

service. The City Council has not done so. We are satisfied that the Tramway Committee and the administrative advisers and staff that have evolved such an efficient tramway service out of chaos could and would, with the co-operation of the people, have mastered the difficulties of the omnibus service. It has met instead the forces of municipal disunity and mistrust, allied with the natural discontent of the inevitable sufferers from the results of economic conflict. As matters now stand, we find that an efficient and satisfactory omnibus service has not yet been organized by the City Council.

3. (b) The Working and Effect in the said District of the Provisions of the Motor-omnibus Traffic Act, 1926, and the Regulations thereunder.

Nearly all if not all of the witnesses who appeared before us were examined on this matter. From the evidence thus tendered we arrive at the following conclusion :—

Firstly, in general terms the Act is justifiable as an enactment to control motor-omnibus traffic, and to check the abuses and dangers that must be associated with uncontrolled competition for passenger traffic in the city and suburban streets. Secondly, and again in general terms, it was and is justifiable as an instrument to protect publicly-owned tramways and bus services from unfair competition.

On these two points there was a consensus of opinion amongst witnesses.

Before the Act came into force there was a period of rather more than two years in which the growth of motor-omnibus services was uncontrolled. In that period numerous services were inaugurated, and in the city itself and in every direction in its environs every possible route was exploited. The competition thus engendered gave, particularly to residents in the outlying areas, services which, in the matters of time-tables and fares, were very generous. Many of these services were on a holelessly uneconomic basis, and in the very nature of things their popularity with their patrons was apt to be proportionate with the financial unsoundness of the venture. The inevitable cessation of these services when the Motor-omnibus Traffic Act, 1926, introduced proper measures of control resulted in much hardship to these disappointed patrons. It was inevitable that this should be so, and, human nature being what it is, it is perhaps equally inevitable that these disappointed persons should blame all their misfortunes on the Act that substituted order and control for the previously existing chaotic state of things.

Several witnesses blamed the tramway administration on the City Council for not having procured the passing of such legislation many months earlier than September, 1926. These witnesses urged the obvious fact that such legislation early in 1925 would have been preventive rather than remedial, and would have saved the economical loss of unjustifiable services, and the disappointment and bitterness caused by the subsequent withdrawal of such services.

The reply to these submissions seems to us to be equally obvious. It is, firstly, that the witnesses are merely being wise after the event; and, secondly, that, great as was the difficulty of meeting urgent problems by legislation in the latter half of 1926, it would have been much greater if the attempt had been made eighteen to twenty-four months earlier, on expert reports as to the possible future developments and problems. Such a report was, for instance, made by the Auckland City Council's Engineer, Mr. W. E. Bush, M.Inst.C.E., in March, 1920. Mr. Bush indicated the danger in the following clear and striking words, which we quote from pages 29 and 30 of his printed report (Exhibit 82) :—

Generally, it may be stated that to cope with the passenger traffic of large cities the tramway system is still needed, and for countries where petrol or other motor-spirit has to be imported, where electricity can be generated from coal or water-power, it would be foolish to depend altogether upon the motor-bus for transportation, apart from railways; but if it can be shown that motor-buses can give a regular and adequate service for less cost than a tramway system, the motor-bus will ultimately oust the tramway. That point for most cities has not yet been reached, but there are few cities where motor-buses cannot be used with great advantage to supplement and help develop electric tramways, and therefore the trams and buses should be under one control, and the City Council will be well advised to protect itself from competition which can only prove harmful in the long run to the best interests of the travelling public.

This report was written by Mr. Bush on his return from a tour of inspection through the United States of America, Canada, and Great Britain.