

categorical definite answer. The question and answer relate to an undertaking that has not yet reached stability. We shall approach the answer by marshalling and inviting consideration to the following facts :—

1. The City Council's considered policy in the matter of motor-omnibuses was never put into operation. The attack of private-bus owners on the transport trade of the city prevented this. The English buses that were ordered were diverted from their intended routes and thrown into the fighting-line of a hurriedly organized counter-attack.

2. The City Council was bound to take up the challenge of the private buses, and in doing so it used all the usual methods of meeting trade competition. By so doing it roused against itself the opposition and hostility of the bus-owners and all the allied trades. These organized against the City Council a solid and eager body of opponents of its transport system.

3. The success of the City Council's counter-attack, and later of the Motor Omnibus Traffic Act, 1926, in weeding out many services that should never have been started arrayed against it large sections of the public. Many interests, large and small, business and private, have been ground fine between the upper stone of regulated municipal enterprise and the nether stone of unregulated private enterprise, and the whole of the resultant ill-feeling is now apt to be visited upon the City Council.

4. The City Council's policy, originally diverted in so far as the buses of its own choice were concerned, was later wholly submerged by the compulsory acquisition of a motley fleet of buses. The outstanding fact is that the City Council was not able to take a definite policy in relation to its buses, because it was compelled to take over many omnibuses that were fairly described as "junk." It took over many services; it is still running services that do not pay. In relation to several of these non-paying services, the tramway managers before us said that they were keeping them going for the present, pending the report of this Commission.

5. Many incidents of incivility, inconvenience, lack of consideration to bus patrons, and some of fare anomalies, such as are in the very nature of things inseparable from a large transport system, were proved. These seem, unfortunately, never to have been made the subject of complaint to the tramways authorities, but instead were made the basis of further propaganda against the City Council.

6. Very little help is obtainable in the matter of comparative costs of motor-buses running from any published figures. There is no uniformity in the conditions that govern costs, and it is difficult to obtain reliable and complete data on which necessary adjustments and reconciliations can be made. The variations in published cost-per-mile results are so great as to lead to no positive result. This fact adds to the difficulties of an undertaking that is seeking to inaugurate a line of business, and it rendered nugatory a great deal of investigation that we made into the matter at the inquiry. The City Council's costs approximately agree with those of the Wellington City Council; they are higher than many and at the same time lower than many of the published municipal figures in England. They are higher than those of the Passenger Transport Co., an Auckland company whose figures were put before us. We cannot therefrom draw the inference that municipal control therefore stands condemned when compared with the results of private control. We express our thanks to the manager of the Passenger Transport Co. for coming forward as he did and placing even the private records of the company at our disposal, but the presence of this company and its figures and results do not more than touch the fringe of the problem which the City Council had to face, and which we have to weigh in our present judgment. The Passenger Transport Co. bought the buses of its choice, ran them on the roads which it selected, and confined its whole attention to the motor-omnibus services, feeling its way, building up its service as its business progressed, and adapting its organization and administration progressively. That problem is so different from the problem which the City Council had to face that there is no reasonable basis of comparison between them.

Having thus marshalled briefly the factors that we think should be weighed, we make the following answer :—

No body of men in these circumstances, with this equipment, and seeking to serve a public so tried by the conflict of economic forces that have fought for mastery in its district, could, in the time, have established an efficient omnibus