

*Hon. Mr. Veitch.*] We can take it that your contention is that, if heavy-traffic fees are to be charged all heavy cars should pay, whether privately or commercially employed?—We first base our case on the fact that it is unfair, and would like to see it removed; but as a last resource, if the revenue is essential and it cannot be removed, we say it should be graded and cover all cars of a certain weight, and not only cars plying for hire.

*The Chairman.*] Are you aware that some main highways are classed as No. 5 highways?—Yes.

Would you be of opinion that no main highway should be classed less than No. 3, or a subsidiary highway less than No. 4?—Would you consider that reasonable?—In the national interest the main highways should be brought up to as high a standard as possible.

You consider, then, No. 3 is not too high?—I just forget what No. 3 is, but I think they should be brought up to that.

I want you to consider that question carefully, because it is a very important one?—The reason I would say “yes” is because it is in the national interest, and one must subordinate any local feeling in a matter of that sort. The Mamaku Bush Road, for instance, is a national highway, and should be brought up to the national standard in the interests of the whole of the country.

HENRY JAMES KNIGHT recalled.

*Mr. Sullivan.*] Could you, Mr. Knight, elucidate the question I put with reference to the transport advisory committees and the number of appeals in Christchurch?—I would not swear to the exact number, but since the inauguration of the Act in 1926 there have been, roughly, twenty appeals brought before the Transport Appeal Board, which is the final and determining authority, and is only one case has the appeal been disallowed as against the interest of the private owner.

Do you mean the Christchurch Transport Appeal Board?—Yes, No. 10 District. The first appeal, so far as I remember, was against the licensing authority by the private owner to obtain a license at all, and that was reversed by the Transport Appeal Board. Then there have been appeals in respect of fares, and the addition of extra buses, and on various points relevant to the running of services. And the main reason for it, I think, is the lack of knowledge of the Council. They have simply left well alone, and it has been necessary for the private owner to come to the Appeal Board to get his extra buses.

Then, the position is that the great bulk of these appeals have not had any relation to the granting or refusal to grant licenses, but to matters which I might term minor matters—relating to fares and such things?—Yes, the bulk of them are of that description.

WALTER SYDNEY BUSSELL examined. (No. 21.)

*The Chairman.*] Whom do you represent, Mr. Bussell?—I represent the omnibus-proprietors of No. 10 Licensing District, Canterbury. These omnibus-proprietors are owners of forty buses, of a capital value of approximately £45,000, and the taxes paid by them are approximately £5,000 per annum. I think, when you realize these figures and the money involved, we should have some say in the legislation that is passed.

That would be the direct taxes?—Yes, on buses carrying twenty-five passengers each—insurance, petrol-tax, heavy-traffic fees, and licensing fees. The tax paid on a single bus running regularly on the road, including petrol-tax, is approximately £212 per annum; the tire-tax is omitted. One of the things that Mr. Knight has touched on has been a thorn in the side of every omnibus-owner ever since the petrol-tax came in. We recognize that that tax is a fair one to every one—a person using the road is paying for it; but we do claim that the heavy-traffic fee of £2 per seat per annum, less 15 per cent., is nothing more or less than a class tax on heavy-traffic vehicles. I cannot agree, however, with what he said, that the light car does not do as much damage to the road as the heavy vehicle. It depends entirely on how the vehicle is shod. An example of that is to be found in the Heathcote County, where the County Council was tar-sealing a piece of road. The County Engineer left a piece bare, and told us to keep our buses off it. The light cars ran over it and swept that piece of road bare down to where it was scarified, while all the week buses were being carried over that road, and, as far as could be seen, they had consolidated the work. The buses do not do as much harm as the light cars travelling fast, provided they are properly shod. The weight of an ordinary seven-seater Hudson on its tires is greater per pound per inch of road-surface covered than an ordinary twenty-five-passenger bus, the way it is shod. Then, there is the great difference in speed at which the machines travel. Fast light traffic does more harm to a road than heavy traffic at a lower rate of speed, provided the heavier vehicles are properly shod. Of course, I am referring all the time to pneumatic tires. We understood that when the legislation was passed there would be a reduction in, if not a complete withdrawal of, the heavy-traffic fees, and on those grounds, I believe, every one supported the petrol-tax. The gentlemen I represent unanimously support the present Bill in its entirety. We consider that licenses in the past have not been properly dealt with. With all due respect to City Councillors and Borough Councillors, they may be skilled as Councillors, but when it comes to a question of passenger transport and motor business generally they have not sufficient knowledge, and a licensing Board, as suggested in this Bill, are the only fit and proper persons to grant licenses. I could quote from our own experience the actions of the Christchurch City Council. Their vote on these licensing questions is generally a party vote. I think there have been approximately twenty appeals arising from the decisions of the Christchurch City Council, acting as a licensing authority, by the firm I personally belong to, and nineteen have been upheld by the Transport Appeal Board, which shows quite clearly the necessity for a separate body as a licensing authority. Going further,