

128. Do you not think that would obviate very largely the question of overcrowding?—It ought to help to do so.

129. Do you think the people who send representatives to Parliament and who build up Governments are competent to erect and manage a tramway undertaking?—Yes, if they are competent for the greater they should be competent for the lesser.

130. Seeing that the railways are now being run by the General Government, and noting the present overcrowding on their system, are they a proper authority to insist upon conditions other people cannot carry out and which they cannot carry out themselves?—I do not think they are the people to go down to Christchurch and Dunedin and make regulations about the handling of passengers on the cars. We ought to be allowed to do that ourselves.

131. Which is the greater inconvenience to passengers, being called upon to do without a seat in a tram-car for a few minutes, or being without a seat in a railway-train for a period of three or four hours?—I should think the train journey would be the more unpleasant.

132. *Hon. Mr R McKenzie.*] The overcrowding is not a matter of convenience?—The convenience of the public who use the cars is affected.

133. You know the grades we have in some parts of the Dominion, such as at Brooklyn and College Hill: would not the power asked for in this Bill be a margin of safety?—It is questionable.

134. You have cars in Christchurch licensed to carry forty-nine passengers?—Yes.

135. They have cars in Auckland licensed to carry fifty-eight, and they have jammed 120 passengers into those cars. Do you think they ought to go down such grades as Brooklyn in Wellington and Wellesley Street in Auckland without power being taken to stop them?—It would depend upon the margin of safety you had, but if the brake-power was only sufficient to hold up a car with fifty-eight passengers—

136. Assuming the margin is 3, and you are going down a grade of 1 in 14 with 120 passengers in a car licensed to carry fifty-eight, do you think that would be dangerous?—Yes.

137. Do you think the Government ought to have power to step in and prevent it?—I think the local authority should have power to prevent that.

138. For the public convenience and public safety, do you not think it would be much better, if a car is licensed for forty-eight or forty-nine, to state at once that they should be allowed to carry an equal number of people standing?—I do not think any cars will carry an equal number of people standing.

139. Say 50 per cent.?—I should say that is probably near their utmost capacity.

140. Do you not think it would be best to state that at first?—Perhaps so; but when you make a hard-and-fast rule it is difficult to maintain it.

141. But if in the interests of the public safety, and in the interests of the lives of the men working on these cars, there are places in the country where it is necessary?—It goes without saying that the safety of the public should not be endangered, and it might be in excessive overcrowding such as you suggest, and if the local body does not do it you ought to stir them up, but you should not take the control or responsibility out of their hands.

142. You have Government inspection now?—Our Orders in Council give the necessary power to the Governor in Council to see that the rolling-stock and all sorts of things are in proper order not only before the line is open to traffic, but afterwards at any time.

143. What is the Minister's remedy if the local authority refuse to keep their rolling-stock in order?—There are certain penal clauses. 'If the local authority fails or neglects to fulfil any of the requirements of the Order relating to the maintenance of the traffic and the securing to the public the full benefit of this undertaking, it shall be lawful for the Governor by Order in Council to impose upon the local authority a fine of five pounds for every day or part of a day of such default, such fine to be recovered in any Court of competent jurisdiction by any person appointed by the Governor to recover the same.'

144. Do you know if that is the only Order in Council in New Zealand containing that penalty?—I think there is a little difference in the wording, but the same ground is covered. The same powers are given in all the Orders in Council, but in slightly different words.

145. Those powers are not in the earlier Order in Council?—You are referring to the other systems?

146. Yes?—I do not know anything about that. I suppose the Government would have power to make other Orders in Council.

147. Has the Government been in any way harassing you, or officious, in connection with your Orders in Council?—No; we have had a little difference, but it never amounted to anything.

148. What makes you think they would do anything more than they have done if this Act passed?—Because the powers are much wider in the Amendment Act. It is assumed that they will be used, otherwise why ask for them?

149. You admit that there is overcrowding in Christchurch?—Yes, occasionally. The other day I got on to a pretty crowded car in Christchurch during a spell of rain that came on suddenly, and I asked the conductor how many people he had on the car, and he gave me an answer that was ridiculous. I said, "This car will not hold that number." I counted the number roughly myself, and found he was 50 per cent. over the mark. At the end of the journey he said he had carried 120, but that referred to the number of tickets he had sold. There was never the number on the car he stated at one time. My recollection is that he said there were about a hundred on the car when I asked him, and there would be sixty according to my count. I should think 50 per cent. of strap-hangers would be the very outside of what a car could carry.

150. I suppose we can inspect a car after an accident?—Yes.

151. After an accident we can stop that car until it is put into proper order?—Yes.