions to make.”

I may add that other local authorities in the same area expressed similar opinions regarding the provisional scheme.

REVISED EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS SCHEME.

The provisional scheme was revised in the light of all the comments and criticisms received, and was then printed in complete form. As soon as this had been done, copies were sent to all the local authorities having primary control over territorial areas—namely, the City and Borough Councils, Town Boards, and County Councils. Copies were also sent to all members of Parliament.

PREPARATION OF LOCAL EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS SCHEMES.

Local authorities were asked to study the scheme and, in their particular localities, to set up an organization capable of taking control of the situation in the event of a calamity or an emergency situation of the type mentioned occurring in that locality. The assistance of the Department of Internal Affairs was promised to local authorities in the preparation of their emergency precautions schemes, and this offer has been availed of to a large extent.

In the result I am happy to be able to say that there is every evidence that local authorities are facing up to their responsibilities in this direction and are forming, or have formed, adequate organizations to cope with whatever local emergency conditions may arise.

At the moment I am not in a position to give definite figures as to the final results, as the replies to a recent questionnaire which I sent to local authorities are only now coming to hand. It is, however, gratifying to be able to say that the number of replies so far received show clearly that should a calamity occur in any district (and it is to be hoped that no such occasion does arise) local authorities generally will have established a sound organization to control essential services in the locality and look after the well-being of the people until such times as normal conditions are restored.

The scheme forwarded to local authorities was a guide scheme only. It was framed on the principle of providing the most elaborate precautions against the worst possible emergency. In doing this it was realized that, to be at all effective, a local scheme must have regard to all those local circumstances which vary from one district to another, and generally should be sufficiently flexible to be adjusted to the peculiar needs of any particular locality. For this reason it was made clear to local authorities that as far as possible they should exercise their own initiative, and, using the basis of the scheme forwarded to them, make their local schemes such as would best suit the requirements of their own localities. That this course has been adopted, or is being adopted, is apparent from the information which so far has been received from the local authorities.

COMBINED SCHEMES.

It was suggested to local authorities that in many instances it would be preferable to pool their resources and prepare a combined scheme suitable for application to all the local districts comprised in a particular area. In this respect several Borough Councils have combined with County Councils in the preparation of joint schemes which should be of great advantage to the local districts concerned; but a better example of this course of action is in the Auckland District, where some thirty-one local authorities have combined to prepare a major scheme for the Auckland metropolitan area. This scheme is known as "the Auckland Metropolitan Emergency Precautions Scheme." I would add that the authorities promoting this scheme have kept in close contact with the Department of Internal Affairs, and it is apparent that a scheme has been prepared which has all the elements of the safety and protection of the inhabitants of the whole of the Auckland metropolitan area and general far-sightedness in its whole preparation.

At a later stage I hope to be in a position to present to Parliament figures showing the number of local authorities that have responded to the Government's appeal and the number of localities that are thus provided with adequate emergency precautions schemes for use in the event of an emergency situation arising.

OUTLINE OF EMERGENCY PRECAUTIONS SCHEME.

It is obviously unnecessary to attempt to explain in detail what is provided in each local scheme. They are, as indicated, framed for the benefit of particular localities, having regard to the needs of those localities. The individual matters contained in them will therefore be of no public interest outside the particular locality concerned. However, as each scheme has been framed on the general basis of that formulated by the Government, it would, I think, be of interest and, I hope, of value for me to explain in general outline how the Government's scheme was framed.

General.

The scheme is based on the principle that in each particular locality the local authority exercising territorial jurisdiction is responsible for the setting-up of an organization for action in an emergency. The co-operation and assistance of the appropriate Government Departments is made available for this purpose. For example, the Department of Internal Affairs is exercising a general oversight and guidance and will give whatever help it can. Then, in turn, all other Departments in any way affected are giving any help they can, either from Wellington or by means of their local officers. In this respect specially qualified Government officers in each locality are to act on any Committees where their services and experience could be suitably utilized. Up to the present I am able to say that local authorities have availed themselves fully of such assistance on the part of Government officials.

Sections.

The scheme is divided into sections. Each section, with the exception of Section 1, relates to some specific subject such as supply, transport, law and order, and so on.

Section 1 is in the nature of a general introductory. It sets out the aims and objects of the scheme. Included as an appendix to this section are extracts from the report on the Hastings organization in the Hawke's Bay earthquake of February, 1931.

By a careful study of this introductory and of the Hastings report, local authorities are able to obtain a clear conception of the set-up of the organization necessary for an emergency situation and some idea of the actual workings of such an organization.

Section 2 relates to the formation of a Supply Committee. This is responsible for the supply, control, distribution, and sale to the public, and supply to the other Committees, of all foodstuffs, clothing and other personal effects, bedding, coal, and other household supplies. It is also responsible for restoring the normal trading arrangements.

Section 3 relates to the Transport Committee. That Committee is responsible during the emergency period for the supply and maintenance of all forms of transport, internal and external, required for the local community, both for goods and passengers.

Section 4 relates to medical, public hygiene, and hospitals.

In connection with this Committee, it is obvious that in the event of a national emergency the services of practically all practising doctors and trained nurses in the Dominion would be utilized in a national medical scheme. The organization provided for in the local emergency precautions scheme is suitable for a local emergency such as an earthquake, but in the event of a national emergency it would be necessary for the Medical Committee to contact the Medical Officer of Health for the personnel, equipment, and other services required from the national pool.

Then, again, the question of public hygiene does not really come within the scope of the local Committee, as the Medical Officer of Health, in co-ordination with the local authority or local authorities in the area, will be responsible for sanitation, purity of water-supplies, control of infectious diseases, &c., and will carry out any of the extended powers provided for in sections 75 and 76 of the Health Act, 1920.

Furthermore, the local Hospital Board will be responsible for all hospitals.

Apart from the above, the Medical Committee will be responsible for the medical and nursing needs of the stricken area, which includes the collection and treatment of all casualties.

Section 5 provides for the establishment of the Law and Order Committee. In accordance with the Public Safety Conservation Act, 1932, during the emergency period the local senior Police officer will have full authority for the maintenance of law and order, applying any measures which he considers necessary. At the same time, he will no doubt require varying degrees of assistance in carrying out his duties, and this assistance will be provided by the Law and Order Committee, which will comprise representatives of certain organizations qualified to give it.

Section 6 provides for the establishment of a Public Utilities Committee. This Committee is responsible for the supply, distribution, and maintenance of all forms of power, lighting, and heating facilities, whether obtained from within the area affected or from outside sources.

Section 7 relates to the Communications Committee. This Committee is responsible for the provision and maintenance of all forms of communications, including telephone, telegraph, wireless, and messengers of all descriptions, within the area, and also the co-ordination of such communications with outside sources.

Section 8 provides for the establishment of a Works Committee. This Committee in most cases will probably also be responsible for public utilities referred to under Section 6. During the emergency period the Works Committee is responsible for the provision and maintenance of water-supply, repairs to sewerage systems in collaboration with the Controller of Medical Services, temporary accommodation, and all other emergency construction; for the provision and control of rescue operations, street-clearing, and demolition personnel and equipment and general labour, including the requirements of other Committees. The work of this Committee will entail co-ordination of material, resources, and personnel within the area and the utilization of similar assistance from outside sources.

Section 9 deals with the subject of civilian anti-gas training. This is being more fully explained under a separate heading.

Section 10 relates to fire control. During the emergency period the Fire Superintendent is responsible for dealing with outbreaks of fire and maintaining adequate fire precautions. In time of war this responsibility includes fire patrols, in collaboration with the Police, to report and check incipient fires, particularly those caused by incendiary bombs. The Fire Superintendent will require adequate assistance in carrying out his duties, and for this purpose a Committee is recommended consisting of representatives of certain appropriate organizations.

Section 11 deals with accommodation and evacuation. The task of this Committee is to arrange, during the emergency, accommodation and temporary feeding arrangements for the local population, particularly those who are, due to the disaster, shocked and homeless. In addition, if the need arises, this Committee will arrange and control the evacuation of part, or the whole, of the uninjured population from the stricken area to more congenial surroundings.

Section 12 relates to finance and records. This Committee will control and co-ordinate all emergency expenditure, whether undertaken by the Central Committee or by individual Committees. It will also control all the records activities, which will include, where necessary, the registration of volunteers of labour and of the population.

Section 13 provides for a Harbour Area Committee. This Committee will assume control of main and secondary New Zealand ports where land organizations are rendered partly or wholly ineffective and where the sea-fronts or harbours offer a safe and workable base.

Section 14 provides for a Publicity and Information Committee. This Committee is responsible, during the emergency, for the preparation of information; for co-operation with and, if necessary, control of press activities; for emergency entertainment; and for the co-ordination of all these matters with outside authorities.

The foregoing paragraphs indicate the various Committees suggested in each case. Each section makes provision for a Controller to be appointed and for a Committee to assist him to carry out the task involved. In many cases, of course, it will be possible for the activities of two or more Committees to be merged into one. This is dependent on local circumstances. In all cases the draft scheme in each section sets out all the material information required by the Committee, and suggestions along the following lines:—

- (a) An outline of the task of the Committee;
- (b) A list of suggested representatives or persons on each Committee;
- (c) The preparatory work required to be done;
- (d) The duties to be undertaken in an emergency;
- (e) How the work of the Committee should be co-ordinated with that of other Committees provided for in the scheme;
- (f) Other relevant information for individual Committees.

Chart.

To show the local authorities how the various Committees link up with one another, a chart has been printed and placed at the beginning of the guide scheme setting out a list of the suggested Committees, and showing their co-ordination.

Central Committee.

The controlling authority in a stricken locality, which will have primary charge of all the arrangements, is known as the Central Committee. The suggestions in this respect are that the Committee shall comprise the members of the territorial local authority of the district or, if there is more than one such authority, representatives of them all. In certain cases, representatives of appropriate *ad hoc* local authorities should be represented.

In addition, it has been suggested that the member or members of Parliament for the district should be co-opted on the Central Committee to act in an advisory or consultative capacity. This action will, among other things, ensure an effective liaison between the Government and the local authority.

From the Central Committee a Central Executive of not more than three members should be appointed, the Executive to have power to give emergency decisions and take such other emergency or executive action as may from time to time be required.

SCHEMES FOR RURAL LOCALITIES.

From the foregoing explanation of the general scheme it will be apparent that it has been framed from the basis of providing a suitable organization for the cities and towns. It will also be apparent that such an organization would be too elaborate for many of the counties, which, in the main, would have only a number of villages and sparsely populated areas to look after. To meet this position, a summarized version of the scheme has been prepared for use in rural localities and sent to County Councils. It is not necessary in a statement such as this to explain in detail what is provided for in this summarized version. It is sufficient to say that it contains the essential elements of the general scheme, but is prepared in such a way that it is readily adaptable to the circumstances of the rural localities where the same extent of Committees and the same degree of work in an emergency would not be called for. Here, again, it is pleasing to be able to record that County Councils are responding well in the matter of establishing suitable organizations, based on the modified requirements, in rural localities affected.

ANTI-GAS TRAINING.

An essential part of emergency precautions work is the dissemination of information to civilians regarding precautionary and remedial measures against gas attacks from the air. Fortunately, New Zealand is not immediately subject to this likelihood, but, nevertheless, it is desirable to have a sufficiently trained personnel to give further instruction should the necessity arise.

Accordingly, classes were formed to receive instruction in anti-gas training. These classes were conducted under the auspices of the Army Department and were confined to training in the treatment of gas casualties and the work of decontamination. The personnel of such classes were drawn from the employees of local authorities and organizations engaged in first-aid work, together with officers of State Departments such as the Police and Army Departments.

It was considered desirable that the training should commence in the four main centres, and accordingly classes were instituted within the urban areas of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin. The largest class which one instructor can handle efficiently is twenty. The classes were accordingly limited to this number, allotted in approximately the following proportions:—

- Six Police officers.
- Six municipal staff (for decontamination and repair duties).
- Four first-aid officers.
- Four fire-brigadesmen.

One of the principal reasons for instituting these classes and limiting them to persons engaged in particular classes of work was that the persons so trained would, in turn, train their fellow-officers, so that a knowledge of anti-gas training and air-raid-precautionary measures would be disseminated amongst those who, in time of an emergency consequent upon an air raid, would most require to have this type of knowledge.

Evening classes were held as well as three or four half-day instructional periods. The Military District Headquarters at Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch (Dunedin being administered from Christchurch) each made arrangements in connection with the establishment of these anti-gas training classes in their particular district. To make it possible for these classes to be established, the co-operation of local authorities was essential. I accordingly communicated with the local authorities in the urban areas of Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin, and I wish to place on record that all local authorities approached by me whole-heartedly co-operated with the Government in the institution of these classes.

The following return indicates the results achieved :—

- (1) Total number of persons who have received or are receiving instruction in air-raid precautions:

Northern Military District (Auckland and urban areas)	62
Central Military District (Wellington)	26
Southern Military District (Christchurch and Dunedin)	199
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Total	287
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- (2) The occupations of the persons trained or being trained (Police, municipal staff, &c) :—

Northern Military District—

Metropolitan Police	6
City Corporation staff	6
Metropolitan Fire Board	4
St. John Ambulance Association	4
Harbour Board staff	6
Local-authorities staffs	34
Legion of Frontiersmen	2
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	62
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Central Military District—

Metropolitan Police	4
City Corporation staff	5
Wellington Fire Board	4
St. John Ambulance	4
Harbour Board staff	4
Hospital Board staff	5
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	26
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Southern Military District—

Police	93
Traffic Inspectors	3
Firemen	45
Health Inspectors	1
Harbour Board personnel	7
Drainage Board	1
Hospital Board	3
Municipal staff	11
St. John Ambulance	13
Red Cross	2
Legion of Frontiersmen	9
Territorials	11
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	199
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Total 287

Suitable suggestions have been made to the local authorities outside the four main centres as to the best means of obtaining necessary instruction for their officers. The course of instruction to be given to the classes instituted by local authorities has been prepared in collaboration with the Army Department so that there will be uniformity of instruction throughout the Dominion. These instructions may be obtained from the Department of Internal Affairs.

CONCLUSION.

The problems connected with the proper and effective organization of the man-power and resources of the country so as to be readily available in any locality where they may happen to be required in time of emergency are difficult ones. They are none the less important. The matter is one where the success of the organization is dependent on a ready response by all organizations and individuals affected from one end of the Dominion to the other. That such response is forthcoming is increasingly apparent from the information that I am daily receiving. I believe that the work that has already been done and the ready response by local authorities and numerous other representative bodies and individuals affected is resulting in an organization being set up fully prepared and fully equipped to cope with any emergency situation which may arise in any part of the Dominion.

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