

the dates they were prepared. On 23rd March, 1923, the *Herald* wrote, in reference to the tramway system:—

There is still much reason for complaint regarding overcrowding and confusion generally. . . . No competent observer would describe the present arrangements as efficient, either in the employment of cars or in serving public convenience. Indeed, it is probably conservative to say that conditions are now as bad as ever they have been.

That evidence accords with a great deal of evidence given before us relating to that period—viz., the end of 1922 and beginning of 1923.

On the 28th December, 1923, the *Herald* wrote:—

Even to the most casual observation there is apparent a remarkable improvement in the city's tramway services. Their efficiency has been subjected to an exacting test during the last few days, when the normal demand for transport has been greatly augmented by the presence of many visitors to the city and by the universal desire, induced by the brilliant weather, to journey to holiday and pleasure resorts. Other services have had a share in carrying this great movement of population, but the bulk of the task has been borne by the tramways. The smoothness with which the ordinary services have been expanded to meet this extraordinary demand, the ease with which many thousands of people have been enabled to reach their destination, have been a striking demonstration of the skill and foresight with which this important service has been organized.

And on the 6th November the same journal wrote:—

The policy adopted by the City Council for the operation of the tramways can be accepted as meeting the immediate situation. It is a sane, workmanlike programme that errs on the side of neither panic nor foolhardiness. A working solution is presented of a problem that has yet to be figured out finally.

It must be admitted that the trams have been progressing rapidly towards the point where they would deal with "peak" loading periods, and the new cars should bring them abreast of the demand.

Mr. Thomas Bloodworth was one of the witnesses who impressed us as being impartial, well prepared, and helpful. After outlining (see page 115 of the Book of Evidence) the great difficulties which the tramway administrators had to face in the matter of shortage of rolling-stock, and hold-up of supplies due to post-war conditions, he says: "While these difficulties were being overcome there was dissatisfaction with the services, and when the Council had the trams, and power was available for them, motor-bus competition had developed to such an extent as to compel the Council to seek protection in the form of the Motor-omnibus Regulations." Mr. Bloodworth described the present transport difficulties as being in part due to circumstances beyond the control of the City Council. The only specific charge he lays against the City Council is that it failed to take notice of the reports of its expert officers, warning it of the coming of the motor-omnibus competition, and that it failed to move for legislation until the mischief was largely irremediable.

Then there is a third significant fact. Counsel for the suburban bodies, in cross-examination of the City Council's witnesses and in the examination of their own and all independent witnesses, zealously brought out every point that could tell against the tramway administration. On matter touching the running efficiency of the tram services they asked no questions relating to any period later than 1923, but they continually harked back to the congestion, confusion, and exasperation that prevailed at the bottom of Queen Street at that period. During the period we are now considering—July, 1924, to March, 1928—the work of reorganization of the staff continued. A policy was inaugurated, and partly carried to completion, of providing club-rooms for the employees. Great attention was paid to their comfort and safety in working the trams, and to their general welfare in their periods of waiting. These men are frequently off duty when other people are working, and the management wisely recognized that it was in the best interests of the service that the men should be able to find their recreation by way of games, library, &c., at their own club-rooms, and at the same time be enabled to obtain hot and good refreshment in clean surroundings, and at an economy of cost. All these facilities now exist in the splendidly equipped rooms at the Epsom and Gaunt Street depots. (See the evidence of Mr. J. J. Nixon on this point, at pages 223 and 224 of the Book of Evidence.)

The shortage of rolling-stock has been largely overtaken, and cars are being turned out as fast as is possible consistently with a policy of preserving the industry to the Dominion, the district, and, as far as possible, the Department's own workshops. The congestion at Queen Street has entirely disappeared, and a system of