

*Mr. Mason.*] With regard to your statement that the people of Auckland voted for the Bill and for the extensions, thereby showing a confidence in the control, is it not correct that two members of the Transport Board, of whom you were one, and two members of the City Council who were prominently connected in the eyes of the public with transport in Auckland were turned down by the electors at the last election for the City Council?—That is incorrect. One member of the Transport Board, myself, was unsuccessful at the last election. I was the one; you said “two.” Another member of the Board, Mr. Morton, who represents a suburban district, did not seek re-election.

I am thinking of the City Council?—Mr. Crookes was never a member of the Transport Board. I was defeated. Instead of polling high up on the list, as I did on a number of previous occasions. I was twenty-second or twenty-third; and I do not think my worst enemy will deny that a very persistent propaganda was launched against myself.

I am only concerned with certain matters, and am not making a series of accusations requiring you to defend your whole life. I only wish you to answer my point?—Well, I must respectfully say that I am not going to allow a statement to be made that I said “yes” to your question without putting in a qualification. I said “Yes,” but I also say that there was undoubtedly a system of propaganda in connection with the transport question from which I suffered unfairly. And the voting showed that the city supported me, but certain outlying districts opposed me.

Well, it found you out, and you had been undoubtedly most prominently associated with transport problems in the eyes of the people of Auckland. It is correct to say, is it not, that your name stood for transport?—That is so.

It is quite fair for the Committee to assume that the voting had reference to the question of transport?—Five members of the Board were returned to the Council, and I was defeated in those districts where the people had been growling because they had not got the service they thought they ought to have. As to the city area, my vote was ahead, and I was about twelfth.

*The Chairman.*] Has it been considered in other cases that there should be a right of appeal?—There is no right of appeal in many cases now.

In a case of this kind, do you not think there should be the right?—Not in the case of Auckland. We have bought a monopoly and desire to take first place.

Are the scattered areas to be left isolated, and not be supplied with transport, because you will not supply it and will not allow any one else?—I do not suggest that; I say that if we cannot do it no one else can.

You have a good right to do it, you think?—Yes.

And you are quite ready to do it?—We are entitled to do it, and prepared to deal with Auckland transport, since the Board is a new one.

But how are these people going to be supplied with transport if you decline to do it and decline to allow any one else to take it up? Are you to be the sole judges, and there is to be no right of appeal?—In some way—it is not suggested it would be one of the best services—where there is any reasonable prospect the service would be provided. I do not say that every service should pay.

If you consider it is not a satisfactory service, how would you allow those people to get their transport?—If there were cases in our own area where applicants desired to compete with our services then the licenses would be refused; if they did not compete with our services, then they could have a service of their own; they would not conflict with us. There is a case where the people got together and ran a converted lorry, with one trip in the morning and one back at night. We never interfere with what is laid down in the Act. See clause 17 of the Act of 1926.

But if any private individual proposes to do that you can refuse to allow him to do so, and he has no right of appeal. Is that reasonable?—Yes, sir. We have to protect some people against themselves. That is the whole trouble. Services have been started at the instigation of landowners to develop their land, never mind whether the service paid or not. People have been persuaded to settle in those outer districts, and once the landowners have sold their sections and got the people settled, then the responsibility of providing transport facilities is thrown on to the Board.

You will admit that the progress and prosperity of the individual in the community depends on the lines of communication?—Precisely.

If these people are on an outer margin, and you as an interested central organization decline to allow them to provide facilities to assist them in their daily life, again I ask you, how are they going to get on?—There is a lorry system, and if these people want to be served they can have their own transport.

You think they should be able to ask one of their number to provide a means of conveyance?—They could do that if they charged more than 2s. A country service would be more than 2s. under any jurisdiction, and they could run it on their own.

For 2s. they could run right through?—Certainly. In the whole of a certain area that I am conversant with the population averages only five people to the acre, and the district, which is as large as Glasgow, has not one-sixth of the population of that city.

JAMES ARTHUR FLESHER examined. (No. 15.)

*The Chairman.*] You are the Chairman of the Christchurch Tramway Board?—Yes.

Do you wish to make a statement?—Yes. The Christchurch Tramway Board was established in 1902, and I have been a member of it for twenty years, and four years Chairman, this being my second period as Chairman, so I speak in that capacity. This Transport Law Amendment Bill is opposed by my Board because it is against any change in the legislation which will place the trams under the control of a new Department which will act on the advice of an advisory committee; and