

them representation on the Board. The main objection that local bodies appear to have to these clauses is the loss of power. They say they are losing power, that their rights are being filched away by this legislation. We say the time has arrived when it should be. The Department of Transport is to control transport, and this is a thing it can handle. If this Bill is cut about and the system of licensing comes out, then there is no need for a Transport Department at all. It is necessary, if we are to have a national scheme, that these matters should be handled by a Government Department—the Transport Department. We have now Dominion registrations, Dominion licenses, and Dominion regulations, and any new legislation should be on those lines. The collection of the heavy-traffic fees by the Transport Department, through the Post Office, is objected to by the local bodies. At the present time we know of cases where the local bodies are not getting the fees they should be getting. There are plenty of people throughout New Zealand who are evading the payment of heavy-traffic fees, and we say that if the Department collects them it will get more money than is being collected at present. The machinery will be that before any man can operate a service car he will have to pay all the fees payable. He will get a special license plate, and the whole thing will be done in one operation through the Post Office in lieu of the many operations necessary at the present time. The possession of that special plate will show that all license fees have been paid, and the money will then be allotted, less the small fee for collection (which will probably be less than at present), and eventually more money will be available than at present. The local bodies themselves are the worst offenders now in the matter of heavy-traffic fees. There are Councils in New Zealand which pay no heavy-traffic fees. The Wellington City Council, I think, pays none, because it pays itself, and New Plymouth pays none. Those are only two instances, and no doubt these municipalities will object later on because they will have to pay in a cheque like every one else to the Post Office. We see no reason why they should object, and we say that to put every one on the same footing is the correct method. I would just like to quote one or two instances of local-body control which we object to, where it is overlapping and lacks uniformity. Here is one, a report of which appeared on the 7th October, where Mr. Justice Ostler quashed a Hamilton Borough by-law. A case was taken against a service proprietor for the examination of his bus. It was found that Hamilton had no jurisdiction over that case at all, and yet the man had to go to the expense of defending it, and it probably cost him a good deal before it was found out that Hamilton had no jurisdiction. Under this Bill they would have jurisdiction. Here is another case, in Timaru: The Timaru Borough Council is taking action against one of our members who trades into Timaru because, it says, he has not paid his heavy-traffic fees. They have been paid in Dunedin. Then they took another case against him because he had not taken two vehicles that plied for hire to be examined. The Timaru Council has no right to take this action, and it will find itself in the same position as Hamilton has found itself. The local bodies do not know where they are getting to, and we say the powers the local bodies have are not exercised uniformly. Take the heavy-traffic license fees before they were paid quarterly, as at present: Some local bodies required the twelve months' fee in advance, others were satisfied with six months, and some with three, while some were good enough to let the whole twelve months go and collect the fee afterwards. We say that is not right, and that matters should be uniform. Those are some of the objections we have, and we say the Transport Department will co-ordinate everything and collect the fees in one operation through the Post Office, thus doing away with the pinpricking attendant on the present system.

*The Chairman.*] Do you think that the whole twelve months' fee should be paid when the heavy-traffic license is taken out?—Decidedly not. We object, of course, to the heavy-traffic license. We say it is not a fair tax so far as motor transport is concerned. One man may pay a heavy-traffic fee and use a car for a hundred thousand miles a year, while another man may only get a little use out of his car. Finally, we say in this matter that it is the duty of the Government to legislate in the public interest. You are hearing evidence from various branches of the industry, and the public are not represented at all, except by yourselves, and we say it is your duty to legislate in the public interest—first, for the public safety; secondly, for their service; and, thirdly, to avoid unnecessary economic waste. There is no doubt the time is overripe for the control of this uneconomic competition, and, broadly speaking, there are only two alternatives—to remove all restrictions, wipe out the Motor-omnibus Act altogether, and allow a policy of “free for all,” or to adopt some reasonable control, which we say this Bill covers, and place the business on a sound footing. I would just like to say that there is no special privilege for private enterprise in this Bill whatever, and every time we have met the Railway Department on this matter it has expressed its approval of some form of licensing, and I take it that the Department is still of that opinion. That, sir, covers the whole of my case. This Bill is the result of expert consideration by representatives of all branches of the industry, and we say delay would be dangerous. The legislation should be put through now. The Transport Department and the machinery provided with it are the logical solution of the position, and I trust the Committee will use every effort to have the Bill passed this session.

*Mr. Williams.*] With regard to Part VI of the Bill, which deals with the proposed new Main Highways Board, subclause (3) of clause 51 provides that the members of the Board who belong to the North Island shall not deal with South Island expenditure, and *vice versa*. Assuming that the Board is composed as suggested in this Bill, do you think it is in the best interests of New Zealand that the South Island should not know what is going on in the North Island, and *vice versa*, so far as the continuity of roading and control goes?—They would know, but I take it the provision here is that they would not be voting on capital expenditure from revenue other than their own.

But do you think it wise to break the continuity of policy between the two Islands? Your firms operate practically from the Bluff to the North Cape, and I take it that you want the same policy of roading and management from one end of the country to the other, independent of Islands?—Yes. We claim that everything should be on a national basis, eliminating different systems or types of control.