

other conditions of service. It was agreed that the same conditions should not apply for both the city and secondary town brigades, but that each should be standardized on a basis of the existing conditions most favourable to the men. These recommendations have since been given effect to as from 1st January, 1937, thus avoiding the necessity for special legislation. The following is briefly the effect of the alterations made :—

- (1) An additional five weeks' leave annually has been granted to all permanent staff. The effect of this is that in the four main cities the firemen now receive one day's leave in four, and, in addition, eight weeks' annual leave. In the secondary towns, where the service conditions are less onerous, the day-leave is one day in five, with four weeks' annual leave.
- (2) The Boards have agreed that as soon as practicable family quarters will be provided for all married men with not less than three years' service. Pending the provision of these quarters, a reasonable house allowance will be paid to these married men.
- (3) In recognition of the fact that under the continuous-duty system married men are required to turn out to fire calls when on the station during leave periods, the allowance for lighting and firing, which previously applied to officers and a limited number of men only, is to be given to all married men provided with quarters.

During the course of the negotiations an application was made by some of the men's representatives for a change-over to the " platoon " system of working, which is in force in most large cities and under which the firemen are on duty alternately in day and night shifts and do not reside on the station. This was very strongly opposed by the Fire Boards. It was pointed out, firstly, that a considerable increase in cost would be involved, and it was probable that it would be uneconomic to maintain the same effective fire-fighting strength as under the existing system ; secondly, that a very large capital cost was involved in the existing fire stations, which had been built for operation under the continuous duty system and were provided with living and recreational facilities which would no longer be required if the platoon system was adopted ; thirdly, that heavy commitments for the erection of blocks of married quarters had recently been made ; and, fourthly, that the congested conditions in the business areas, which had forced the adoption of the platoon system in large cities abroad, had not been reached in New Zealand, and the accommodation provided for both married and single firemen was comparable with that available to any other class of the community.

This position was recognized by the Government, and at the Fire Board Conference the Hon. the Minister of Internal Affairs agreed that the existing continuous-duty system would be continued for a period which would justify the provision of married quarters in accordance with the undertaking given.

The effect of the adoption of the new service conditions is not yet fully apparent, but it is anticipated that at least fifty additional permanent men will be required to maintain the same effective brigade strength. This must, of course, be reflected in brigade costs, and it will be noted from Table II attached that the estimated expenditure for the current year is £181,885, as compared with £149,455 for the previous year.

#### DEATHS AND INJURIES IN FIRES.

During the year sixteen deaths due to fires, including four children, were recorded as against fifteen for the previous year and an average of thirteen for the past five years. In addition, sixteen persons received injuries necessitating their removal to hospital for treatment, whilst minor injuries were sustained in a number of other cases both by firemen and the general public. Although no deaths resulted this year from home dry cleaning with petrol, several cases of serious injuries arose from this cause.

#### CAUSES OF FIRE.

In Table I attached the causes of all fires in fire districts are set out. There is very little variation from year to year in these tables, which emphasizes the fact that if carelessness with electrical equipment, heating fires, and smoking materials could be overcome more than half the fire wastage of the Dominion would be avoided. Most heavy losses arise from one of these causes occurring prior to the closing of premises for the night. It will be seen that all the serious fires during the year under review were of this type, and the returns for the past four years show that while only 46 per cent. of the fires occur during the night hours (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.) the actual fire loss is 80 per cent. of the total.

#### INSPECTIONS.

A number of special inspections were made during the year to discuss the application of the new service conditions with the individual Fire Boards and also with the representatives of the firemen. It has also been necessary to make special visits to discuss with the Boards and their architects the details of the new quarters which will be required to accommodate the additional personnel.

Most of the brigades were inspected during the year. Close touch was kept with the activities of all districts by means of newspaper cuttings, and, where necessary, several visits were made. The conditions found were generally satisfactory, and it is pleasing to report that most of the brigades are maintaining a high standard of training. Tests on the water-supply were made in a considerable number of towns, and recommendations made to the Boards concerned as to the development of the brigade organization and the purchase of new plant and equipment.

A number of reports were also made with regard to the fire protection of Government buildings and to the local Government Loans Board on loan proposals for fire-protection, water-supply, and water-reticulation services.

Attached are statistical tables covering both the year under review and also averages taken over a period of years.

I have, &c.,

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