

PARLIAMENT

Notes From The Gallery

(By Our Special Representative)

About Bicycles + And Mainly Christchurch Bicycles + And Harbours + And Mainly Wanganui Harbour + Anti-Climax

BICYCLES and their owners became the centre of a good deal of comment, facetious and otherwise, when the Transport Law Amendment Bill and its proposal to register bicycles were before the House. Opposition members wanted to know whether the Government intended to require the registration of such vehicles as scooters, wheelbarrows, tricycles, and perambulators. As the hub of the bicycle habit, the leader of fashion in bicycle styles and riding styles, and the originator of those terrifying road marathons for the honour and glory of a blue ribbon, Christchurch came into the picture. And, of course, so did the prevalence of cycle thefts in that rubber-tired city. But civic loyalty united two political opponents on this point.

A New Angle

"There are 40,000 bicycles in Christchurch," explained S. G. Holland, Opposition member for Christchurch North, in mitigation, when the Minister of Transport (Hon. R. Semple) informed the House that thefts in Christchurch

had aggregated 13,000 in eleven years. The Minister of Railways (Hon. D. G. Sullivan), who numbers a lot of bike-riders among his constituents in the Avon Electorate, came to Mr. Holland's support, and with a twinkle in his eye suggested that the responsible parties were "visitors, of course." But the jovial A. E. Jull (Opposition member for Wai-pawa), replying on behalf of the visitors, suggested that this was just another way of distributing the wealth of the people.

Harbour Sights

The far-famed Wanganui River, with its drop-scenes and so on, has certain utilitarian disadvantages that may not be apparent to most people, according to W. J. Polson (Opposition member for Stratford). He clinched a vigorous argument against the Wanganui Harbour Board's proposal to borrow £25,000 for harbour extensions by informing the House that the "only thing that can turn in the river is an eel, and even whitebait will be in danger of stranding if things go on." Mr. Polson speaks with the authority of a former member of the Harbour Board.

One For Wanganui

W. J. Lyon, Government member for Waitemata, inspired no doubt by an Aucklanders' uncrushable pride in his own harbour, could not forbear a little good-natured dig at Wanganui's harbour when the member for the district (J. F. B. Cotterill) was putting a good case for the loan. "Which side of the Port Bowen is the harbour?" he asked with a naivete that convulsed the House for a moment. Mr. Cotterill joined in the laughter, but he would not be put off.

The Ferry Road Front

While everyone was anxiously awaiting events in Europe, in an atmosphere of unmistakable tension, T. H. McCombs, the conscientious Government member for Lyttelton, chose to administer to the House in general, and the Minister of Defence, the Hon. F. Jones, in particular, rather a strong dose of anticlimax. Mr. Jones, who combines with the portfolio of Defence the duties of Postmaster-General, had just arrived back in the House after an urgent Cabinet meeting called to deal with international complications, when Mr. McCombs seized the opportunity to request, on behalf of the residents of Ferry Road, Christchurch, that a public telephone box should be placed at their disposal!

Skins . . .

Mr. Holland wants to know why we sold 425,000 lbs. more of sausage skins and received £57,000 less? This was one of the thrusts he used to press home an argument about the Dominion's export returns. Opposition members flay the Government with all sorts of things, but sausage skins are something new, surely.

. . . And Hides

As Mr. Holland warmed to his subject he became involved in technical difficulties.

"Now take cattle skins," he said. "We exported so many more and received so much less."

"Call them hides," suggested a colleague.

"All right, then, hides," continued Mr. Holland. "Now then, take rabbit hides . . ."

Members chuckled loudly at this display of innocence.

Or was it?

American Style

"None of that gangster talk now!" said W. J. Broadfoot (Opposition, Waitomo) when Mr. Semple informed the House that, with the increase of 99,000 in the number of motor vehicles during the last four years, there were now sufficient cars to take everyone in the Dominion for a ride on Sundays.

Home Consumption Only

A minor point, but one that is of interest to many people, was clarified by the Minister of Transport when his Bill dealing with drunken drivers was being discussed. The Right Hon. J. G. Coates (Opposition, Kaipara) no doubt with the public welfare at heart, asked whether it would be possible for a man to take home a bottle of beer in a bus.

"Yes," replied the Minister, "but he can't give an exhibition of how to get rid of it when he is in a public vehicle."

In other words, the owner of a bottle of beer must not get outside it while inside a bus.

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