

place the position in a fair and proper way before this Committee and to do justice to my clients. I require evidence not only from Auckland, but probably from various other parts of New Zealand. I may say I have arranged with Mr. Walklate, the general manager of the company, who is also a tramways engineer, to be here by the Main Trunk train to-day; but, sir, at forty-eight hours' notice it is impossible to procure all the evidence I desire to procure in order to place properly before the Committee and before the House the evidence which I think should be available before a Bill of this kind is passed. My observations, sir, are submitted with regard to an application, which I shall renew at a later stage, that this Committee should report that the Bill ought not to be proceeded with at this stage of the session, and that it ought to be postponed till next session of Parliament. The Committee will see, sir, the difficulty in which counsel is placed and the difficulty in which this company is placed. The company, as I say, has expended no less a sum than three-quarters of a million in good faith, and in reliance upon Orders in Council which this Bill is going to give the Minister, by a mere stroke of his pen, the power to absolutely abrogate. Of course, sir, I shall tender such evidence as in the short time at my disposal I am able to tender, but that may be confined to the general manager and engineer of the company, and I ask that I should not be called upon to tender that evidence before this evening. Mr. Walklate will not be here till half past 4, and I must have an opportunity of conferring with him and seeing his papers; but my remarks are addressed, firstly, as preliminary to the observations I shall make at a later stage, and, secondly, to the application that this Committee should report in common fairness and justice that this Bill should not be proceeded with in the dying hours of the session without giving the Select Committee and Parliament the fullest opportunity of hearing all the evidence which this company is desirous of tendering, and which, in fairness to itself, it ought to tender, before such a Bill as this is proceeded with and passed.

*The Chairman:* The position is that this Bill has been referred to this Committee to take evidence and report: that we must do. I purpose this afternoon taking the evidence of those gentlemen who are present, and I have arranged, with the concurrence of the Committee, to meet at 7.30 this evening for the purpose of meeting those who are coming from Auckland, so that they can get away again to-morrow, and also one or two Wellington witnesses who cannot be here this afternoon. We will take that evidence, and then consider any other application you may make with regard to what you have alluded to.

ALFRED KINGCOME NEWMAN examined. (No. 1.)

*The Chairman:* You are the Mayor of Wellington?

*Witness:* Yes.

*The Chairman:* Will you make a statement in regard to the matter now before the Committee?

*Witness:* Well, sir, as you are aware, I presented the Minister with telegrams showing that the Christchurch Board and the Corporations of Dunedin and Wanganui were in accord with us, together with Miramar and Karori; also the Hutt and Petone, where they are going to have trams, are with us; and we have received a telegram from Napier besides, all protesting that we should not be affected by this Bill; and I wish also to call some expert advice as to the reasons why we should not be affected by it. Now, clause 3 of the Bill, which is the only clause I wish to draw your attention to, says, "The Governor may from time to time, by Order in Council gazetted, make regulations." Then follows a list of what may be done, and subclause (f), to which I wish to call the attention of the members of the Committee, says, "Providing for such other matters as he thinks fit in order to secure the safe and convenient working of the tramway." Well, sir, I submit that if those clauses are passed it takes the management of the tramways out of the hands of the Corporation of Wellington. A few years ago this city decided to have tramways, and under the Orders in Council that were then issued, and under the rules which were to govern this city, we raised half a million of money. We have spent more than that on our trams, and we understood that those regulations were to be in force practically in the same way as the articles of association of a company, and that they were to be in force for ever. Unfortunately, by this Bill it is now proposed to take away from us the whole of these powers. I have seen a great many citizens since yesterday morning, and they all desire to back me up, and also my Council, in this protest against the introduction of this Bill. I might also say that the whole of my Tramway Committee and every member of my Council unitedly protest against this interference with our trams. Besides, sir, I submit there is no reason for any such interference. In fact, sir, the Minister himself said yesterday that the brakes on the trams in Wellington were absolutely the best in the Dominion. I will call my Engineer, who is a man of wide experience, to give evidence, and we have also an Assistant Engineer of English experience: there is also the City Engineer, who superintends the laying-down of the lines: and they will be able to say that, whenever any of our experts have recommended to the City Council anything that conduces to the better management and control of our tramways, the present Council—although I have only been a few months in the Council—and previous Councils have unanimously and without hesitation voted any money that has been required. Everything that our experts have suggested we have carried out. Furthermore, I should like to point out that our record of accidents, considering the enormous mileage we cover, and that we carry about twenty-one to twenty-two million passengers per year, is, I suppose, as low as the record on any tramways in the world. Unfortunately, while we have very excellent brakes, there is always the human element, and while we have a first-rate set of motormen and conductors, there is always the chance that an accident may happen through the failure of a motorman. Sometimes their minds wander, or other things may happen when there is an emergency near, and there is a failure of human action which is inseparable from any system; but I would point out that we have managed our trams so successfully that our casualty list will favour-