

## SERVICE CONDITIONS, PERMANENT STAFF

9. The basis of employment known as the continuous-duty system has been in operation for the permanent or full-time firemen ever since they were first employed about the turn of the present century. The men are required to reside on the station and to respond to all fire calls, but the working-hours on routine duties have not at any time been onerous. In the early years the service conditions were almost as restrictive as those of seafaring men, from whom the staff was largely recruited, but the leave arrangements were later improved, and residential quarters were provided for the married officers and senior firemen. The congested living conditions at first provided were the source of family troubles, and when the new central station was built in Dunedin in 1930, each set of quarters was provided with separate entrance, laundry, and garden or drying-ground. This standard has since been adopted throughout the Service for attached or semi-detached quarters, and fully detached houses have been provided whenever sufficient land was available.

10. The continuous-duty system involves the provision of residential stations with full provision for recreation for the men not provided with married quarters. In 1936, after the 40-hour week was made general, the whole question of Fire Service conditions was discussed by the Government with representatives of Fire Boards employing permanent staff. It was agreed that the continuous-duty system should be continued, but that the firemen should have the benefit of the same additional leisure as was provided in industry by the reduction in working-hours under the new legislation. The Boards agreed that the improved scale should be based on the most favourable conditions then existing, and the basis of day leave every fourth day and eight weeks' extended leave was introduced throughout the Service. An undertaking was also given that additional married quarters would be provided wherever practicable, and this has been done in most centres employing permanent staff.

11. The improved leave conditions granted in 1936 involved an increase in establishment to maintain the turnout strength, and by 1938 the number of permanent men in the Service had increased from 252 to 304. During the war a further increase was necessary for the training of the emergency firemen and the protection of Service camps and storage areas. On reversion to peacetime conditions the Boards agreed to maintain an increased turnout and most of the additional men were retained. It had not been possible under wartime conditions to continue the housing scheme, and by 1946 the authorized permanent strength had reached 433, but only 189 of the 303 married men were provided with family quarters.

12. There was some unrest in the Service in the immediate post-war period due partly to the inequalities between the conditions of quartered and non-quartered firemen and partly to the fact that Fire Service conditions had remained the same since 1936 while those in industry had been improved by the compulsory-holiday legislation and the payment of special allowances for work at night and on week-ends and holidays. This culminated in proposals by the unions for a 60-hour week. These were declined by the Fire Boards on the grounds that they were in effect a request for a three-platoon or shift system, which was not justified by New Zealand conditions or requirements. A committee of departmental officers was instructed to prepare alternative proposals, and these were finally submitted to a Tribunal set up under the Strikes and Lockouts Emergency Regulations.

13. In most countries the permanent fire brigades work under either a two-platoon (84-hour week) or three-platoon (56-60-hour week) system, and some explanation is necessary as to why it is desired to retain the continuous-duty system in New Zealand. The permanent Service has almost without exception grown up as an extension of the volunteer fire brigades, which provided the first organized fire-protection system.