

These are single men employed under ordinary hiring and firing arrangements who make their homes on the station and mess with the permanent men. They do regular standby duty at night and attend all night fires, but are not called in the daytime. There were at the time no volunteer brigades in the Board's area, and since both parties apparently desired their inclusion, the Board agreed, despite certain negative conditions in the union rules.

18. Some time afterwards the union cited all brigade-controlling authorities in the Wellington district, including those in the small country towns, in an application for an award. The claims, intended to apply to these country brigades, were strongly opposed and were not successful. In conciliation proceedings last year the Fire Board representatives agreed to the inclusion in the award applying to districts outside the metropolitan areas of the same conditions with respect to "part-time firemen" as are contained in the Wellington City award. The justification for this is that in one of the secondary cities covered by the award only auxiliary firemen are employed and under the same conditions as in Wellington. The union has since claimed that the award applies to volunteer fire-brigadesmen whether or not resident on the fire stations and whose brigade rules involve duty on an entirely different basis. The union has put forward for acceptance by the Service a definition of "part-time firemen" which would, at the pleasure of the union, include practically all the volunteer brigadesmen in the country towns.

19. In order to understand the strong feeling which has been aroused by the union action it is necessary to have some knowledge of the volunteer brigade organization. The brigades were invariably formed before any permanent firemen were employed in the district. They were initially associations of men interested in fire protection who gave service to their community on an honorary basis. They elected their own members, made their own rules, obtained their finance from subscriptions, entertainments, &c., and were responsible only to public opinion. In course of time they were taken over or sponsored by the local authority, which then provided the finance. As the towns grew and the complexity of the work and number of fire calls increased, it became customary for the local authority to make some small payments for fire duty either to the brigade or to the individual fireman. Such payments are now made in most towns with a population exceeding one thousand.

20. The volunteer firemen are very jealous of their rights, status, and privileges. They value the democratic system under which they elect their own membership, have a say in all brigade affairs at brigade meetings, and deal directly as a body with the controlling authority on all matters affecting the local service. They regard any remuneration received not as wages, but as compensation for possible damage to clothing or loss of wages whilst on brigade duty. They are mostly in the Service, as were their predecessors who formed the volunteer brigades, because of an interest in fire-brigade work and as a hobby. This is shown by the fact that even in the larger centres great interest is taken in competition work and most of the members compete at demonstrations at some stage of their service. They are mostly staunch unionists in their ordinary employment, but they resent the proposal that their brigade service should be treated as a part-time job and not as a service to their community. The opinion is widely held that the varying conditions existing in large and small towns are more satisfactorily dealt with by local discussion than they would be if governed by a standardized award controlled from Wellington.

21. The United Fire Brigades' Association, which includes in its membership both permanent and volunteer brigades, has consistently opposed the proposal to include volunteers in the union since it was first mooted in 1937. It has no objection to the inclusion in the union of auxiliary firemen working under the conditions applying in the Wellington Brigade if this is desired by permanent men and agreed to by the auxiliaries.