

*Mr. Williams.*] When you referred to the difference in the amount of money that you had spent last year on the maintenance of secondary roads and the amounts you proposed to spend this year, would that be in respect of the same length of roads?—Practically in respect of the same length. We have not extended the length of the secondary roads more than a few miles.

Then, that would be due to the extra use on those roads?—Yes; and also it must be remembered that last year was the commencement of the scheme, and they did not get into the swing of it. I know that the Highways Board have still got applications for miles more of secondary roads to be taken over. We had applications this year for, I think, something like two thousand miles in addition to what we already have.

That would be the proper way, following the policy adopted in the past for assisting these extra districts: they are supposed to be provided for in clause 54?—Yes, so far as the funds would permit.

Would you prefer that course rather than that the £150,000, approximately, should be used?—Yes.

With regard to the Public Works Department and the Transport Board, the aim of the Highways Board up to the present, independent of any Minister, has been to construct roads throughout New Zealand in conjunction with the local bodies?—Yes.

And it is all done through the Public Works Department's Engineers—they deal with the local bodies and refer back to the Board their recommendations?—Yes.

And the construction of the roads is a different proposition altogether from controlling the traffic which uses the roads?—Yes. If, however, the control which is referred to in the Transport Bill is no greater than is exercised under the Main Highways Act—and that, I understand, is the intention—then so long as we have one or two members occupying a high position in the Public Works Department upon the Main Highways Board I do not think any great harm will be done. My main reason for saying that is with a view to the discipline of the people who work under us.

In a sense it would duplicate the work of the local bodies so far as the Engineers are concerned?—It might do so, but the District Engineers of the Public Works Department would still be the local representatives on the Main Highways Board. I am not sufficiently *au fait* to know whether there would be any difficulty in the matter.

The Public Works Engineers, as you know, must deal with Public Works grants to local bodies as well as grants to the Main Highways Board, and I take it they would watch both aspects of the case?—Yes.

Do you think there might be duplication in administration by removing it to the Highways Board?—Of course, there may be some difficulties between the Ministers, but I cannot add to my previous remarks on the matter.

*Mr. Ansell.*] With regard to the motorists' claim for additional representation on the Highways Board, I understand that you have supported that claim in the past?—Yes, for a number of years.

And you consider their claim is just and reasonable?—I think so. When the Act was passed the only money paid was the tire-tax. It was contemplated that license and registration fees should come in on top of that; and now not only are those taxes paid, but there is the petrol-tax, and the motorists are contributing out of our total revenue of some £1,500,000 very nearly £1,300,000, whereas when the Act was first brought into existence their contribution was only some £250,000. Under the circumstances it seems only reasonable that they should have substantial representation.

And it would assist you in your work on the Board?—It certainly would.

With regard to the clause repealing certain sections in the Public Works Act, the intention of that Act was to limit loads of four-wheeled vehicles to 10 tons, and six-wheeled vehicles to 15 tons. Do you consider that desirable?—Only in so far as it applied to the development of motor traction. There may be in the development of motor traction, vehicles which would not do more damage to the roads than the limited vehicles, and, as those may change on account of development from time to time, there might be difficulty in having a hard-and-fast statutory law, when the matter could be dealt with by regulation.

I understand there is no intention of allowing increases in loads; but the point I want to get at is this: would it encourage importers to import heavier vehicles than at present?—I think it would unless a distinct statement was made by the Minister as to the intention of the alteration.

With regard to heavy-traffic license fees, it has been suggested that there is provision in this Bill that the Government can by regulation reduce heavy-traffic fees. Have you gone into that aspect?—I have not considered that particular matter. I have not been considering it from the point of view as their representative, as it is not a Highway Board matter.

*Mr. Harris.*] With reference to clause 54, you mentioned some extraordinary allocation for this year—£75,000 in respect of earthquake damage. Such an allocation will not be necessary next year?—I do not know, but the amount we anticipate spending is £250,000 altogether.

At some time or other it is possible that you may have funds which had not been allocated, due to the discontinuance of that particular expenditure?—Yes, but on the figures I have given I do not know where we shall get the money next year.

You know the clause is purely permissive?—Yes.

It has been suggested that the cities would apply for some of this money?—Yes, I think it is very likely.

Do you think it likely that the Highways Board would grant it for the cities?—I do not think so, but I am not prepared to say—I am only one member of the Board.

Assuming that that extra £150,000, or a portion of it, would be expended on backblocks roads, do you not think it reasonable that the backblocks roads should have some benefit from the fund?—They are getting it indirectly at present, inasmuch as the shares which the Board is giving in subsidies on secondary roads is affecting the whole of their funds.