

ably compare with the Government railways or any tramways in New Zealand. I desire to say, sir, on behalf of the Corporation and the people of Wellington that they are proud of their tramways, and think they are well run. They do a bit of growling now and then, and they would growl at certain things if they were in heaven for a time, but still they are proud of the tramways, and desire to keep them free so that we can manage them ourselves. I would say, sir, that, if some tramway company has not been acting with all due care in its management, it is a little hard upon us to be incorporated under this Bill. Surely if a boy in a class is bad and needs a thrashing, it does not follow that all the good boys in the class should be thrashed in the same way, and therefore, as we have been managing our tramways with care, and supplying the most modern appliances, we do object to handing over the whole of this power to the Minister. We feel very strongly on this question, and we want to protest with all the force not only of the ratepayers but of the citizens of Wellington behind us, against being brought under the power not only of the Minister, but of his officers, who, should they choose to be unreasonably particular after getting control over our tramways, may cause a large amount of expenditure. It is open to them to inflict great hardships upon us, and, as we have conducted our trams without any complaint, we submit that this Bill should not apply to us and other towns who have not had a chance, owing to the hurried way in which this Bill is being perhaps unnecessarily forced on, of attending before the Committee and entering their protest. I submit that we could get from all the other cities in New Zealand who have tramways, and have not delegated their powers to anybody, a large amount of backing in the protest we are making. They unitedly desire to keep the management of their own trams in their own hands, and if the Committee will postpone the matter till next session I will make it my business as Chairman of the Municipal Association of New Zealand to send round circulars calling the members together earlier than the next session of Parliament to consider this matter. I might say that all those cities that have trams unitedly protest against being brought under such arbitrary clauses as those contained in this Bill, and I submit that such a large phalanx of opinion ought to have sway with this Committee. Therefore I do trust that this Committee will postpone this measure, or, at all events, that it should not apply at present to cities which have hitherto managed their affairs in a proper manner.

1. *The Chairman*] How many passengers do you say you carry?—Between twenty-one and twenty-two millions a year.

2. And how many cars have you?—Eighty.

3. How many employees?—Between 450 and 500.

4. Can you tell me how many accidents there have been to the general public during the last two years?—The Engineer informs me that since the beginning of 1906, including the general public and the employees, there have been in the four years fifty-six accidents through people jumping off cars or getting knocked down and suffering slight concussion, the breaking of a limb, or severe cuts, and there have been six fatal accidents. Only one fatal accident was attributable to the fault of the Corporation or its servants, the others being brought about by the people themselves. The Engineer will be able to give a detailed statement of the accidents and their causes.

5. *Mr. Brown*.] Have any of those accidents been attributable to your brakes going wrong?—If I might explain to the Committee, the question of brakes has been before us a good deal, and the Engineer will explain the details in that connection; but whenever an accident does occur the motorman (and our motormen are a very excellent lot of men) naturally always puts it down to the brakes—it is never the motorman's fault, but always the brakes. The position is this: that our brakes on the whole work exceedingly well. As the Minister said yesterday, our brakes were practically the best in New Zealand, but we have evidence and we know that now and then the magnetic or electric brake does not always work perfectly; but I would point out that if the magnetic brake does not work immediately we have the hand-brake, so that really there cannot possibly be a failure of brakes altogether. It is not possible for a car to run away. If the magnetic brake does not act, then the motorman can turn round and use the hand-brake straight away. As a matter of fact, a large number of our motormen use the hand-brake nearly all the time, and the hand-brake is always ready if the magnetic brake fails.

6. *Mr. Herdman*.] Can you tell the Committee what powers the Government at the present time possess regarding the inspection of tramways, such as the cars and the system generally?—I understand that if we neglect to do what we are supposed to do they can interfere according to the clause in the Act, but not otherwise. Practically, I think they have very little power at the present time, but if this Bill is passed it gives them entire power.

7. What is the length of your tram mileage?—About thirty-three miles of single track. We run about 1,800,000 miles a year.

8. *Mr. Poole*.] Have you had any trouble with the Public Works Department up to the present time respecting the car-service?—Practically nothing. We have a very tortuous line at Brooklyn, where we had one accident, and the Government gave us advice in regard to that; but that is the only time. We were going to make various changes there, and at the time of the accident it was practically a new line.

9. Apart from accidents, have you had any complaints from the motormen about the brakes?—The complaints have been these: that whenever there has been an accident it is always put down to the failure of the brakes.

10. But, apart from accidents, have you had any complaints lodged in the office respecting the weakness or failure of the brakes?—At times there have been. For instance, when a car has gone out in the morning perhaps the magnetic brake has failed to act, and the car has been taken back to the shed immediately. The orders are very strict in that connection: the car has to be taken back immediately and have it put right.

11. The men have expressed no general dissatisfaction with the brakes on the system?—No, not at any time.