

Will you please try and dissociate yourself from the membership of your executive and regard the matter purely from the standpoint of a County Council representative in the point I am going to put to you now. With regard to clause 54, which provides that a subsidy may be granted up to 25 per cent. for maintenance of roads, how would the county of which you are a member view that proposal?—I do not know that we would apply that way, because we have always received our proper quota from the Public Works Department when we have made application to them.

Do you think it would be better to leave the granting of funds as it is at present?—I certainly do.

*The Chairman.*] And if you thought it was necessary for some money to be granted in that way you would prefer to have the Public Works Department supplied with a greater amount of funds for that allocation?—Most decidedly, or only having the money spent on the main or subsidiary roads.

By increasing the number of subsidiary highways?—That is so; but I would prefer to have it through the Public Works Department.

WEDNESDAY, 16TH OCTOBER, 1929.

HENRY JAMES KNIGHT examined. (No. 20.)

*The Chairman.*] Whom do you represent, Mr. Knight?—I am representing the White Star Tourist Services, Ltd.; and I may say that Mr. Gallagher, secretary of the Aard Association, has also asked me to make representations on behalf of that organization conjointly with our own. Their ideas on this matter are exactly the same as ours. I have here a map which will show briefly the routes throughout New Zealand on which members of both our organizations operate. This map shows just the White Star routes, and you might say that the Aard Association runs over the same routes, so that we cover practically the whole of New Zealand. The number of members of our association is approximately sixty, and Aard is about the same, making a total of approximately one hundred and twenty, and the number of cars of the two organizations is one thousand four hundred. We cover between us approximately fourteen million miles per annum, and the number of passengers carried is approximately four millions, while the number of employees of both organizations is about two thousand eight hundred.

That is for the two bodies?—Yes.

*Mr. Williams.*] The Aard embraces the Duco, does it not?—Yes. At the annual meeting of the White Star Tourist Services held in Dunedin at the end of September the following resolution was passed, which I would like to read: "The annual general meeting of members of the White Star Tourist Services, Ltd., expresses its appreciation of the Government's action in grappling the problems affecting motor transport in the Dominion, and approves of the setting up of a Ministry of Transport, and particularly of the proposals embodied in the Transport Law Amendment Bill, the chief of which, the licensing of all passenger transport motor services, is regarded by the organization as the only satisfactory solution of existing difficulties." I take it that the Aard Association endorses that, although they have not had an opportunity of meeting since the Bill was placed before the House. I will not waste any time in dealing with the relationship of transport to the public welfare, you gentlemen are probably better aware of it than I am; but it is well known that good highways and good methods of transport are essential to the welfare of the community, and two of the greatest factors are the safety of the travelling public and service. We say that there is a great necessity for legislation on the lines of this Bill, which is based on exactly the same lines as the Motor-omnibus Traffic Act of 1926; and I would like to draw attention to the fact that that Act was passed at the instigation of the Municipal Associations of New Zealand to protect municipally-operated enterprises, such as tramway concerns and bus services—in other words, the public money controlled by the local bodies. This Bill, we say, is exactly on the same lines, and service proprietors have for some years passed been asking for legislation on those lines. Mr. Williams would remember that we approached him on several occasions when he was Minister of Public Works, and I think we had his sympathy at that time and hope we still have it. Dealing with the Bill, it has ten Parts. The whole are tending towards uniformity, and planned to ultimately prevent overlapping and establish a single control throughout. The idea of the Transport Department is only temporarily dealt with in the present Bill, but the ultimate idea is to bring in one Act covering motor transport and all that it affects, and at a later stage wipe out the several Acts, which are now more or less conflicting, and embody them all under one control. I will just run over the various Parts of the Bill which, generally speaking, are not contentious. Part I, setting up the Department, is, of course, essential. Part II, abolishing all exemptions from the payment of license fees, is quite as it should be. If license fees are to be paid, they should be paid by every vehicle of the type. I will not deal with Part III at the moment. Part IV provides that goods services are to be regulated, and I think the Master Carriers' Association realize the necessity for regulating goods services in the same way as passenger services. Part V deals mainly with Auckland and Christchurch transport, but principally with Auckland, to bring that district into line with other parts of New Zealand. That is necessary if we are to have a national scheme. I will deal with Part VI later. Part VII deals with motor-spirits taxation. It has been held that that is a sop to the oil companies. We hold no brief for them, and we think the trade is firmly enough established, especially with 4d. a gallon tax on it. The amendment aims, of course, at taxation on spirits locally manufactured. It is a tax on the use of the roads, and should be made.

*The Chairman.*] Have you gone into the cost of production of spirit in this country at all?—No. We are simply dealing with the road proposition. It is a tax on the use of the road, and we agree