

170. Are there any men who have been appointed by the department that are inefficient?—That is for the department to say.

171. But in your opinion?—That is not a fair question to ask.

172. Have there been any accidents here through overcrowding?—I do not know that there have been any; that may have helped, but I do not think they can refer direct to them. There have been on one or two occasions accidents to conductors through overcrowding, through the people standing half-way out of the doors of the cars. The other day I was going down Vivian Street as a passenger, and a man in the car was standing up and his walking-stick was pointing out. The conductor tripped over the stick, and it threw him out on his head on the blocks.

173. I understand you ask for this Bill because you think the motormen ought to be licensed by the Public Works Department, and because you think new brakes are necessary in Auckland?—We ask for this Bill because we think it is for the general benefit of the tramway services throughout New Zealand.

174. Have you considered the effect of section 2?—If that is applied I believe it will be pretty severe in some places.

175. That is allowing any person to require alterations?—It would not make any difference to any company which kept its rolling-stock in good order.

176. But could not the Minister under that clause make any alteration he requires?—I do not think it is likely the Minister would. No sensible body of men are going to make any alterations that are unnecessary.

177. You do not think the Minister would make any alteration unless he considered it necessary?—Not unless he thought it was absolutely necessary, I do not think he would.

178. *Hon. Mr. R. McKenzie.*] If any one told you that under clause 2 of this Bill the Minister was likely to require an alteration in the gauge of a tramway, what would be your opinion of such a statement as that?—I do not think the Minister would do it unless he thought it was necessary for the safety of the public.

179. Do you think any one who would use an argument of that kind must be hard up for an argument against this Bill?—I think he would be hard up for an argument.

ROBERT FAIRE examined. (No. 9.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What are you?—A motorman.

2. Are you a member of the Tramway Federation?—Yes.

3. Will you make your own statement in regard to this Bill?—Before commencing, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I should like to point out the position we are in through the procedure of the Committee. You cannot expect men to give clear straightforward statements with their employers before them. I appeal strongly against the procedure of the Committee in the first place. The real difficulty is this: that we were here last night when this Committee sat, and we were not allowed in the room while the employers gave their side of the question. We were outside in the lobby from half past 7 till 12 o'clock last night, and we consider we should have had the same right of hearing the evidence of the employers as they have of listening to our evidence. That is the main ground of objection. [The Committee discussed the question, and decided not to alter the arrangement of the previous day.] Well, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I wish again to lodge my objection against the procedure, but at the same time I have no hesitation whatever in giving what evidence I think best before my officials. I think we shall get treated fairly, and what will be brought forward will not be brought up against us, but I do object strongly to the principle of this Committee hearing the evidence of our employers without allowing us to be present, and then for us to have to give our evidence while our employers are here. It considerably weakens our case, inasmuch as the points that are raised we have no chance of debating, while the points we raise they have every chance of debating.

4. Do you say you cannot give evidence?—I am prepared to give evidence. The first thing I should like to state is that we do not approve of the Bill as it stands at present, because we should like to see the Government take additional powers. In the first place, the time has arisen when all motormen should be examined by the Government. When you take into consideration the position of the local bodies, they protect their own services, select their own men, and have their own form of examination, occupying, as you will see, a dual position. Now, the tramway employees' responsibilities are second to none in the colony or in any other calling. They are called upon to meet emergencies at any time and every minute of the day. What protection have they as far as their legal position goes? They have absolutely none unless their employer gives them a distinct discharge—I mean the sack. They have no legal remedy, because the employer, in order to overcome the difficulty, has means of reducing a motorman to a conductor for a period of six months or for life in some instances, and that reduction does away with the legal right of the man concerned. They cannot go for wrongful dismissal or some such action as that in the Courts of justice. Now, I consider I am speaking on behalf of the federation when I say there is the necessity for Government inspection at frequent intervals, especially after an accident attributable to an inefficient motorman or defective brakes. It is a matter of vital importance to tramwaymen that, after an accident in which blame is attributable to the motorman or to the brakes, the first man to shift that car, examine that car, or do anything with that car should be the Government Inspector. Another point I wish to mention is in regard to the cars themselves. I think it is necessary that the Government should have some hand in the type of the cars used. For instance, where the streets are narrow, as in the City of Wellington, the cars should not be built so wide or of such a design as to endanger the lives of the general public in boarding or riding on the running-board of such cars, or the employees in the discharge of their duties. Now, I wish to point out in this connection that in places in the city if a cart or a dray is hard up against the kerbing there is only a very few inches of room between the running-board and the wheel-box