

our local body which controls the passenger-carrying business is the Christchurch Tramway Board, who cater for work right outside the tramway area, which we consider is not a fair proposition. The people have to pay for this tramway undertaking, and if the Tramway Board runs at a loss outside its area the people have to pay. As an instance, there was a special job: the railway return fare was 9s. 8d.; the Tramway Board took twenty people return for £4. As another instance, quite recently they took forty-five people in one bus to Rangiora for 1s. 8d. each; the railway fare is 3s. Things like that the Tramway Board can do, and the local authority apparently does not care how much is lost so long as the other fellow is done out of the job. To the best of my knowledge, every service that is being run by a local body under this Motor-omnibus Act is being run at a loss; and this was the Act they got put through for themselves. My company was burnt out in 1926, and we practically, as you commonly put it, "went through the mill." However, we faced our losses. We had only one bus left from the fire, and to-day—three years later—we have four buses running. That looks as if private enterprise, under similar conditions, can do handsomely where a public body runs at a loss. The route which we run over is rather unique in New Zealand. There is partly competition with the Tramway Board, and it is a route through a district to which the Board would not give a service. We gave it and to-day we have four buses, and at times it is all we can do to cope with the traffic. There are instances where the Tramway Board has sublet its license to a contractor and subsidized that contractor out of the Tramway Fund to run a service which they cannot make pay. There is a case out at Templeton, where a bus is run four miles from Templeton to Sockburn, and a fare of 9d. is charged; then the passengers have to change to a tram, and are charged 6d. to the city—a total distance of nine miles for 1s. 3d.; and it takes approximately an hour to do the trip. A bus could do the whole journey in twenty-five minutes, at a fare of 1s. 6d. return, instead of 2s. 6d. I do not know whether the Tramway Board is absolutely within its rights in subletting these runs. However, this particular service was carried out before by private enterprise; but when the 1926 Act came into operation the owner could not get a license and had to sell to the tramway, with the result I have stated, which shows plainly that this Bill is wanted. I understand that you have had local bodies before you who are very much damning this Bill, and yet they had representatives on this Transport Board who agreed unanimously to the Bill as drafted. I think it shows very little trust on their part in their representatives on that Board. We had representatives there also, and I assure you that every private man is quite satisfied with the Bill as drafted. We are here to support it, and to ask that this Committee recommend it to be put through the House as it is. Registrations are nationalized to-day, and most of the fees, and we think the time has come when licenses should be a national affair to control in the same way as other matters are now controlled.

*Mr. Ansell.*] With reference to your statement in regard to damage, did I understand you to say that the light car will do as much damage as the heavy bus?—On a macadam road, yes; and in that respect I was only giving you the experience of the Heathcote County Engineer on that particular road.

Engineering opinion, as a rule, is this: that a light car will damage the surface, but heavy traffic will shatter the foundation. Have you any idea whether that is correct?—That would depend entirely on the heavy traffic. I am speaking entirely of buses. The light fast car does more damage and throws more stuff out of the road than a slower bus which is shod properly.

What would be the laden weight of your buses, approximately?—Five tons.

Do you agree that in some cases the heavy weight would shatter the foundation?—On solid tires, certainly.

Take your ordinary buses?—No, not to the extent it is claimed they do. I admit that on a pot-hole road the foundation must to a certain extent get shattered more by a heavy machine than by a light one.

You say that services are, and can be, carried out profitably by private enterprise where local bodies make a loss. Could you give the Committee an indication of the important factors that bring about that position?—No; I have not been connected with any local body, and it has always been a great puzzle to me. They have a monopoly and choose their routes. Whether they are over-staffed or not I cannot say, but our men work under a more strict award than theirs. It is scarcely courteous to say so, but it certainly looks like mismanagement—a lot of overloading and over-staffing.

It is rather an important question, and I would like to get something more definite?—I am afraid I cannot help you much in that respect. However, they should be able to explain the position. Every return they bring out shows a loss—a frightful loss.

To get down to tin tacks: do you consider that private enterprise could carry on a run successfully from a financial point of view, and that a local body would necessarily make a loss, because of the conditions under which they run?—On roads that I have in mind I am absolutely certain it would.

*Mr. Harris.*] What is your experience of the way in which the Christchurch City Council has carried out its duties as a licensing authority? Has it been fair and equitable?—I can only say, as I said before, that we have appealed against their decisions many times, and our appeals have been upheld by the Transport Appeal Board. With all due respect to them, they would vote as labour against citizens if a labour party were in power. Nothing else controls it. These men are good Councillors, but they do not seem to know what is necessary in the interests of the travelling public. It is the great big public that is getting hit. You gentlemen represent the public, and it seems to me they are not getting what they ask for. They ask for a certain thing, but it is denied them. For instance, the people from Templeton do not want to ride in a bus and then a tram at a fare of 1s. 3d., and take an hour over the journey when a bus would carry them for 9d. in twenty-five