

*Hon. Mr. Veitch :* No, I have not. I will not allow myself to be led by anybody.

*Witness :* We know it is the intention of the Minister to help the municipal authorities, and we know that his policy will be to help them, and I will ask him to carry that out by leaving the present licensing regulations as they are—they will protect both the local bodies and the public. To suggest that a licensing authority must be constituted independently of the local authority—sitting like a Judge of the Supreme Court, free from bias—simply means that, unless absolute preference is given to the local authority in every respect, probably that tribunal in trying to be fair will irretrievably injure the present system and do away with all the benefits at present enjoyed by the public. We are satisfied with the present system. What is the reason for changing it? The reason is that the motorists are using their influence unfairly in the tribunals. They are acting entirely in their own interests.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch :* That is not the reason.

*Witness :* Of course, I may be an advocate, but I am putting it from our point of view.

*The Chairman :* It will be our job to reconcile your views with those of others.

*Witness :* I am putting it as fairly as possible—that the interests of the public are imperilled, and that the suggested proposals are going in the wrong direction. With regard to these licensing authorities, we do not want the motor-omnibus districts extended. If the Minister is going to deal with districts outside the motor-omnibus districts, I suggest that he should get a new Act. Under the present system every district consists of a central district, which has some transport authority, and the districts around. Thus the districts are constituted, but they do not cover the whole of New Zealand. We want this position left entirely as it is, so that the local bodies who are at present administering will be able to preserve the existing services. We do not want the Board in Wellington, which has no knowledge of local conditions, to smash up what exists at present. We are afraid that instead of this Bill being an improvement it will be an engine of destruction. I do not want to stress the point further; I only want to speak generally, and to say that right throughout New Zealand the municipal authorities in charge of public undertakings do not approve of the proposed alteration.

*Mr. Broadfoot.]* Suppose they can show that a sufficient degree of efficiency is not being maintained by local bodies, do you maintain that we should bolster up the municipal authorities?—No; but I have never seen a case in Wellington where a private undertaking was at all comparable with that of the municipal authority. The private owners cannot afford to give such a service. In Wellington to-day we are being asked to undertake runs which will not pay; and there is at present an appeal to induce us to initiate a run to Vogeltown.

*The Chairman.]* Would you object to private enterprise doing that?—Private enterprise would not entertain the idea for a moment. Of course, the local bodies want to get the good as well as the bad.

*Mr. Sullivan.]* The licensing authority would consist of a majority of the local bodies?—Yes, but the point is that every local body which exists to-day has a knowledge of local conditions; they understand the position. The motor-omnibus district for Wellington will extend, say, to Kiwitea: what will a man appointed from Wellington know about that? The whole point is that at present we have a system that is workable. With regard to the Appeal Board, the association does not agree with it; they think that if it is constituted afresh it should be on the lines of a tribunal under the Public Works Act—that is, a Judge of the Supreme Court could sit as President, with two assessors, one representing the local bodies, the other the motor interests. They consider that would be the least dangerous, if there must be a change.

*Mr. Broadfoot.]* On that last statement of yours, where would our railways come in on that tribunal—they are not affected by this Act?—So far as the railways are concerned, if the local bodies protect their own interests they will protect the interests of the railways. It is possible that it might be better if a Judge sat alone.

*The Chairman.]* You do not object to an Appeal Board: it is a question of its constitution?—Yes, we do; and we object to the increasing of the motor-omnibus districts, because we do not think increasing the districts will lead to efficiency. The omnibuses running in the city and between suburbs and city are different altogether. So far there has been very little necessity for the control of the services outside. But it is not a difficult thing to control.

Perhaps you may not be aware of the need of control?—Most of the members of the Municipal Association travel, and they do not notice any serious difficulty. Our contention is that if matters remain as they are at present they will be satisfactory with regard to civic and borough transport. If the Minister wants to deal with services outside the city, that is another matter.

*Mr. Broadfoot.]* What I am trying to get at is this: will your service be competing with the railways—I mean, in the cities?—No.

Will they do so in any other city?—No.

Because if there is to be regulation between the local bodies and private enterprise, surely there should be regulation between the railways, local bodies, and private enterprise?—I know of no conflict between them, except at Napier—where the railways bought the buses—and in the Hutt. The whole matter so far as that is concerned can be overcome by the preference clause. With regard to clause 36, there is an extension of the definition here, and there is no opposition to it; but it has been suggested by the solicitor for the Auckland Transport Board who is also the City Solicitor of Auckland, that the better way to deal with the definition would be to delete the words “exceeding seven in number, inclusive of the driver,” from the definition of “motor-omnibus.” Clause 37 should be deleted if the local authority remains the licensing authority.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch.]* With regard to clause 36, that question was raised before the Transport Department, and we are advised that what you are proposing would make a two-seater car a motor-omnibus?—If they are run on regular services we think they should be so regarded.