

suggested that this body should act with the Minister of Civil Defence in giving effect to the proposals. For the reasons stated in paragraph 20 no regulations were in fact made. In the early months of 1943, however, the Government had to make decisions, firstly, to determine the emergency organization then required to meet the possibility—fast becoming more remote—that the Pacific war position might deteriorate; secondly, the special measures necessary for the fire protection of war storage areas, munition dumps, hospitals, and of manufacturing premises vital to the war effort; thirdly, regarding the change-over from emergency to post-war conditions; and fourthly, the utilization to best advantage of the equipment prepared for emergency purposes. It was therefore decided to set up a National Fire Council to advise the Minister on these matters. The constitution decided upon was three members representing the Fire Boards' Association and one representative each of the Municipal Association, the United Fire Brigades' Association, and the Fire Brigade Union Federation, with the Minister of Civil Defence as Chairman.

22. This Council worked under the handicaps that it had no legislative status, that its function was advisory and not administrative, that it was unable to bind the organizations it represented, that it was not concerned with the regular service except in its relation to the emergency organization, and that it was formed at too late a stage in the emergency. Despite this, it rendered really valuable service. Prior to its formation, all decisions regarding the Fire Service had been made by or issued through the Dominion Fire Controller. It will be noted that the recommendations made by the Fire Service officers in 1942 had not been given effect to and the man-power position (paragraphs 36 to 40) had been unsatisfactory to the Service throughout the emergency period. It was not possible for security reasons to broadcast the purpose and effect of the decisions made, and in a wholly decentralized service such as this there was under these conditions bound to be misunderstanding and resentment. The representative character of the National Fire Council made its recommendations reasonably acceptable both to the controlling authorities and, on the whole, to the regular service. This aspect apart, most of the members had had considerable experience of fire-service administration and their advice and assistance was of considerable practical value.

23. The Council functioned only between May and September, 1943. Its deliberations traversed the proposals submitted to Government by the Service officers in 1942 and also Mr. A. D. Wilson's recommendations. Although the improvement in the war situation during this period made any action unnecessary, it approved in principle an emergency organization something between the two proposals. The basis of district control was adopted, but instead of a headquarters officer with operational control it recommended the employment of a technical officer for inspection and liaison work. The difficulties of wartime operation with the multiplicity of brigade-controlling authorities were recognized, and the Council recommended that the necessary legislative provisions should be made both for its own constitution as an administrative controlling authority and for the necessary powers for the Regional Fire Controllers.

24. In its deliberations on technical matters the Council was assisted by a Fire Service Committee consisting of the four District Fire Controllers and one representative each of the Superintendents and Deputy Superintendents' Union and of the United Fire Brigades' Association. The questions traversed in connection with the emergency organization included the regular brigade strength, both normal and for war requirements, the allocation of man-power to the Service, the status, billeting, and gradual release of the Emergency Fire Service, systems of alarm, brigade auxiliary units in non-vulnerable centres, the position of the Fire Service in the Civil defence organization, type and quantity of fire-fighting equipment required, allocation of emergency equipment to country fire brigades, disposal of surplus fire-fighting equipment, standardization of hydrants, waterways, couplings, and fire-brigade equipment, and standardization of drills and training.

TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

25. During the latter part of 1942 this country had been established as an attacking base for the American Forces in the Solomons. In addition to taking over existing stores, offices, and other buildings for Service requirements, large wooden storage blocks and hospitals were erected in 1942-43 in the suburban areas of Auckland and Wellington. These constituted fire risks which were not only of first rank by reason of their importance to the war effort, but which also required special treatment because of the temporary construction and their location in districts in which the ordinary water-supply reticulation was inadequate for fire-protection purposes. It was therefore necessary to continue in these districts the arrangements for overland operation from static water-supplies which had been prepared against enemy attack, long after the emergency was over.

26. At the beginning of 1944 there was an urgent call from the Eastern Supply Council for fire-fighting equipment. Up to this time 150 of the 289 standard trailer pumps supplied to the New Zealand Service during the emergency period had been released to either the Pacific or Eastern war areas, together with a considerable quantity of hose. The question now arose as to whether the war situation justified the release of further equipment. Arrangements had been made early in 1943 to distribute about one-third of the standard trailer pumps to the country fire brigades. The intention was that these should not only be used for the improvement of the local service, but that they would also be available, together with the trained personnel, should the war situation deteriorate. This equipment had in the meantime established its value both within the towns and for rural fire-protection.

27. It is to be noted that, in approving the original recommendation for supply of emergency equipment, War Cabinet had also approved the recommendation that the equipment should, so far as this would fit in with emergency requirements, be designed so that it had positive value for post-war fire protection. The standard trailer pumps, in particular, are most suitable appliances for fire protection work in rural areas, where access to creeks, &c., is often difficult. It was therefore decided that 25 of the large pumps for which there was no market overseas and 96 of the standard pumps, including 16 which had been fitted up on hose-laying appliances, together with 450,000 ft. of hose, should be retained in the Service to form the basis of the post-war reorganization, and that the remainder of the emergency equipment would be released immediately for overseas requirements. A transfer of £32,000, representing approximately one-fourth the value of the equipment retained, was made from Consolidated Fund to War Expenses Account as a recovery of the cost of this equipment.

28. Proposals for the reorganization of the fire service, involving permanent allocation to the regular brigades of emergency equipment, reinforcement between brigades at earthquake or other serious fires, the development of a system of rural fire protection, the standardization of equipment