

goods, and in that way give the farmer cheaper transport without knocking the roads about—which is of immense importance to them—that point must be taken into consideration. The County Councils' convenience is not the only consideration—it is cheap transport for the farmer.

*Witness* : If you can do that by regulation, you can still leave the sections in the Act, which, after all, is a distinct statement to certain quarters that they must not use a type of vehicle in excess of certain weights. If you repeal it, it would be an indication to some importers to reintroduce such a type of heavier vehicle.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch* : They would not get a license to use them.

*Witness* : But the importers would not know till they got the vehicles in, because the regulations may change from time to time.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch* : But they will not import vehicles until they are certain they can use them.

*Witness* : The counties think it would be better protection if there were a statutory prohibition.

*Mr. Healy*.] You did not refer to the collection of drivers' licenses and heavy-traffic fees. My two counties oppose that strenuously?—The committee did discuss that matter, and they felt that, whatever machinery is proposed to centralize that, they would not object.

Two of my counties strongly opposed it, and I understand they wrote to your association?—We had a letter from the Marlborough and Awatere Counties, and they were considered, but the general opinion of the committee was that a centralized method of collection is not undesirable. There were local objections, but, on the whole, they thought it was a move in the right direction.

You say that the association agrees to the constitution of only one Board for the two Islands?—Yes; they are unanimous on the one Board.

That does not apply in my own district?—Awatere was one of the counties which did not agree. I think there were four in the South Island. In reply to a circular from the Counties Association, Awatere was one which considered two Boards were desirable.

That is the general opinion in my district?—That is possible.

Then you say, with regard to the distribution of the £150,000, that you are sure your counties will receive that with open arms. I presume you are referring to the backblocks?—I have tried to show that the backblocks would not get a yard of metal without that clause. No unmetalled road could be metalled, because that is construction, and this is maintenance.

*Mr. Ansell*.] What does your association think of the constitution of the Transport Advisory Council?—The constitution is not set out. We know the present constitution, and we have heard that it is likely to comprise a Railway man, and a Farmers' Union man.

That was foreshadowed in the Budget?—I am afraid I did not know that, but our members inform me that is the position, and, as it is an advisory body, our members felt that if what was stated was done it would make for improvement.

In regard to the administration of the Highways Board under the Public Works Act, are the counties satisfied with the administration?—We have an assurance from the Minister it is not proposed to divorce the administration from the Public Works Department; and, of course, the only part of the administration which the counties are in touch with are the District Engineers, who will, I understand, be retained in the administrative work.

But the present administration is quite satisfactory?—I think it can be said to be quite satisfactory; but it is not proposed to change it.

Would you suggest that there would be an improvement in administration from the Counties' point of view if a transfer is made to the Minister of Transport?—If the phases which I stated in giving my evidence are taken into consideration with regard to the Public Works Engineers, then, so far as the counties are concerned, I do not think it will make any difference as to what particular Minister happens to be administering it.

Would you consider there would be a possible duplication of Departments, with the corresponding increase in expense?—If it did, then I think it would be detrimental. I do not think the country could stand two big Departments administering the same thing. The only answer is that Mr. Veitch says it is not contemplated.

Did your association consider the administrative costs of the proposal involved?—The association did not go into that question. Of course, we recognized that most of these things involved some additional cost, but we expressed ourselves generally that the administration in conjunction with the Public Works Department was working quite satisfactorily.

In connection with clause 12, relating to exemption of vehicles, some of the city authorities are taking exception to that. Do the counties agree that all vehicles should be taxed? The position has been put forward by the city representatives that their own vehicles which are engaged in roadmaking should be exempt. Have you dealt with that aspect?—We did go into the matter. The largest proportion of heavy-traffic fees is at present going to boroughs and cities, and therefore the counties will not get back an amount equal to what they pay if the same disproportion exists when the transport people have finished with their regulations for distribution. Several counties have raised the question as to the iniquity of charging them for vehicles engaged entirely in road-construction. My personal view is that vehicles that are engaged entirely on road-construction work should be exempt. That is my own opinion; but the executive went into the matter, and they do not wish to be pernickety in objecting to every little matter.

With regard to the constitution of the Highways Board as proposed under the Act, you are not in favour of that, I presume?—The executive are entirely unanimous that the proposed constitution is not likely to be beneficial, and they do not think it is desirable, nor have they seen any good reasons for bringing it about.

In view of the fact that this suggested alteration is, I understand, a compromise with the South Island so as to give that Island a representative on the Board, how would you suggest the difficulty should be