

unaltered, from one Minister to another, except, of course, to the extent that it may be amended by this Bill. This Bill does not take the management of the tramways from the local authorities and put it in the hands of the Minister.

*Witness* : But hitherto the Public Works Department has issued an Order in Council. Now that will have to be done under this Bill by the Transport Department.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch* : But, still, you know that Orders in Council are approved by the whole Cabinet, so that your position is not really changed.

*Witness* : My experience is that when a Minister brings forward a recommendation as an Order in Council it goes through.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch*.] I presume that was your experience, and, if that is so, then is that not an additional proof that there is no serious or material change in transferring the administration of those Acts from one Minister to another?—There would be no objection to that, but the Public Works Department is the Department that has been advising the Minister as to whether, for instance, a new tramway-line should be laid down in a certain locality. This Bill proposes to take that away from the Public Works Department and put it in the hands of the Transport Department. In my judgment, such duties should be left in the hands of the Public Works Department.

But the new Department will be a special expert Department in one particular thing, and therefore will be more qualified to advise the Government than a Department such as the Public Works Department, which is busily engaged in huge undertakings in all directions; and, with all due respect to that Department, I should say that the interests of the local bodies and the general public, which should predominate in every case, will have a far better chance of being conserved if we have a special Department set up for their conservation. That is the reason why the provision is here, and no other reason.

*Mr. Murdoch*.] Your suggestion is that the new Department will not have expert officers to advise it?—Not altogether. There have been cases years ago in Wellington where the local body was penalized by a Minister, because of its political views. That is one of the things we want to watch. We might want to lay down a new tram-line, and we could only get an Order in Council by doing something we do not want to do.

*The Chairman*.] But, still, the change in the Department would hardly change the possibilities in that direction?—It might not; but we know the Department we have been dealing with in the past, and we know we have had a fair deal.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch* : In this case the Transport Department would be advised by officers of the Public Works Department in the administration of the Bill. That is what would happen. I am afraid the difficulty has arisen in the minds of many people by them having got the belief, rightly or wrongly, that the Transport Advisory Council is unbalanced as to the representation of the different interests, which might or might not be the case, and that as a result the motorists' interests will dominate the local-body interests. That is the fear apparently in the minds of many witnesses. But the Minister would be responsible; the Advisory Council only advises.

*Mr. Sullivan*.] In connection with applications to the Wellington City Council sitting as a licensing authority, are other local bodies represented before your Council? Suppose the service affected is through the areas of other local bodies, do they send their representatives to your Council?—Yes, they do.

Have you had any complaints from them in regard to the procedure adopted—any complaints that they do not get a fair deal under the existing system?—I am not sufficiently in touch with the business to be able to answer that question. Personally I do not know of any, but I am not in the best position to answer the question. The Mayor would be in a better position than I am.

*Mr. Sullivan* : Perhaps the Chairman would put that question to the Mayor or the City Solicitor.

*The Chairman* : Could you answer the question, Mr. O'Shea?

*Mr. O'Shea* : There have been no complaints from any local bodies as to our administration. There have been appeals by private people to the Appeal Board, but we have had no trouble whatever with the local bodies.

*Mr. Sullivan* (to witness).] Is it your opinion, then, that the existing method has been acceptable to the outside local bodies?—We have had no serious complaint from them; it has worked well. I want to point out that this present Bill is, of course, extending the area of the districts.

ROBERT WERE, Chairman, Waitomo County Council, examined. (No. 7.)

*The Chairman*.] What evidence do you wish to give, Mr. Were?—I attend here with a fellow Councillor and the County Clerk to give you any information that we may be able to. It was felt desirable by our ratepayers that we should come down and put our views before you. We have a considerable mileage of highways running through our county. We were informed, when the highways system was first introduced, that the users of the roads would pay, but we find that the users are not paying their full share. Our rates are increasing yearly, and we wish to emphasize that point and ask that the backblock settlers should receive fair and due consideration. It not only affects settlers now on the land, but will affect land-settlement, because the heavy rates will keep men off instead of encouraging them to go on the land.

What, then, is your point—that you are not getting a sufficient proportion of the petrol-tax?—Everything nowadays is being carried by motors working with petrol, and on the backblock roads, where there are so many curves, every time a motor-lorry comes along it ploughs a furrow.

Is that not a point in favour of the Bill being passed, to control that sort of thing?—Yes.

*Mr. Broadfoot*.] The question of the damage to the road is becoming out of all proportion to the compensation received, and you want the Council protected on that score?—Yes. We contend that