

6. REGULATION OF COMMERCIAL ROAD TRANSPORT.

TRANSPORT LICENSING ACT, 1931.

A. PASSENGER-SERVICES.

The great bulk of the passenger-services now operate under licenses which have a three-year term, and as a result the activities of the licensing authorities during the year have consisted, in the main, of considering applications for new services, amendments, and variations to existing licenses and applications for temporary licenses. Details of the numbers of the various applications considered during the year are set out in Table 13 in the Appendix.

CONTINUOUS PASSENGER-SERVICE LICENSES.

During the year 131 applications for this class of license were heard. Of these applications, 101 were granted, 15 were refused, 3 were withdrawn, and 12 were deferred for further consideration. The corresponding figures for the previous year were 507, 470, 9, 13, and 15 respectively.

SEASONAL PASSENGER-SERVICE LICENSES.

Only 3 applications under this heading were received during the year, and all were granted. The figure for the previous year was 7.

TEMPORARY PASSENGER-SERVICE LICENSES.

The applications for this class of license showed a substantial increase over those for the previous year. No less than 7,049 applications were considered, of which 6,980 were granted, 66 refused, and 3 withdrawn. These figures compare with 4,745 applications in 1936-37, which were dealt with as follows: Granted, 4,675: refused, 69: withdrawn, 1.

CO-ORDINATION OF PASSENGER-SERVICES.

The following extract from the annual report of the No. 3 Transport Licensing Authority (Mr. T. H. Langford) gives an indication of some of the steps that have been taken to improve the general efficiency to the public of road-transport passenger-services:—

“In the passenger-service business wherever rationalization has been attempted it has been successful.

“On the route Westport Greymouth, Messrs. Gibbs Transport, Ltd., now operate, and on the Nelson–Westport run Messrs. Newman Bros., Ltd., operate the only services. Previously both these companies ran on each of these routes. The return fare on the Westport–Greymouth route has been reduced from 36s. to 30s. which, based on last year’s loading, represents a saving to the travelling public of £2,000 annually. I have not yet dealt with the Nelson–Westport fare schedule, but intend to do so after Easter, and have informed Messrs. Newman Bros., Ltd., to that effect.

“Messrs. Newman Bros., Ltd., have, at my instigation, eliminated, by purchase, the Rink Taxis Co., Ltd., on the Nelson–Christchurch run, and the reduction in this instance is 10s. on the return fare, and an adjustment in wayside fares is now taking place. The saving to the public in this instance represents a considerable sum, and the saving in vehicle-miles is probably over 150,000 annually.

“In the Christchurch area the Midland Motorways Services, Ltd., who operate on a number of routes, including Kaiapoi–Christchurch, purchased the service Belfast–Christchurch previously operated by G. Manhire. Again, at my instigation, they then purchased the license held by A. A. Holland, Amberley–Christchurch. The result of this purchase enabled them to so co-ordinate their operations that approximately two-thirds of the vehicles were able to handle the whole of the traffic. Fares over the whole route were reduced in the suburban area to as low as 0.62d. per passenger-mile. The workers’ tickets on these routes are so low that it will have the definite tendency to promote two-acre settlement in the outer areas, a very desirable feature. A worker residing at Belfast can travel to Christchurch more cheaply than one who is resident at Sumner and who uses the tram. At 5½d. a factory girl can use the motor-bus in wet weather instead of having to battle against the elements on a bicycle. These reductions, together with an improved type of vehicle being put into operation, has caused a tremendous increment in passenger loading, and the financial position as far as Midland Motorways Services, Ltd., is concerned has been tremendously improved. The return on the Kaiapoi–Christchurch run for March, 1937, when the higher-fare schedule was in operation, was £579. For March, 1938, with a lower fare in existence, the return was £669. These facts require no further comment. In October last the same company purchased the license of G. Lewis, who operated observation tours on the hills in the vicinity of Christchurch, and charged 7s. per trip, which brought him an average loading of approximately six. I requested Midland Motorways to reduce the fare to 5s. and induced them to put on the best type of vehicle available and install loud-speakers. The result of the cheaper fares and improved services has brought a daily loading in many instances of over one hundred, and the average between 1st December and 8th January was 82, and for the whole period 57. The acquisition of these services has meant the total extinction of idle vehicle-hours, and, as you will readily realize, this is the only road to lower costs in this or any other transport business. These facts not only support the idea that co-ordination is essential, but that where efficient service is given and low fares and freight rates are charged increased public patronage is automatic, and, further, that the public very definitely prefer to use the road motor for short distances rather than any other form of transport.”