

of fact, because many cars are registered in the names of farmers' wives, and it is therefore difficult to arrive at the exact number. The total number of cars registered by farmers is, I think, 40,500.

*Mr. Broadfoot.*] I take it that the road-costs to your Council have been lowered since the inception of the Highways Board?—No; they are very much higher. We could not hope to get anywhere near the Highways Board's requirements on our previous expenditure.

It has been almost detrimental then?—If we could have kept the motor traffic away we would have been in a much happier position; but under present conditions, of course, we cannot. Under present conditions it is almost impossible for a county such as ours to carry on with the present rate of assistance.

Your expenditure is much greater?—I could give an instance. In our county there is a section of the Auckland-Wellington Highway known as Otorohanga boundary to Te Kuiti. Prior to this section being available to traffic the Mangarino Hill Road was used as a detour route. For three years and a half prior to the Mangarino Road being recognized as a detour route (although it had been used as such) it cost the Council £582 for upkeep. For three years and a half after being recognized as a detour road it cost over £2,400, of which the Highways Board contributed on an average of £1 for £1. The county's share was £1,200, an increase of over 100 per cent., to provide for the increased outside traffic. Hence we contend that the most equitable method of meeting the cost of the highways is by an adequate benzine-tax, so that the user, by whatever means he uses the road, pays.

*Mr. Murdoch.*] Your suggestion is that the amount provided by the Highways Board is not sufficient for your requirements?—Our contention is that we have come now to the position in a county such as ours that the Highways Board should contribute the whole of the maintenance on the main roads.

Have any moneys been offered to you by the Highways Board that you have been unable to take up?—Not up to the present, but just recently we had an offer which it will be quite impossible to take up unless we strike a heavy rate.

*Hon. Mr. Veitch.*] Is that on a 25-per-cent. basis?—No, on a £3-for-£1 basis.

*The Chairman.*] Have you anything further to say?—Yes; I would like to say that our county views with satisfaction the proposal to issue motor-drivers' licenses at the same time as registration and licensing of the motor-vehicle takes place under the present Motor-vehicles Act, but does not consider it advisable for a local authority in a highways district to be delegated the power to test applicants as to their competency to drive and handle a motor. This might involve applicants having to travel considerable distances, and will also involve giving a service for which we will receive no recompense.

*Mr. Murdoch.*] Do you suggest that your centre should be a licensing authority?—We suggest that the testing should be done by the Transport Board, the same as the registration of licenses.

*The Chairman.*] You do not want the responsibility of doing it?—No. This opens up the question of traffic inspection. We suggest that this should be done by the Transport Board; a sufficient number of Inspectors to be appointed for each highway district, local bodies in each of these districts to contribute between them, say, one-fourth of the cost of Inspectors' salaries, the local bodies to give these Inspectors authority to operate over their ordinary roads as well as the highways. These Inspectors could do the testing for drivers' licenses, and have all the powers of Inspectors under the present Motor-vehicles Act and Regulations, and Motor-lorry Regulations. If necessary, revise the classification of roads so as to have uniformity in each highway district. I think that is all I have to say.

*Mr. Healy.*] I suppose your county, like all others in the Dominion, is really put to the cost of maintenance owing to foreign traffic?—That is our trouble. We have a long stretch of main road from Te Kuiti well on towards New Plymouth.

That is mounting up your rates, no doubt, to an enormous extent?—For the last twelve years the rates have been increased rather than decreased, until last year I determined I would arrest any increase in my riding, at any rate.

Your by-roads have really suffered owing to the necessity of maintaining the main roads?—My opinion is that the by-roads are being neglected until we get the benefit of the benzine-tax. There is no denying that that will be of assistance; but experience has shown that as soon as a road is declared a highway or a subsidiary highway, and is improved, it encourages traffic other than that arising from residents of the locality.

*Mr. Broadfoot.*] And so money is drawn away from your other roads?—It means that, apart from the main highways and subsidiary highways, the county has very little money to spend on what might be termed backblock roads.

*Mr. Healy.*] It has really put a rent on to the properties?—Yes.

*Mr. Murdoch.*] Have you a system of main roads in the county, apart from the highways?—No. Each riding works on its own?—Yes.

FREDERICK CHARLES PERRY examined. (No. 9.)

*The Chairman.*] What is your position, Mr. Perry?—I am Clerk of the Waitomo County Council.

What evidence do you wish to give?—There are just one or two points I wish to make, but I wish first to state that my Council recognizes how difficult it is to legislate on matters of this kind to suit all requirements. We are putting before you the case of Waitomo and similar counties, but we quite appreciate the difficulties of other counties which may not look with so much favour on the Bill as we do. My first point is in connection with motor-vehicles being allowed to run into counties. We suggest, from the point of view of our county and districts similarly situated, that the proviso to clause 13 should be deleted. Subclause (2) safeguards service cars running through several districts from having