

the parties to it are justified in asking for any modification of it unless they can produce some evidence of bad faith or maladministration, and I therefore submit that Parliament itself would not be justified in attempting to alter that Act. It represented an effort to secure lasting settlement of a very difficult and complicated position, and a reasonable opportunity should be given to let that settlement take place. In addition, the Board is spending the greater part of the loan of £526,600 just authorized in putting down further tramway extensions, and it cannot feel, nor can the ratepayers of its district feel, any confidence in going ahead with those works if the reasonable powers already given to the Board by Parliament are to be wantonly interfered with and the question of motor-omnibus licensing thrown into the melting-pot again. With the completion of the expenditure of this loan the amount of capital invested in the Board's undertaking will be £2,380,000. The Bill proposes to abolish the Auckland Transport District as a licensing unit, and to substitute for it the No. 2 Highways District, which extends from the Whau Creek to Matamata. All the motor-omnibus services within this area would be licensed and subsequently controlled by a new and separate licensing authority comprising representatives of various interests. One person, for example, would represent all the counties in the district. The main motor-omnibus problems of the district centre round Auckland City, and, with one or two exceptions, the services do not run into any counties at all; yet a representative of counties is to have as much voice in licensing and controlling those services as will be possessed by the two hundred thousand people in the metropolitan area who are directly affected, added to another thirty thousand persons living in other boroughs and town districts who are not affected at all. The fact is that each centre of population has its own problems, and if local interests are to be represented they should be represented by local people for each centre, and any attempt to group several distinct centres under one representative authority must be unsatisfactory. These questions have been fought out so far as Auckland is concerned, and a definite solution arrived at which should not be disturbed. We think that the definition of "motor-omnibus" in the Motor-omnibus Traffic Act should be amended so as to bring all motor-vehicles carrying passengers at separate fares of not more than 2s. within the Act. Cases have occurred in Auckland where motor-cars have been used on regular passenger routes as omnibuses in improper competition with licensed services, and the licensing authority has been powerless to interfere. We therefore suggest the following clause: "The definition of 'motor-omnibus' in section two of the principal Act is hereby amended by deleting therefrom the words 'exceeding seven in number, including the driver.'" We do not approve the proposal to bring all motor-omnibus services under the Act, as is done in section 36. We think the better plan is to deal with all such services—being practically the long-distance service car runs—under section 46. A new type of licensing authority might possibly be justified in respect of these services, but even there it seems to us unnecessary to have a composite representative primary licensing authority as well as a composite representative Appeal Board. We would point out that the Dominion Appeal Board is not very fairly constituted, and suggest that if any change from the present constitution is to be made it should be in the direction of creating a small quasi-judicial body consisting of a Judge and two assessors representing the appellant and respondent in the particular appeal. If the present powers and functions of our Board are left intact we are not greatly concerned as to the Appeal Board, but if such an Appeal Board as is proposed in the Act were to be given authority over our district it would create a very serious position. The basis of representation proposed for primary licensing authorities is bad enough, but in the case of the all-important tribunal—the Appeal Board—it is infinitely worse. With regard to the proposed transfer to the Transport Department of the administration of tramways, I should like to say that while I recognize that this is a matter primarily for the Government itself, yet our experience over a great many years as a body controlling tramways is that the Public Works Department has the technical experience and equipment necessary to deal with these matters, and that Department is in a sufficiently detached position to ensure that tramway matters will be dealt with entirely on their merits. I do not suggest that the Transport Department would not do the same; but the contents of the present Bill and the activities of the new Department do not inspire our Board with the same confidence as we have hitherto reposed in the Public Works Department, and we do desire to suggest to the Committee that if any transfer is to take place care shall be taken to ensure that the interests of tramways are not subordinated to or affected by considerations relating to other forms of transport. In this connection I would only point out that the alterations proposed in the Bill are none of them in the direction of assisting tramway-operators, all of whom desire the present position to continue; but the proposals in the Bill have been generally welcomed by the private motor-omnibus operators, who obviously expect to receive more from the operation of the Bill and the Transport Department generally than they are at present receiving. There is an injustice under which tramway-operators labour: they maintain approximately one-third of the road-surfaces where the tracks are laid, but they can receive no contribution from the Main Highways Board toward this expenditure. We think this should be remedied, and urge the inclusion in the Act of the following clause: "Where a tramway has been or is hereafter constructed on any main highway, or on any other road or street towards the construction or maintenance of which the Main Highways Board makes any contribution, then the local or public authority owning or operating such tramway shall be entitled to receive a share of such contribution proportionate to the area of the surface of such main highway, road, or street constructed or maintained, as the case may be, by such local or public authority."

*Mr. Williams.*] Were the representatives of the private-omnibus owners represented at the Conference you allude to as having taken place in Wellington last year before the 1928 Act was drawn up?—Yes. When we were in Wellington representing the Auckland City Council with representatives of the suburban local bodies Mr. Spencer was here representing the motor interests of Auckland—

The private-motor interests?—Yes; and he asked that the clause should be inserted that related to the protection of the existing licenses, and we all, of course, agreed to that. There was never any