

*Hon. Mr. Veitch :* Mr. Ansell not only made a statement which I cannot admit, but has made a statement that I have definitely indicated that £150,000 provided for in clause 54 is to be allocated to backblock roads. I say that I have never said that; and, further, that the Bill provides, first, that it is for roads and streets; and, further, the Bill provides, as the present law provides, that the money will be allocated by the Highways Board and not by the Minister. I merely want to put myself right in the matter.

*Mr. Ansell :* I am sorry if I took up the Minister's remarks incorrectly, but I was under the distinct impression, when the Waitomo County representatives were giving evidence, that that statement was made. (To witness :) With regard to your remarks about the heavy-traffic fees, they are not paid to the Government?—We say that we are satisfied the heavy-traffic fees should be taken off, and that the petrol-tax is the only fair and defensible tax; but we do say, Give us relief in any tax to the extent of the heavy-traffic fees we pay and we will probably be satisfied so long as we do not have to pay out in hard cash the amount we do now. Some firms are paying as much as £2,000 a year in heavy-traffic fees. One firm has as many as eighty-eight vehicles, and probably has only an average of thirty in use. On the question of the petrol-tax, the point I am making in the propaganda referred to by Mr. Ansell is that if it is proposed to distribute the petrol-tax fairly between the cities and the counties, having regard to the use made of the roads in the various places, the cities are entitled to more. That is the only point I am making; but I think the primary consideration given to the allocation of moneys to the cities and boroughs is the requirements of them. The question as to how those requirements can be met by a method of allocation is a secondary consideration. Our chief concern is to get relief from taxes, although it is not our concern at this stage.

*Mr. Sullivan.]* You agree that if the heavy-traffic fees were taken off the cities it would have to be compensated for from some quarter?—I think probably it would. I say that if a tax is unfair, take it off, and then consider what is to be done, but first remove the injustice. It is no argument to say that you are not going to remove an admitted injustice off one section of the community because it might impose an injustice on another. That is not fair; take it step by step.

*Mr. Murdoch.]* Is it admitted to be unfair?—I think it is admitted that the matter of motor-taxation was a big factor in the last general election, and that it had a good deal to do with returning another party to power.

*Mr. Sullivan.]* You want this Bill to pass, with the alteration you have asked for?—Yes.

You represent the carriers: do they want the Bill to pass?—Yes.

You represent the motor-omnibus proprietors?—Generally speaking, yes.

And they want the Bill to pass?—Yes. There may be individuals who object, but the executive of my organization, which is supposed to interpret the feeling of members generally, has decided to approve the Bill, and I do not think there is any other method of getting at the collective opinion of a body.

The position, then, seems to be that all private-enterprise interests are asking for the Bill to pass, and all public interests are opposing it?—Exactly. We have just reversed the position that obtained in 1926.

Representations have been made by your organization in the direction of securing amending legislation, both to the present Government and the previous Government?—It has been an incessant battle for the last four years to secure relief.

And the proposed law meets with your wishes?—So far as it goes. It is chiefly machinery designed to bring about co-ordination. There is always the bogey put up against us when we ask for an alteration in the present law that we are desirous of competing with the railways. Not 5 per cent. of the services are competing with the railways. We do not stand for a service competing uneconomically with the railways; but the illogical part is that, while the municipalities come along and say that bus services cannot be conducted at a profit, they are all the time saying they cannot compete with them.

You contend that where a place has been developed by private enterprise it is a fair thing that that service should be left alone by public enterprise?—So long as it is giving service.

And you would agree that that should apply the other way round?—Admittedly. If any monopoly exists under the Bill, it exists to-day, because the Bill is designed to give us no greater rights than we now enjoy except in the matter of compensation and a different licensing tribunal.

In a case where a place has been developed by public enterprise, and another license has been granted by a licensing authority and a service created that really shares in the profits, do you think it would be fair in a case like that to grant compensation?—I think a man should have compensation if you take from him any goodwill. It is part of a man's property. It is his own personal right, and if you take it without compensation you confiscate it. Of course, the goodwill in such a case as you mention would be much less than where a man had no competition.

With regard to the master carriers, do you say they contribute £700,000?—Approximately, out of £1,600,000. The individual contribution is about five times greater than that of the individual motorist.

*The Chairman.]* In the case of the establishment of a new service on entirely new ground, you would not object to a local body having a monopoly in that case?—If it was an extension of an existing service; but supposing it was to some suburb to which the local body did not now run, I do not think it is entitled to any preference. If it were an extension of an existing service something might be said for those in the field being given some priority.

*Mr. Healy.]* You said that the heavy-traffic vehicles rarely left the centres where they were registered. I presume you were referring to the cities?—Yes, I was speaking of the four centres. Seventy per cent. of the heavy vehicles never go outside the cities.

In the country districts the position is just the reverse?—Yes; I was speaking of the cities.