

services through our district in particular are worse than they have ever been—that is, from the terminus of the tram routes outward. There has been no improvement; in fact, they are worse. The buses are worse, the service is less frequent, and fares are higher. The control is substantially the same, owing to the fact that six members of the Board are nominated by the Auckland City Council, the same as before. The loss is going on the same as before, and the service is bad. We claim that the Auckland Transport Board Act should be amended further than is suggested in the Bill, and that an elective Board should be provided for, taking in the transport area. Then if the same Board goes back it is our funeral. Dealing with the Bill, clause 5, we understand, provides for the licensing-power being taken away from the Transport Board. We agree with that. We disagree with the principle of an operating authority having power to license themselves or any one else. I will now briefly outline the comment made by a meeting of the Mount Eden Borough Council specially called to consider the Bill. First of all, I want to say that, as a general principle, they entirely approve of the setting-up of the Department, transport being the first thing necessary for every industry in the Dominion. With regard to the advisory committee, district licensing authorities, the central Appeal Board, and the Highways Board, I will take them as a whole. In each case it is substantially provided in this Bill that the Minister of Transport, or Governor-General in Council, may make an appointment or have the power of veto, nominations being made by various interests concerned outside the Department. We think that will not work, and cannot work for efficiency and satisfaction throughout the Dominion in boroughs and towns; and we are of opinion that the interests represented on licensing committees should be directly appointed by the various interests concerned—Borough Councils, motor owners, and the like. We should get away from the nominating principle to direct appointments by the interests concerned. Clause 16 provides that motor-drivers' licenses and heavy-traffic fees should be collected by the Post Office and be subject to a collection charge. We wish to put forward an objection to that, for this reason: that, taking our own borough for example, and others known to us, we have set up machinery for control of traffic within our own particular district. That makes it necessary to engage Traffic Inspectors or pay the police to undertake the duties. The Traffic Inspectors having been engaged, the collection of these fees is a minor item in their duties, and in collecting the fees they earn a very substantial amount of their salary, which makes a difference of £70 to £75 per year to the Mount Eden Borough revenue. We suggest it might have a similar effect on other boroughs. We therefore object to that clause as it stands at present, and suggest an amendment. With regard to the heavy-traffic fees, we have heard it suggested that possibly regulations will appear under this Act dealing with the amount levied on heavy traffic, and possibly dealing with the petrol-tax. We think the heavy-traffic fees as they now stand are not too big compared with other forms of transport taxation, for the reason that damage is done by weight as well as by volume. We have had that experience. Therefore, motor-lorries should pay both heavy-traffic fees and the petrol-tax. We are not satisfied with the allocation of the petrol-tax; not that we claim any particular further advantage in a borough of the size of Mount Eden, but smaller districts we consider are not fairly treated. The subject should be further investigated, and dealt with by regulation. Clause 26 gives the Department power of veto over by-laws. It is difficult to suggest amendment. We do not agree with the clause as it stands. We say that it is impossible for a Department to keep in touch with all the requirements of a local district on a question of by-laws, and that further consideration should be given to clause 26 with a view to modification. Clause 38 provides for preference being given to the Minister of Railways or a local authority in applications for license for transport. We are of opinion that preference should be eliminated, for this reason: that transport of passengers and goods being the first essential to the success of any industry, if a local authority or the Minister of Railways cannot give an efficient service they should stand on an even basis with others—there should be no statutory preference. That is the unanimous opinion of my Borough Council. If any particular line of railway cannot pay on a fair basis with any other transport undertaking, we say that that railway, in the interests of the Dominion, must go. Clause 54 deals with the power to grant up to £150,000, to be vested in the Highways Board, in respect of streets or roads not being main highways. We are of opinion that that clause should be either eliminated altogether or a definite method of allocation provided, because if the authority rests with the Highways Board it resolves itself into a question of which district pulls the hardest, and the one that does pull the hardest will get the funds. It is a dangerous clause, in our opinion.

*Mr. Harris.* With regard to the power of veto in clause 28, is it not your experience that at times local authorities are apt to frame very harassing by-laws, which do more harm than good, and that for that reason it becomes necessary for some check to be instituted? Certain local bodies, say, frame a by-law that drivers must not exceed twenty-five miles an hour on concrete roads, when everybody knows that that by-law will not be carried out. Should there not be some power of veto?—We recognize that there should be power of veto where a by-law is likely to interfere with through traffic; but we are concerned with schools and streets where there is heavy cross-traffic, and we are afraid that the power of veto might interfere with the control of that traffic, to the danger of children.

But you do not suggest the power of veto would be arbitrarily applied, do you?—No; but we suggest it would be impossible for a central authority to control it.

You know that the harbour by-laws have to be approved by the Minister, and that he retains the right of veto?—Yes.

Have you any objection to that?—We can only give you our opinion, that centralization in these matters is not in the general interest.

Will you explain why you object to the preference clause in No. 38?—Take a concrete case. From Mount Eden right away to Waikowhai—about four miles—now being run as a service by the Transport Board and admittedly losing money: inefficient service; no satisfaction; no comfort; most infrequent service: better without it. Why let the Auckland Transport Board have the right to refuse an application for license by an outside body? Why should the Board get preference?