

ALBERT EDWARD JULL examined. (No. 16.)

*The Chairman.*] Who do you represent, Mr. Jull?—I represent the New Zealand Counties Association, of which I am President.

You are also a member of the Main Highways Board?—Yes.

What evidence do you wish to give?—The New Zealand Counties Association had a meeting yesterday, when they considered the clauses of the Transport Law Amendment Bill. There are certain portions of the Bill which the counties are not very much concerned about, therefore I will not deal with them—matters such as motor-omnibus districts, Transport Appeal Boards, tramway affairs, and so on—but I will endeavour to deal with the matters which the Counties Association is principally interested in. First of all, they have been working, of course, under the Main Highways Act for the past five or six years, and, naturally, the counties have become more or less acquainted with the Main Highways Board's administration, and they feel that they may be left under this Bill to embark upon what may be different methods of administration. I will now deal, in order, with the matters that the executive committee feels concerned about. Subclause (1) of clause 3 says: "There is hereby established a Department of State, to be called the Transport Department (hereinafter in this Part referred to as "the Department"), which, under the control of the Minister, shall be charged with the administration of the several Acts specified in the Schedule hereto, and with such other functions as may from time to time be lawfully conferred upon it." The executive committee would like to know what is the new control which the Minister is to exercise over the affairs of the Main Highways Board. Of course, there are other matters affected by the Bill which the Minister will, no doubt, require control of; and, if the Main Highways Board is to be under the control of the Minister, these words are differently used from what they are in the Main Highways Act now, and we would like to know whether it is the intention to vary the administrative control of the Main Highways Board's functions, and, if so, in what direction it is likely to be changed. For instance, if the Main Highways Board were to make an arrangement with a local authority for a contribution from the Highways Board's fund for a particular work, would that be a subject upon which the Minister would exercise control? Contrariwise, if the Board failed to make an arrangement with a local body which applied for, say, special consideration in regard to any work, and the Main Highways Board did not see its way to agree to that application, would the Minister under this provision be empowered to say that the Board must reverse its decision?

*Hon. Mr. Veitch:* Perhaps I can answer that straight away and clear up the point. The word "control" refers only to the Transport Department. The subclause puts the Minister of Transport in exactly the same position as the Minister of Public Works is in to-day, and the relation between the Government and the Main Highways Board will not be altered in any way by this Bill, but the Minister of Transport will be the Minister charged with the administration of the several Acts specified in the Schedule. The word "control" refers to the Transport Department and not the Highways Board.

*Witness:* Thank you; that disposes of that point. The next point is in subclause (2) of clause 8, which reads: "Where in any of the enactments mentioned in the Schedule hereto, or in any other enactment administered by the Transport Department, references are made to the Minister of Public Works or to any other Minister of the Crown, such references, in so far as they relate to the administration of any such enactment, shall hereafter be read as references to the Minister of Transport."

*Hon. Mr. Veitch:* The position is exactly the same there. That simply means that the relationship between the Crown and the Board is not altered, but the Minister of Transport will be the Minister responsible for the administration of the Act, instead of the Minister of Public Works.

*Witness:* In the Act itself we have a specific reference to the Minister of Finance, who may raise certain loans, and he fixes the rate of interest. For instance, we are allowed to charge local bodies on expenditure that is to be progressively repaid.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch:* There is no change there.

*Witness:* With regard to clause 12, which provides that no motor-vehicles are to be exempted from the payment of annual license fees after the 31st May, 1930, the Conference is quite in agreement with that provision, although individual counties take exception to their road-vehicles being made to pay, but the executive feels that it is a step in the right direction. Then I pass on to clause 26—"The Minister of Transport may disallow any local by-law relating to motor traffic on the ground that its subject-matter should be dealt with by provisions of general application." In this respect we know, as motorists, that a lot of irritating by-laws have been made, perhaps mostly by the smaller local authorities, which are irksome to motorists, and, in fact, in some cases have been shown to be unreasonable. So far as counties are concerned, which operate over a very large area, there has been evidence during the past few years of a desire to secure uniformity in the by-laws for whole groups, and only at this last meeting of the executive have we finalized a proposal whereby a complete set of by-laws, prepared by the counsel for the association, is to be prepared, and it is expected that a very large number of the counties in New Zealand will participate in the proposal to make their various by-laws uniform as far as possible. This clause seeks to place an embargo upon any progressive by-law only if it is of a character which might be made a by-law of general application. We think it would be more desirable if this clause were altered so that the general regulations would supersede anything. In fact, it may be beneficial to the Department to, as it were, "try it on the dog" permit local bodies in certain areas to frame by-laws and bring them into operation. If they were successful a general regulation could be made, and that could supersede the local by-law, which, of course, might be improved upon; but I think it would not be desirable that you should be able to preclude any improvement in the by-law administration by the local authorities.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch:* Perhaps I may say just a word here. Clause 26 provides, as it is intended to provide, that all matters of local interest or concern shall be left in the hands of the local bodies, and that the wider matters of national concern shall be under the control of the Minister of Transport, so as to get uniformity throughout the different districts. In making the regulations we would not think of doing that without first consulting the County Councils.