

*The Chairman.*] You mean the counties are getting it?—Yes, and the General Fund of the counties would be greater in consequence.

*Mr. Harris.*] I want to draw a distinction between the secondary roads and the backblocks roads. Is it not reasonable that backblocks roads should get some benefit from the petrol-tax?—My previous remark went to show that they do get an indirect benefit. I do not think anything more should be expected.

How do you suggest that the backblocks are getting some benefit?—By the fact that the general funds of the county are being saved the amount which we are now contributing towards the secondary roads.

*Mr. Healy.*] It is going on to the main roads?—No, it is a general saving to the county.

*Mr. Harris.*] Does not this clause merely give permission to the Highways Board, at its discretion, to allocate a portion of its funds to roads which to-day are not receiving any benefit whatever?—That is so.

And you do not think this desirable?—I do not think so, seeing the situation the Highways Board is in.

Your contention is that they should deal only with main highways?—Yes.

It has been suggested that the commercial interests have a right to direct representation on the Board?—I can only refer to the statements made by previous witness and say that I agree with them—that the representatives of the motor unions, who include in their membership large numbers of heavy-traffic people, are the best people to represent the views of the motor-owners on the Highways Board, than a section of those owners, who are only specially interested in the heavy-traffic side.

How would you view a suggestion that one representative should be appointed on the recommendation of the private-car owners, and one on the recommendation of the commercial-vehicle owners, rather than two from the motoring class generally?—I do not think it would be acceptable. It would leave the representation in the one class purely sectional.

*Mr. Sullivan.*] What objection is there to giving heavy-traffic people representation?—On the ground that their interest will be purely sectional, whereas the motor unions representative, representing as he does both the heavy and light vehicles, would look after the interests of motorists generally.

Do they suffer through not having special representation, or is there some interest of their own which would secure benefit if it were specially represented?—I do not think so. I personally look upon myself as representing them, and on many occasions they have consulted me in connection with various matters, and I always bring their representations forward and further them as much as possible so long as they are in the interests of motorists generally.

Have they expressed any dissatisfaction with any decisions arrived at?—Not to me.

*Mr. Broadfoot.*] Reverting to the question of the co-ordination of the Highways Board and the Public Works Department, you say you think it desirable that some of the higher officials from the Public Works Department should have a seat on that Board?—Yes.

Do you not think there is a limit to the number of Boards that departmental men can sit on and at the same time carry on their ordinary business?—You mean a physical limit?

Yes?—Possibly there is; but we have not found any difficulty in the Highways Board.

But you will admit that there is a physical limit?—Yes.

And there is a possibility of a danger-point being reached by overloading?—There may be, but, as I say, from the Main Highways Board standpoint we have found that the Government officials were able to do their work quite well.

Do you agree that it is a dangerous thing to dissipate a man's energies too widely, instead of concentrating on fewer jobs?—It depends on the individual.

I am dealing with the average individual?—It still depends on the individual.

With regard to the backblock roads, there is a controversy, I think, between one of the counties in my district—the Waitomo County—and the Highways Board, which is being wrangled out now?—Yes.

Are you prepared to admit that the traffic as going on to-day is costing the counties a great deal more than it used to, and that moneys which used to be expended on the back roads are being used to maintain the highways?—They allege that.

That funds are being wrongfully diverted?—My reply to that is that we have to take things generally, and the indications are that since the Main Highways Board came into existence the contributions by the local bodies towards the main highways has remained practically stationary. The increased cost of maintenance of main highways has been borne by the constantly increasing subsidies which the Board has been paying in lieu of, as was the case when the Act was first passed, a subsidy of 10s. in the £1, and later £1 for £1, and later still, £1 10s. for £1, and now £2 for £1.

But there may be specific instances where it has worked otherwise?—We are prepared to deal with those cases.

With regard to the motorists getting more representation, I would like to ask, who are the motorists?—The motor-users.

What about the consuming public being served by all these transport services. They may own cars or they may not, but they use the motor transport for their goods. I include that section among the consuming public. Surely they should get representation before the motorists get a second representative?—They have representation, in a sense, as the general body politic.

Do you not think they are entitled to a wider representation?—I do not think so.

*The Chairman.*] With reference to clause 54, I assume you will admit that there is a proportion of the petrol-tax revenue earned on rough outlying roads which do not come under the ordinary expenditure?—Yes; a very small amount, though.