

to the principles of British justice that any local authority conducting a service should have the right to license or refuse to license competitors, and the matter was then put into the hands of the Auckland Transport Board, largely as a result of that judicial pronouncement. He condemned the Motor-vehicles Act, which provides for the local body being the licensing authority, and yet the municipal authorities are here to-day to ask the Committee to adhere to that principle. We ask that the Bill be put through this year in order that transport may be put on a sound footing, and not allowed to drag on. The suggestion that it be postponed is a ruse to prevent it becoming law. We got a copy of this Bill no earlier than the municipalities got it, and yet, with all their legal advisers, they say they have been unable to consider it and make their representations in the time. Yet we were able to come here to state our case on the first sitting-day. It is all nonsense for them to say they have had no time to consider the Bill. If they have competent legal advisers they have had time to consider it, and the request that it be postponed is simply an effort to prevent it becoming law. We ask the Committee to provide, or recommend the Government to provide, for direct representation for us on the Highways Board—along with the motorists, if you like; but I do suggest that the Committee take seriously my statement that the motorists and carriers will not be able to agree on joint representation. I am going to dispense with other evidence I proposed to call. I had two witnesses to disprove the statement made by Mr. O'Shea that a bus service could not be conducted at a profit. I brought them to show that their buses are operating at a profit; and the Eastbourne Borough Council is another illustration of a bus service being conducted at a profit. Mr. O'Shea stated that there was no instance where private enterprise could give equal service to the municipal enterprise. I venture to say that those who know the Bell bus service, running between Wellington and Ngaio and Khandallah, will admit that it is a good service. I will not call that evidence, because I feel sure the Committee must be convinced that transport services conducted by private enterprise are properly conducted, and whilst they are properly conducted they should be given the privilege of carrying on, provided that it is not uneconomic transport in competition with other services; but to say that the municipality should rob private enterprise is grossly improper and unfair. I trust the Committee will put the Bill through, and not give effect to the representations of the Wellington City Council and the other municipalities.

*Mr. Murdoch.*] With reference to clause 46, you want an assurance that the parties interested shall be advised before an Order in Council is issued?—We have received that assurance.

What is the good of advising you?—We suggest that before the Government puts through an Order in Council it should advise all the parties interested of what is intended, and hear their representations if they care to make any. Otherwise we may wake up some morning to find an Order in Council passed which affects us very materially, and we would not have had the opportunity of making any representations.

That is not what you said in your evidence: you stated you should be advised. You mean you should be consulted?—Yes; I stand corrected.

*Mr. Ansell.*] As representative of the heavy-traffic and omnibus people, you say that the Bill meets with your approval?—Yes, subject to that one point about representation.

With regard to the representation of your interests on the Highways Board, do you consider the Bill leaves it open for the Minister to make such an appointment. The wording is this: "One member to be appointed, on the recommendation of the Minister of Transport, as representative of the owners of motor-vehicles who are resident in the North Island, and one member to be similarly appointed as representative of such owners who are resident in the South Island"; and then it goes on to say, "Before making any recommendations for the appointment of a member of the Board to represent the owners of motor-vehicles who are resident in the North Island or in the South Island, as the case may be (as provided for in section five of the principal Act as amended by the foregoing provisions of this section), the Minister of Transport shall call for nominations for such appointment from incorporated societies or other organizations representing such owners." Would you take from that that it leaves it open for the Minister to appoint some one representing the heavy traffic?—It is open to that, but equally open to the Minister to appoint a representative of the motorists.

Were you surprised to find that provision in the Bill?—We were surprised to find that there was no provision for direct representation of both, and we will be surprised if the Bill goes through this Committee without a recommendation to that effect.

You heard the Minister say that provision was being made for the payment of £150,000 for backblock roads?—The point is that the whole incidence of motor-taxation is wrong—lock, stock, and barrel—and, furthermore, indefensible.

In your very excellent propaganda you have asked for the abolition of the heavy-traffic fees, and that to compensate them the cities should get a larger proportion of the petrol-tax?—There is a reason for that. Seventy per cent. of the heavy commercial vehicles never go outside the cities, and therefore they are paying to-day for the construction of country roads, which they never use.

What about taking this £150,000 for backblock roads?—That opens up the whole question of motor-taxation.

The Minister has definitely indicated that £150,000 is to go on backblock roads: what have you to say to that in view of the statements already issued?—That probably should not be spent on those roads; but I think the proper course is to reduce our taxation to a fair level, and what is done with the money available is a matter for the Government. That is our attitude. We will concentrate on getting fair taxation for a reasonable use of the roads. What is done with the money is a matter for the Government to determine. We have no right, because we contribute the money, to indicate as to what is to be done with it.

*The Chairman.*] Any other taxpayer pays his taxes, and the Government determines how the money it receives is to be spent?—Yes; we know the use we make of the roads, and we say, Very well, tax us fairly in regard to the use we make of them. What is done with the tax is a matter for the Government of the day.