

minutes. But they are compelled to do it. Why? They must ride in the bus and tram or take the train, and why should those people not have the right to go with a private man who can run through in twenty-five minutes? We are living to-day with our transport up-to-date, and the people want to live with the times, and yet the public bodies are inclined to force them to be antiquated. If a vote were taken of the public it would be found that they were unanimous in asking for what we are asking for to-day—a through and up-to-date service when they can get it.

On general principle, do you think it right that owners of public transport services should have the sole right to a license, and that licenses should be refused to opposition firms?—Absolutely, no. It would be like a man sitting in judgment on his own law case.

Generally speaking, you have found the operations of the Motor-omnibus Traffic Act, particularly that part dealing with the licensing of motor services, as being unsatisfactory?—Yes. The 1926 Act has been a sore point with private enterprise all over the country.

*Mr. Murdoch.*] How do your fares compare with the tramway fares?—We are compelled, where we touch the tram routes, to charge 2d. more than the tram does. The Motor-omnibus Traffic Act of 1926 compels that.

That does not apply to a through service?—Yes, I am afraid it does if we touch a tram route; but it only applies to passengers picked up and put down within the tram limits.

You can pick up and set down on the route you have without extra charge?—Yes, where we do not touch the tram route.

The Christchurch tramway witness when he was here stated that that undertaking showed a profit. Do you know whether that is correct?—I must say it is incorrect, according to their printed reports in the newspaper.

Do you support the principle of separate Highways Boards for the two Islands?—Yes, we do. I certainly do.

*Mr. Sullivan.*] To put it mildly, I am astounded at your statements in regard to the Christchurch City Council acting as a licensing authority. How many times have you appealed from the Christchurch authority to the Transport Appeal Board?—I am quoting from what Mr. Knight told me—something like nineteen or twenty appeals.

How often has the Transport Appeal Board turned down the licensing authority?—We won nineteen out of twenty appeals.

I think there must be something wrong with your figures?—There may be, but I know that we only lost one appeal.

I have not the details here, but I certainly had in mind that the Transport Appeal Board had turned down the decisions of the licensing authority only twice. I am referring, of course, to the city and inter-city traffic. On the whole, have you not had a square deal from the Christchurch City Council?—Yes, on the whole; but I know we have been held up at times for as long as three months, and that has held up business. I must say, however, that you and certain members have always supported us, but there was a faction that would not give the private enterprise a chance at any price. There are members of that party who would not let private enterprise in Christchurch get anything if they could stop it.

Is it not a fact that, so far as your own appeals from the licensing authority to the Transport Appeal Board are concerned, only on two occasions has a decision of the Transport Appeal Board been against the licensing authority?—No; there have been more than that. A lot of these appeals have been for fares against the Christchurch Tramways Board, and *vice versa*.

So far as the Transport Appeal Board is concerned, have you had a fair deal from them?—We can take no exception; they have been absolutely fair. I do not think you could get a fairer tribunal. There are five men on it—two representatives of the Government, one of the Christchurch Tramway Board, one of the City Council, and one representing bus-owners, and every decision except the last one has been unanimous.

Taking the present machinery as a whole—the licensing authority as constituted, plus the Transport Appeal Board—the general result has been satisfactory from your point of view: at least, you have had fair consideration and fair decisions?—Yes; we have been upheld by the Transport Appeal Board in a way in which we would never have been upheld had the licensing authority been a Board such as is contemplated in this Bill—going from the 31st May to the end of October before we would know where we were. Decisions have been held up in a way in which they would not have been held up by a body of experts. If the Council had been composed of nine men, probably it would have been the same.

In connection with the evidence you have given as to why private-enterprise buses succeed and public-enterprise buses fail, Mr. Ansell asked you whether you could give an explanation. Mr. Ansell asked this question: It is repeatedly alleged that you people do not make adequate provision for depreciation. Is there anything in that? We depreciate our machines double what the Tramway Board does. They reduce 12½ per cent.; we reduce 25 per cent.; and anybody who knows the business knows it must be done. We run better buses and give a better service than they do. We keep our machines absolutely up to date.

Taking the private omnibuses as a whole, do you think that what you have stated in regard to your own provisions would apply generally? For instance, the General Manager of Railways, in his report to the Government in the annual Railways Statement, raises the question also, and questions whether adequate provision is made for depreciation?—The concerns that I know of do make adequate provisions. Of course, there may be one or two who do not.

Do the whole of the motor-omnibus services approve of this Bill?—All that I have discussed it with and to whom we have written approve of it.

Is it in accordance with representations you have made?—Yes, in accordance with the representations I have made and they have made to me.