

Just as the joint experience of operators of omnibuses has shown that the chassis which has been designed principally for the carriage of goods is not altogether suitable or satisfactory when used in a city-suburban passenger-service, so will many operators admit that the use of an ordinary motor-car, or one with an extended wheel-base and elongated chassis-frame, leaves much to be desired when operating in a long-distance passenger-service.

In general, the private-car models are too small for the loads to be carried in a licensed service, but, as vehicles of from eight to fourteen passenger capacity were not purchasable from stocks held overseas, the service-car proprietor, in the past has been obliged, more or less, to adapt the standard seven-seater chassis to his requirements. Naturally enough, this was done by making the chassis longer, but seldom, if ever, stronger, and then a New-Zealand-made body was constructed not only longer but wider than the standard body.

In extreme cases the original parts, such as engine, transmission-gear, steering assembly, braking system, wheels and tires, &c., have been left to transport a body and a live load weighing twice as much as was originally allowed for by the manufacturer, and to this burden has been added the extra baggage and freight.

Many serious defects in the vehicles have been located by the Inspectors, but detailed information concerning these need not be given herein. It will perhaps be adequate to say that certain models unquestionably have characteristic and serious weaknesses; in one model it may be the transmission, in another a vital part of the steering-gear, in a third a defect in the brake mechanism; or, again, the weakness may be evident through a tendency to fracture in the chassis-frame, cross-member, or an axle; but in these latter cases the trouble is usually caused through overloading.

However, the operator rather than the designer of his vehicle should be blamed for most of the defects that have been observed, because the unsafe condition of the vehicle more often than not results from indifferent maintenance. Actually vehicles in regular service have been found without a second brake-operating gear; without brake-linings; with brake-drums that were useless; with essential parts of the brake-linkage system missing; with steering-gear in a positively dangerous condition; with both main frames fractured through harsh treatment; with drive-shaft almost ready to fall to the ground; with wheels on the verge of a collapse; with the body insecurely fastened to the chassis; with the body in such a condition that the doors could not be kept closed when the vehicle was travelling; with inefficient headlights; without rear light; with several leaves of the springs cracked; and with rivets and chassis fastenings in a neglected state.

Not only can it be said that many of these defects have been found in the one vehicle, but also it has been established that certain owners, possibly in ignorance in a few odd cases, have allowed most of their fleet of vehicles to quickly deteriorate to a dangerous degree.

#### ENFORCEMENT.

*Inspectors.*—In view of the limited funds available, the efficient enforcement of the Transport Licensing Act has constituted a problem in itself. It was felt that the police should not be further burdened with traffic work. Therefore the majority of local authorities which have inspectorial staff were communicated with, and the services of their Inspectors solicited on the basis of the local bodies obtaining all fines obtained as a result of prosecutions. The response was very favourable. Out of 114 local authorities written to, eighty-eight have agreed to assist, and, of the remainder, many have not yet made their decisions.

The Main Highways Board has also instructed its Traffic Inspectors to assist the Department on the above basis, and as these and many of the local-body Inspectors operate on the "group" system—that is to say, cover the territory of several local bodies—efficient means for enforcement of the Act is now in operation practically throughout New Zealand.

Arrangements are being made with the Health Department to permit its Inspectors to co-operate with this Department in the few remaining territories not already sufficiently covered.

As licenses become finalized, and operators and Inspectors become more fully accustomed to the Act and its requirements, the standard of efficiency in its enforcement will undoubtedly become very complete.

The Department very much appreciates the assistance the local bodies and Main Highways Board are rendering free of charge in this important aspect of administration of the Act.

*Prosecutions.*—As it has taken operators some time to become accustomed to the Act and its requirements, prosecutions have not followed every breach, and Court cases, therefore, have been comparatively few.

*Revocation of licenses.*—The Act contains two provisions of great importance to operators, inasmuch as under them they may lose their passenger-service licenses.

Section 31, subsection (4), states that if any licensee curtails or abandons his service without consent of the Licensing Authority he *shall* lose his license, and may, in addition, be subjected to heavy monetary penalty. Several licenses have been revoked under this section. Although this may seem harsh, it has to be recognized that a passenger-service license under the Act gives privileges which in their turn imply obligations, one of the obligations being the provision of a service upon which the public, at intermediate places as well as the termini, can rely.

Section 36 provides that if as a result of a public inquiry held by the Licensing Authority it is shown to the latter's satisfaction that the licensee has broken any of the conditions or terms of his passenger-service license the license *may* be revoked. This section has, so far, been used only to prove cases of curtailment in the service for the purpose of assisting to carry out section 31; but now that operators are used to the Act and their obligations under it they would be well advised to bear in mind this section and the wide powers given by it.