

AUCKLAND.

SIR,—

Office of the Inspector of Fire Brigades, Wellington, 7th August, 1908.

In reply to your letter dated the 23rd ultimo, addressed to the Under-Secretary, Department of Internal Affairs, asking for a copy of the report of the Inspector of Fire Brigades bearing upon his recent inspection of the Auckland Fire Brigade, I have the honour to report in that connection as follows:—

At 2.45 p.m., 21st July, I gave a call at the Central Station for an imaginary fire in Beresford Street. At 2.46.7 p.m., or 1 minute 7 seconds from the time the call was given, water was shown from the first delivery that was got to work from the motor hose and ladder tender. The steam fire-engine was got to work, and with 100 lb. of steam on the pressure-gauge the first water was shown 6 minutes 45 seconds after lighting the fire. Various drills were gone through, such as fire-escape and water-tower, Eastman set, rescue of unconscious persons, practical smoke-jacket drill, &c. The whole of the demonstration was carried out in a workmanlike and efficient manner, with very satisfactory results in all respects. A turn-out demonstration was also given at the Ponsonby Station.

Personnel of the Brigade.

The members of the brigade appear to be smart and active, a well drilled and disciplined body of men, and thoroughly acquainted with their various duties.

Stations.

The Central Station, in Pitt Street, is a building well designed and arranged for the purposes of a modern fire-station up to the point that more and better sleeping-accommodation is required for the men, and this should be provided for in the near future.

The Ponsonby Station is utterly inadequate to the requirements of this rapidly growing district. The watch-room has to be utilised as a bedroom. The only bedroom is overcrowded to an unhealthy degree, especially so in view of the proximity of the stables. More accommodation should be provided for the single men, married quarters for the officer in charge, and the horses and horse-vehicle replaced by a motor-machine.

At Beach Road Station more accommodation is also required.

Plant.

The plant and appliances at the Central Station are up to modern ideas, and appear to be sufficient for present requirements.

The wagon at the Ponsonby Station is heavy and cumbersome, not suitable for the fast work of a fire brigade, and should be replaced by a motor-machine.

The hand hose-reel at the Beach Road Station should be replaced by a horse-drawn or motor-driven machine.

Water Reticulation and Pressure.

The volume of water obtainable generally in nearly all parts of the city is fairly good. The reticulation has been greatly improved, and it is the intention, I understand, to proceed with the work in this direction as rapidly as circumstances permit. The pressure on the lower levels—90 lb. normal, with an increase to 130 lb. at three minutes' notice—is a fair working-pressure. On the higher levels a pressure of 10 lb. normal, with an increase to 35 lb., is very poor, and in case of a fire of any magnitude would be of very little service indeed; therefore I would recommend that the motor-machine which I have suggested above should be placed in the Ponsonby Station, and should be of the petrol motor fire-engine and hose-tender type, of, say, 350 gallons capacity, which could be run to all calls. A number of these petrol motor-engines have been in use in both Sydney and Melbourne for some time, and are giving excellent results.

I would respectfully point out that a brigade, to be efficient as such, must keep pace in its improvements as to strength and equipment with the growth of the local district; and if this ratio is not maintained at intervals of some years a large outlay is required to bring the brigade up to date, with a consequent outcry as to the cost of the brigade. The improvements to the Auckland Brigade, particularly with regard to accommodation for the men at the various stations, have certainly not kept pace with the rapid growth of the fire risks in the City of Auckland during the last few years. It should be borne in mind that permanent firemen, necessitated by the exigencies of their employment, are subject to exceptional confinement to their respective stations, and as one of the means to induce a good class of men to remain in the fire service after the time and trouble taken to make them proficient, good and comfortable quarters conduce very greatly to that desirable end.

I have, &c.,

THOMAS T. HUGO,

Inspector of Fire Brigades.

Percy Butler, Esq., Secretary, Auckland Fire Board.