

interests of both efficiency and economy to form a united district, this was not considered practicable—firstly, because of the cost of the necessary polls of ratepayers in both districts, and, secondly, owing to the fact that, since the formation of the united district was of no great importance or advantage to the Auckland City ratepayers, it would probably be difficult to obtain a favourable decision.

Experience in both this and other countries indicates that the centralization of the control of the fire-fighting organization in any urban area is likely to be more efficient and also more economical than the operation of a number of independent brigades. Arrangements have been made by several Fire Boards to undertake the fire protection of adjoining districts under the provisions of section 64 of the Act; but this arrangement is also not altogether satisfactory, owing to the fact that the Board is not authorized to incur any capital expenditure (on fire-stations, alarm systems, &c.) within the adjoining districts, and the value of the service possible is therefore limited. It should also be noted that the whole cost of the service falls on the ratepayers of the district, and no contributions are received from insurance companies in respect of these areas.

The question of amending the Act so as to facilitate the amalgamation of fire-fighting units in urban areas is at present under consideration.

INSPECTION.

Owing to the time taken in organizing the fire-prevention campaign, it was not possible to make a complete inspection of Fire Board brigades during the year, only thirty out of fifty-five being visited. Most of those omitted have been inspected since the end of the year. The conditions found were almost universally satisfactory, and the Fire Boards are to be congratulated both on the equipment and personnel of the brigades. The drills carried out at the inspection parades and the knowledge of the work shown by the brigadesmen were satisfactory, and in many cases of a very high order. The opportunity was taken during the inspections to make inquiries regarding the water-supply and reticulation, and recommendations were made regarding improvements to the latter where it was considered that these would increase the effectiveness of the brigade's work. Recommendations were also made for the provision of a fire-pump at Tauranga and a new first-aid tender at Cambridge, both of which have since been ordered.

The usual reports were made on inspections of public buildings and institutions, and advice has been given to Fire Boards and local bodies with regard to fire-station sites and buildings, water-supply installations, &c. Reports were also made to the Local Government Loans Board on loans proposed for fire-prevention and water-supply and reticulation purposes. In view of the fact that all the brigades were not visited, it is not proposed to make a detailed report on brigades until next year.

During inspections in the Auckland urban area it was noted that no arrangements had been made for co-operation between brigades in respect of fire calls in boundary areas, and inquiries showed that the lack of this co-operation had in fact resulted in delayed attendance at fires. A conference was arranged in December last between the Fire Boards and local authorities controlling the various brigades in the area, and it was unanimously agreed that some measure of co-operation was desirable. Instructions were given to the Superintendents of the brigades to confer regarding details. This was done and a report was prepared. No action has since been taken on this report, owing to the fact that since the end of the year negotiations have been in progress for the formation of a Metropolitan Fire Board to control the whole of the urban area on the south side of the harbour. This would undoubtedly be the most satisfactory arrangement from a technical point of view.

Appended is a table of miscellaneous statistics in connection with Fire Board districts.

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