

when the signal to the starter is given are final and that correct dividends are declared, and it relieves clubs of the worry entailed in refuting accusations of accepting investments after the start of a race.

The inspection formally extends no further than the certifying to the figures arrived at on the final calculation made immediately after the close of the totalizator, and seeing that these are the figures shown on the face of the machine. The Inspector's work is completed at most a minute after the figures are available, and is in no way responsible for the delays that have occasionally occurred. Without exception these delays have been occasioned by indifferent totalizator staffs; and it may be mentioned that though the work done by many of them is a fine example of what ability and perfect organization can accomplish, there is still much to be desired in certain quarters both in the ability of the men engaged on the work and the organization thereof. The knowledge gained by the Inspector in the course of his rounds has been freely placed at the disposal of clubs needing it. Several have written their appreciation of his help.

After the race the Inspector checks the dividends. Here again no delay occurs, the work being completed before the "pay out" authority is received in the totalizator-house.

(5.) *Fire Brigades Act.*

Fire Districts.—Four new districts—Wanganui, Levin, Ohakune, and Waitara—were constituted.

Elections.—Besides the general election taking place this year, arrangements for elections to fill vacancies on the Christchurch, Balclutha, Dannevirke, Gisborne, Greymouth, Hastings, Port Chalmers, Palmerston North, Feilding, and Petone Fire Boards were made. Members were appointed to Balclutha, Petone, Milton, Port Chalmers, and Wanganui Boards.

Assistant Inspector.—The increasing burden of work thrown on Captain Hugo, particularly as Government Fire Inspector, has made it necessary to create the position of Assistant Inspector of Fire Brigades. Many calls upon the Inspector have again been made by the Defence Department.¹

Wireless Fire-alarms.—Information is being obtained through the High Commissioner respecting wireless systems of fire-alarms, which it is anticipated will be extensively installed in England now that the war is over. It is stated that the cost is far below that of any of the present efficient systems, and if this is so many of the Dominion Fire Boards will be able to install them. At present street fire-alarms are lacking in many towns owing to the great expense of the wired systems.

Otago Harbour Board's Wharves.—There was a lengthy but fruitless correspondence between the Department, the Dunedin City Council, the Otago Harbour Board, and the Dunedin Fire Board arising out of a special report by Captain Hugo respecting the altogether inadequate provision for the protection from fire of the wharves, stores, and shipping under the jurisdiction of the Harbour Board. This lack of provision is notorious. It has been mentioned in the Inspector's reports for the last eight years, and in the Dunedin Fire Brigade Superintendent's report for 1915-16. All three bodies have in the past disclaimed responsibility, but there can be no doubt that, as part of the wharves are within the fire district, it is the legal duty of the Fire Board to provide for the protection of that part, and the simplest method of doing so would be to obtain a pumping plant to use the water from the harbour.

Paper by Inspector.—The paper entitled "The Use and Maintenance of some of the Smaller Fire Appliances," read by the Inspector at the Fire Brigades Conference in February, 1918, has been printed and circulated in pamphlet form.

(6.) *Motor Regulation Act.*

Registering Authorities.—Three local authorities—Amuri, Waimarino, and Wanganui County Councils—adopted Part II of the Act during the year.

Identification Marks.—Letters and numerals as identification marks were allotted to fourteen registering authorities.

Amendments of the Act.—Requests for amendments of the Act are frequently being forwarded by local bodies and the New Zealand Automobile Union. There is no doubt that at the first opportunity the present Act should be reconstructed. The proper taxation of motors to meet, in part at least, the increased cost of maintaining existing and forming new roads is a matter on the principle of which all—both local authorities and motor-owners—seem to be agreed, though there is considerable divergence of opinion as to the incidence thereof.

This big question cannot, of course, receive the consideration of Parliament in the next session, but there are others on which legislation is urgently required. The definition of "registering authority" in the present Act provides only for County Councils and those boroughs with a population of five thousand or more. The effect of this is that boroughs like Blenheim—which, moreover, lies in a county in which the Counties Act is suspended—cannot register motors. The use of the motor-car to-day is so widespread that not only every borough but every Town Board not forming part of a county should become a registering authority.

Registration itself has become rather a vexed question. Under the present law a motor need only be registered once, this registration holding good throughout the Dominion for so long as the motor remains the property of the same owner. On a change of ownership the registration must be cancelled or confirmed, but there is no provision for cancellation in the event of loss, destruction, or export of the motor. Apart from the very real difficulty this has caused to local bodies and the police, the present system has rendered it altogether impracticable for the Government Statistician to compile even approximately accurate returns of motors in use. The need for these returns has already been felt. Some system of annual registration, which will make it possible to keep in touch