

of two thousand pounds." Well, £4,000 may not be sufficient for some of the large cities, but if any of the smaller places are given a Board I would not give them the power of borrowing too much. It would only lead to extravagance and mismanagement. Clause 4, subclause (b), says, "At such meeting the representatives present shall elect their own chairman, and all matters shall be decided by a majority of votes, each representative having one vote only, whether he represents one or more than one company." Provision there is made that if one agent represents more than one company he shall only have one vote. He should certainly have a vote for each company he represents. He might represent many different companies.

62. Yes, but the interest of one company might be enormous, while that of three or four others might be very small?—Still, if they conform to the rules and regulations and pay their contribution they ought to be entitled to this. Clause 5, "The appointment and election of members of the Board shall be made and held in the month of March, one thousand nine hundred and five, and thereafter in the same month in every alternate year": We believe it should be provided that all members of the Board should not go out of office at the same time. Members might be appointed for say two or three years, and a proportion retire each year, so that there would always be a continuing element on the Board. With regard to clause 7, if there are a large number of Boards this clause will be obviously very awkward and difficult to carry out. Clause 13 is a very important clause. Subclause (a) says, "Every such company shall annually, at such time as may be prescribed by regulations, transmit to the Board a return showing the total gross amount of the premiums received by or due to such company during the year ending the thirty-first day of December, then previous, in respect of the insurances held by such company within the fire district, after deducting the amount of premium actually paid by way of reinsurance to any other company contributing under this Act." We contend that it should be stipulated in the Act that these returns should be confidential—not published to the world.

63. I do not think it mentions throughout the various subclauses that they are to be published?—Well, they are to be given, and in Sydney they do publish them, and it might be the same here.

64. You say these returns ought to be considered private and confidential?—Yes, sir. Clause 17 is a very important clause. That clause provides for the acquisition of property when necessary. All property so acquired should be vested in the Board in trust for the parties contributing to the cost of same. We all know the position to-day, but perhaps thirty years hence there may be trouble over this property. Those who contribute should be entitled to their proportion.

65. The Board to hold the whole of the property in trust?—Yes. With regard to clause 18, subclause (f), we are against payment—the whole of the insurance world is against payment of any sort—to any members of these Boards. That is of the utmost importance. There will be never-ending trouble if payment is made to members.

66. There will not be such a rush?—No; and you will get better men. They should not be paid, except perhaps the Chairman of the main Board of all. In Victoria he gets £75 per annum at the head metropolitan station; but that is merely for the cost of entertainment—it is a show place. I would now like to bring under the attention of the Committee that at the last Municipal Conference the municipalities sought to avoid the responsibility of keeping water-mains charged with water except during times of drought. This duty should be specifically laid on the municipal authorities, because the Fire Brigade Boards cannot see that the mains are charged.

67. Well, I suppose that in all such cases—take the cities of Wellington and Auckland, for instance—they would see that the mains are charged, because the mains are always at the main buildings. They would not keep their mains empty?—Well there has been a tendency to do so, and you will see by "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1900," section 309, that this duty is specifically laid upon them, and it should be insisted on.

*Mr. F. Allen:* It did occur once, at what was called the Panama Street fire—there was no water.

*Mr. Kernot:* In clause 22 we would like the following words inserted at the end: "Except as hereinafter provided, no penalty, damages, or claim for compensation shall be recoverable by or against any person in consequence of any act done under the authority of this section." That is very important. We should like those words put in. This will not contravene clause 23, and it will supply a provision made under "The Municipal Corporations Act, 1900," section 314, which would otherwise be repealed by this Bill. We believe that the clauses of "The Municipal Corporations Act 1900," which you are proposing to repeal by the Bill, should start with clause 311, so as to retain in force clause 310. That is a most important matter, and this clause ought on no account to be repealed. If it is repealed there will be endless trouble to everybody.

*The Chairman:* I am pleased to see that Mr. Allen and yourself are in accord with regard to your suggested improvements in the Bill—for instance, as to the number of Boards—

*Mr. Kernot:* That is of vital importance.

*The Chairman:* You also agree that members should retire from these Boards by rotation. Then, there is the question of outside companies paying their contributions. We should have thought that you or any company being asked to pay a third or a half, as the case might be, would yourselves see that these people contributed their share—

*Mr. F. Allen:* How could we? We have no means.

*The Chairman:* Then, there is the question of not paying these Boards. It may have occurred to you that the whole of the members may not be elected by the towns. The country districts would also have to have some proportion of representation, and the Board would have to pay their travelling-expenses.

*Mr. Kernot:* We have no objection to travelling-expenses.