

35. Do you consider that the licensing of carriages is necessary in the public interest?—I think it is absolutely necessary. You cannot have a two-wheel cart about town without a license, and certainly a tram-car should be licensed.

36. I suppose cabs are licensed by the local authority?—Yes. The object of the licensing is to see that they are in an efficient condition.

37. And motor-cars?—The question does not refer to drivers, but they also should be licensed.

38. *Mr. Luke.*] You say that under the present law the Government examine men for engineering purposes and mining engineers?—Yes, and also examine steamers.

39. But just in regard to the examination of the individual. They only examine on the principle; they do not examine on the application and ability of the man to apply that knowledge he has to the undertaking, do they?—I cannot say, because I have not sat for one of the examinations, but I should say they do.

40. With your general knowledge as Under-Secretary for many years you would know that when a man is being examined for a certificate either as an engineer on a boat or land, mining or otherwise, there is simply an examination of questions oral and written. Questions have got to be written and demonstrated to the examiners, but the man is not taken to the work to prove to the examiners whether he is competent to carry out the work?—That may be so, but in the case of motormen the examination proposed was to have been of a practical nature, and the Bill contained a clause that the company had to place its appliances at the disposal of the Government to give them an opportunity of carrying out the practical part of the examinations.

41. With your knowledge of the affairs of the Dominion, do you think the fact of having an examination for motormen would be sufficient to safeguard the public interest without practical demonstration on a car?—Certainly not. I think the practical examination in the case of motormen would be of the first importance.

42. Then, from the very fact of steamer engineers and other engineers being examined, it is necessary that the tramway undertaking authorities should be examined also—that is, the motormen. Now, these undertakings are carried on by the local authorities with the exception of Auckland; is that not so?—Yes, for the most part. Of course, there are some private companies such as the Roslyn company.

43. Do you think it is in the interests of the good government of this Dominion that a local authority should be subservient to the principle that has to be enacted to reach those private undertakings?—I do not think you put the matter quite fairly. If the city Corporation wishes to employ an engine-driver you have to get a certificated man, and why not the same if you employ a motorman?

44. I am not questioning that, but do you not think that the local authority, with the machinery that they have for examining, with special officers for carrying those examinations out—that those men are equally able to examine the men, and demonstrate to the community that those men are capable of the work?—Then why not apply the same to steamship-owners. Do you not think the Union Company, with all their competent officers, are just as capable of examining a captain as a Government official is?

45. You are striking now at the root of self-government, and your Department is now building up a system that is going to take control out of the hands of local authorities simply to get at private undertakings. The Union Company is not in the same position as a local authority?—You are overstating the case. Take another parallel: The Corporation employs a steam-boiler, and you have to get that examined by the Inspector of Machinery. Why is that necessary when you have competent men in your own employ?

46. Do you mean to say that the City Council, employing very superior executive officers, should not examine that boiler, and decide that it is in a fit condition to be worked, quite apart from the Government Inspector?—That is what I say. I think they should not do so, and this is on all-fours with that.

47. Why does the Government exempt the Railways in connection with the Inspection of Machinery Department—the Railways examine their own boilers?—Only Government boilers.

48. They are exempt because the Government recognise that Railway people are competent enough to examine their own boilers?—That is one ground, but the Government makes regulations for the control of the public at large rather than for its own control.

49. Do you think it is in the interests of this city that the cars should be licensed and have all the limitations put upon them in regard to the number of passengers and other disabilities?—I know how reasonably the Department would act, and therefore I think it is very desirable.

50. Cannot you assume that the Department would not act reasonably?—No, I cannot assume such a thing for a moment.

51. Could we assume that the Wellington City Council and other people perhaps allow overcrowding to the extent of 10 or 15 per cent.?—Say 100 per cent.

52. That is at holiday time. Do you not think that a limitation may be put on the local authority in that way which would increase the charge considerably to the community in the way of fares?—I do not think so at all.

53. Would you be surprised to know that, as far as the Wellington City Council is concerned, if it had not been for the rush hours, and without any limitations that may be proposed providing this Bill becomes law—that that is the biggest earning-power of the undertaking?—No doubt overcrowding increases the receipts, but you do not take into consideration the damage it does to the cars. I am astounded that the Corporation allows it to go on.

54. Do you think the overcrowding does damage?—Yes, and the extra liability to accident is also very great.

55. If the passengers are kept away from the motorman is there any liability to accident?—Oh, yes! a greatly increased liability due to overcrowding.

56. But they are not allowed on the steps?—I have seen people riding on the steps.