

I received a telegram yesterday which I would like to read, for the reason that it shows how unreasonable some of these licensing authorities can be. The position is that, I think, it was in this year, or perhaps late last year, that the Auckland Transport Board decided to abandon the bus services to New Lynn and to grant a license to a private company. They decided to abandon on the 31st March this year. They did not give much time for any one else to form a company, to secure the necessary buses and to establish a service. However, the Auckland Bus Co. went to the Transport Board and made arrangements to get some buses which they had taken over under the Motor-omnibus Act from one of the companies, and started this service under circumstances which, as you will see, inevitably meant difficulties. Now, this is what happened: The Auckland Bus Co. has ordered other buses, which will be arriving in the country soon, but this is the telegram I got yesterday from the Town Clerk of New Lynn:—

“Bus Company’s license to carry standing passengers withdrawn after Public Works inspection. This robs capacity by one-third as result inability pick [up] traffic. If restriction withheld further six weeks new rolling-stock then available probably able handle situation. Bus Company applying. Interview Ransom Saturday here. Present fleet operating under said restriction. Cannot handle peak loads even running intensive service. Can you see Minister Public Works?—TOWN CLERK.”

It seems to me strange that those buses, which have been carrying on satisfactorily for some months—that is, before necessary additions are made—should be prevented from carrying the people. The buses were sold by the Auckland Transport Board some time in January and continued to operate under inspection from then till now, and to say that they are not fit to handle the traffic now seems to me unreasonable.

*Mr. Ansell:* It would depend on the condition of the buses.

*Witness:* The buses were inspected when they were bought, and they have been inspected since several times, and they are only asking to be permitted to operate them for another six weeks, but they are informed they cannot do it. It does not seem reasonable.

*The Chairman:* The only justification for refusal would be if they were dangerous.

*Witness:* That will be the suggestion, of course. I think another effect of the Bill will be a large increase in the number of private motor-cars on the road. I know cases in New Lynn when the bus services were interfered with and the owners were told they would have to observe certain regulations which meant that they could not operate over the same field as before. The result was that the people who had been using the services bought private cars. And I think the effect of this Bill will have a similar effect—if the people cannot get the proper service they will buy cars for themselves. The people will not be dictated to: if they cannot get the facilities, they will get cars for themselves.

*Mr. Mason.]* When the regulations are made sufficiently irritating?—Yes.

*Mr. Harris.]* You think that would not be in the interests of motor-car sellers?—I am afraid in this opposition to the Bill I am not considering my own interests. I have a small interest in a motor-importing concern: I am obviously not considering that.

*Mr. Healy.]* Empty houses, I presume, are fairly general throughout Auckland, as in other cities, at the present time?—I do not know any place that has as high a percentage of empty houses as the district which I have the misfortune at the moment to represent. I am certain it is not so in the case of the City of Auckland. I am certain our population has been drifting into the city, and as an evidence of that I would point out that, while there may be some empty houses in Auckland, there is very great activity in the building of cheap flats. Personally, I think that is wrong. I have no quarrel with the big flats, but anything that will encourage the building of cheap, inferior flats is bad.

This Bill cannot stop that?—It is interfering with the happiness and convenience of the people. I think it is socially bad in that respect.

Of course, most of the cities are overcrowded and overbuilt?—That is certainly the case in Auckland. There are some areas in Auckland which should be condemned.

You have regular suburban trains running to New Lynn?—That train gets you five miles from the city.

But you have regular suburban trains?—Yes, there are regular trains.

You attribute the reduction in land-values to the lack of bus service?—Yes; but not wholly, of course. We know there is some depression, but 80 per cent. or more of that reduction, as far as New Lynn is concerned, is certainly due to bad transport. I have studied the land question in New Lynn for a number of years.

*Mr. Sullivan.]* I suppose the municipal government has not got anything to do with the decline?—No.

*Mr. Mason.]* Referring to your observation as to transport of goods, your district and the Henderson district produce a good deal of perishable produce, such as strawberries, for instance?—Yes.

And a lot of that produce is put on motor-lorries?—A good deal of it, yes.

Would restriction on that be dangerous?—Yes.

That sort of transport has to work at high pressure, and any kind of regulation would be difficult?—Undoubtedly. That matter was discussed by the Henderson people. They said it would have a very bad effect on the soft fruit carried.

In fact, it is vital to the district that there should be unrestricted facilities?—Yes.

With regard to the present preference for flats, do you remember the housing shortage immediately after the war, when a number of houses were turned into flats in Auckland?—Yes.

And since the people have been able to get new houses they have shown a preference for the bungalow?—Yes.

And that was largely responsible for the development of these suburbs?—Yes. Where the people can get out, they prefer to live in bungalows and have their own gardens.