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JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS, 22nd March, 1928.

REPORT
(Continued from p. 50)

REPORT

ON THE SUBJECT OF

TRANSPORT FACILITIES

WITHIN THE

FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY.

By Authority:

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JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

REPORT

ON THE SUBJECT OF

TRANSPORT FACILITIES WITHIN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY.

INTRODUCTORY.

Under the powers conferred upon it by the *Committee of Public Accounts Act 1913-1920* the Joint Committee of Public Accounts decided to inquire into certain phases of expenditure in the Federal Capital Territory. Transport, a subject engaging much public attention, was selected as the first field for investigation.

COMMITTEE'S PROCEEDINGS.

To acquaint itself with the various activities of the Transport Service, which embraces the city omnibus-service, the goods transport service, and the passenger car service, the Committee called and heard evidence from seventeen witnesses, including the Chief Commissioner of the Federal Capital Commission, officers and employees of the Federal Capital Commission, and representative persons. To afford the Committee a better understanding of certain features of its inquiry inspections were made of the garages and depots, the mechanical equipment of the costing section of the Federal Capital Commission, and the new omnibuses recently acquired by the Commission.

The witnesses who appeared before the Committee were:—

Barton, Helen Antoinette, Proprietress, Barton's Safety Coach Service, Hotel Acton, Canberra.

Broinowski, Robert Arthur, Usher of the Black Rod, The Senate, Canberra.

Bryan, John, Costing Officer of the Brickworks, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.

Butters, Sir John Henry, K.B., C.M.G., M.B.E., M.Inst. C.E., M.I.E. Aust., Chief Commissioner of the Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.

Cripp, John Samuel, President of the Master Carriers' Association, Canberra.

Daley, Charles Studdy, O.B.E., B.A., LL.B., Secretary, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.

Dojan, Patrick Francis, Officer-in-Charge of Goods Transport, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.

Francis, Charles Edward, Controller of Stores, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.

Gargett, Herbert Stanley, Transport Officer, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.

Harrison, Arthur William, B.E., A.M.I.E. (Aust.), Plant Engineer, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.

Jones, Harold Edward, O.B.E., Director of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, Attorney-General's Department, Canberra, and Chief of Police, Federal Capital Territory.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY JOINT COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

(Fifth Committee.)

(Appointed 22nd January, 1926.)

|| Senator WALTER KINDSMITH, Chairman.

Senate.

† Senator HATILL SPENCER FOLL.

† Senator JOHN BLYTH HAYES, O.M.G.

† Senator ALBERT ALFRED HOARE.

*** Senator CHARLES STEPHEN McHUGH.

† Senator EDWARD NEEDHAM.

House of Representatives.

¶ CHARLES LYNDIARD AUBREY ABBOTT, Esquire, M.P.

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* The Honorable Sir GRANVILLE DE LAUNY RYRIE, K.C.M.G., C.B., V.D., M.P.

* Vice-Chairman from 19th June, 1926, to 1st July, 1928; Chairman from 2nd July, 1928, discharged from attendance 24th March, 1927. † Discharged from attendance 30th June, 1928. † Appointed 1st July, 1926. †† Vice-Chairman from 22nd January, 1926, to 18th June, 1926. †† Chairman from 19th June, 1926, to 30th June, 1926. †† Vice-Chairman from 2nd July, 1926, to 24th March, 1927. †† Appointed 18th June, 1926. ** Chairman from 22nd January, 1926, to 18th June, 1926. Discharged from attendance 19th June, 1926. * Appointed 18th June, 1926. † Appointed 24th March, 1927. *** Died 24th July, 1927. †† Appointed 30th September, 1927. †† Vice-Chairman from 24th March, 1927.

The working results of the city omnibus service are as follow :-

Period Ended.	Expenses.	Receipts.	Mile.	Cost per Mile.	Earnings per Mile.	Loss per Mile.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.		s. d.	s. d.	
9th November, 1926	551 18 0	450 14 0	9,528	1 1 9	0 11 35	2 55
7th December, 1926	628 2 5	473 15 6	9,964	1 4 27	1 0 28	3 99
1st February, 1927	1,170 10 11	708 16 10	15,011	1 6 73	0 11 3	7 42
1st March, 1927	676 4 5	549 15 11	8,833	1 6 37	1 2 94	3 43
29th March, 1927	684 9 0	564 15 8	9,183	1 5 37	1 2 76	2 61
26th April, 1927	668 2 9	501 13 0	8,205	1 7 54	1 2 67	4 87
26th May, 1927	738 0 4	568 18 3	6,899	2 1 07	1 7 79	5 88
21st June, 1927	696 18 10	558 2 2	8,450	1 8	1 4	4
19th July, 1927	830 9 3	655 2 3	8,977	1 10 36	1 2 84	7 52
16th August, 1927	842 16 11	557 6 11	9,778	1 7 69	1 1 67	6 22
13th September, 1927	802 17 8	594 9 4	9,588	1 7 39	1 2 88	4 51
11th October, 1927	816 17 1	614 5 8	10,148	1 6 62	1 2 52	4 1
8th November, 1927	873 9 8	697 4 6	10,768	1 6 61	1 3 55	3 06
Four weeks ended 6th December, 1927						
Eight weeks ended 31st January, 1928	819 9 5	756 8 8	10,252	1 7 18	1 5 7	1 48
Plus accumulated debit on maintenance-reserve of buses to 21st June, 1927, transferred to working account	1,779 15 7	1,192 6 9	20,634	1 8 7	1 1 86	*6 84
Less tickets charged to, but returned by Commissariat Department to 21st June, 1927	778 1 2					
Plus hire for special bus during period ended 11th October, 1927		99 2 3 Cr.				
	15 10 0		240			
	15,359 12 5	9,242 14 2	155,754	1 8 58	1 2 24	6 34

Loss on city omnibus service to 31st January, 1928, £4,116 18s. 3d.

*Loss was due mainly to Christmas and New Year Holidays.

The services rendered by the transport fleet may be enumerated thus :-

- Conveyance of Commission-officers and workmen on official duties;
- Transport of goods to works;
- Conveyance of ministers, members of parliament, public servants and distinguished visitors;
- Maintenance of city omnibus service;
- Maintenance of the ambulance and fire brigade vehicles.

City Omnibus Service.—The city omnibus service commenced operations in August, 1926, with four A.E.C. buses. Increasing traffic necessitated the purchase of a further bus, which was placed in commission in December, 1926. As the progress of the Territory called for improved transport facilities, and the service was being maintained at a loss, the Federal Capital Commission decided to invite tenders from persons desirous of conducting a motor omnibus and hire car service in Canberra. As a consequence, on the 5th November, 1927, a contract was entered into between the Federal Capital Commission and Edward Lovelady Holmes, of Sydney, who undertook to conduct a suitable service in the Territory. The contract provided, *inter alia* :-

- (a) that the new service should commence on or before 5th December, 1927;
- (b) that the omnibuses of the Federal Capital Commission should be taken over by the contractor at a cost of £2,000.
- (c) that the term of the contract should be for ten years;
- (d) that the Federal Capital Commission should pay the contractor a subsidy of—
 - 4d. a mile per omnibus for the first twelve months.
 - 3d. a mile per omnibus for the second twelve months.
 - 2d. a mile per omnibus for the third twelve months.
 - 1d. a mile per omnibus for the fourth twelve months.

- Kelly, Benjamin George, Bus Inspector, Transport Section, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.
- Potts, William Elmhirst, B.E., A.M.I.C.E., A.M.I.E. (Aust.), Chief Engineer, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.
- Quinlan, Frederick John, Assistant Secretary, Department of Home and Territories, Canberra.
- Rowse, William Norman, A.I.C.A., Accountant, Federal Capital Commission, Canberra.
- Sparkes, Frederick Walter, Housekeeper, Parliament House, Canberra.
- Traynor, William John, Garage Foreman, Transport Section, Federal Capital Territory, Canberra.

EXISTING SERVICES.

The transport fleet, which has played an important part in the construction and developmental activities of the Federal Capital Commission, comprises the following :-

Cars.	Trucks.	Omnibuses.	Char-a-lancs.	Miscellaneous.
Armstrong-Siddley .. 17	Thermycroft .. 6	A.E.C. (20 Passengers each) .. 5	Dodge .. 2	Ambulance .. 1
Crossley .. 3	Dodge .. 3	Bean (17 Passengers each) .. 4		Fire Engine .. 1
Morris-Cowley .. 5	Ford .. 10			Motor Cycles .. 7
Ford .. 17				
Hotchkiss .. 1				
48	19	9	2	9

The capital cost of the fleet, including depots, garages and equipment is set down at £55,687, made up as follows :-

Depots, Garages, and Equipment	13,083
Passenger Cars	16,052
Omnibuses	8,587
Trucks	12,699
Miscellaneous	3,066
	55,687

Maintenance Expenditure for the period 1st April, 1925, to 31st January, 1928, was as follows :-

Petrol	13,995
Oil, Grease, &c.	1,733
Maintenance, Interest and Depreciation	33,442
Wages	25,410
Overhead	13,894
Hire and Auxiliary Lorries	33,115
Miscellaneous	584
	122,173

Receipts for the same period amounted to £128,780.

It should be explained, however, that the receipts are represented almost wholly by book entries, the proportion of cash receipts being only about 3 per cent. The accounting procedure, which is dealt with later, explains the manner in which receipts are brought to account.

Subsequently the contract was cancelled, the contractor being unable to secure sufficient capital to proceed with the project. Evidence discloses that there was no penalty clause in the contract for non-observance of contract. In view of the unsatisfactory position thus created, the Federal Capital Commission was obliged to continue its control of the service.

Recognizing that the then existing fleet was insufficient to cope with the traffic the Commission called for tenders for the supply of four new vehicles. Ten tenders were received, the lowest being that of Dalgety and Co., for £2,825, which was accepted on condition that the omnibuses should pass a satisfactory inspection and test at Canberra. The new omnibuses were duly delivered on the 16th January, 1928, and inspected by the Acting Chief Engineer of the Federal Capital Commission, who prepared a report on the inspection he had made. The report shows that, in the opinion of the Acting Chief Engineer, several alterations were necessary to the omnibuses before they could be regarded as suitable for traffic. The principal alterations suggested were:—

- (a) Substitution of twin tyres for single tyres on the rear wheels;
- (b) Strengthening of front and rear springs;
- (c) Strengthening of chassis frame.

Serious defects in the body of the omnibuses were also pointed out by the Acting Chief Engineer. Shortly, these were:—

- (a) Insufficient height inside an omnibus for an ordinary person to stand upright, the height being only 5 ft. 8 in.;
- (b) Limitation of drivers' vision, involving a certain amount of guess work as to clearance available when driving.

In concluding his report the Acting Chief Engineer made the following observations:—

"Generally, my impression is that the chassis is too light for the loads which it is proposed to impose and for the work to be done, and that in operation it would therefore be found that the maintenance cost would be heavy; and I would recommend that the Commission seriously consider the points raised in this memorandum before accepting delivery of the buses."

On the 20th January, 1928, the Acting Chief Engineer attended a meeting of the Federal Capital Commission, where he received instructions to negotiate with Dalgety and Co., with a view to having the defects mentioned remedied and the vehicles brought into service at the earliest possible date. Dalgety and Co. carried out the work required without additional cost to the Federal Capital Commission. To take dual tyre equipment it has been necessary to change the rear axle assembly on the four chassis. Four-wheel brake equipment is also to be fitted at the same time as the dual tyres. This equipment has been ordered from England and will, it is stated, be delivered in a few weeks time. The additional cost per vehicle for the equipment above described is £38 10s., which has to be borne by the Federal Capital Commission, so that the total cost of the new omnibuses will be £2,979. Evidence discloses that the omnibuses are designed to carry seventeen passengers and a driver: but by carrying this number there is an overload of 6 cwt. 2 qrs., which is equivalent to five passengers. Dalgety and Co. guarantee that the chassis are capable of carrying the extra weight. The Chief Commissioner of the Federal Capital Commission has stated that the new vehicles are quite safe so long as there is no overloading. Drivers have been definitely instructed that they must not permit more than seventeen passengers to board the new omnibuses. On the 9th March, 1928, the Acting Chief Engineer submitted a further report to the Chief Commissioner in relation to the new omnibuses. The report states, *inter alia*, "It is believed that the vehicles as finally altered will be satisfactory in use and will show an economy in working as compared with the larger 30-passenger vehicles. The carrying capacity of the buses limits their use at peak periods. It has already been found that at times they are unable—standing passengers not being allowable—to pick up all the traffic offering. From observations since the service was instituted it is already apparent that the number of vehicles now in use will be inadequate to cope with all the business offering and at the same time allow of the necessary margin for spares, &c."

In evidence placed before the Committee, the necessity for improved transport was strongly urged. It was stated that existing arrangements had engendered a feeling of dissatisfaction and discontent amongst the travelling public, who claimed that they were justly entitled to more sympathetic consideration in the matter of transport facilities, which constituted such an important link in the daily life of the people.

Many specific instances of annoyance and inconvenience associated with the omnibus service were brought to the notice of the Committee. Summarized, they were as follows:—

- Infrequency of service;
- Non-observance of time tables;
- Failure of drivers to stop buses when hailed;
- Overcrowding of buses;
- Inadequacy of night service causing serious restriction on social life;
- Absence of lights and notice boards at termini and main intermediate sections;
- Absence of suitable destination boards and distinctive lights on buses;
- Absence of shelter sheds.

Goods Transport.—The transport of goods, which is the major adjunct of the transport activities of the Federal Capital Commission, is carried out partly by Commission-owned vehicles and partly by contract vehicles. The rates paid for goods contract work are:—

Capacity of lorry.	Rate per day of 8 hours.	
	£	s. d.
20-25 cwt.	2	5 0
30 "	2	12 0
2 tons	3	0 0
3 "	4	0 0
4 "	5	0 0
5 "	6	0 0

whilst the rates paid for lorries used for the cartage of sand, gravel and ballast are as follow:—

Capacity of lorry.	Rate per day of 8 hours.	
	£	s. d.
1½ yards	2	12 6
1½ "	3	0 0
2 "	3	10 0
2½ "	3	15 0
3½ "	5	0 0

The transport organization provided that work should be allotted firstly to Commission-owned trucks, any surplus being undertaken by auxiliary or hired vehicles. A check was imposed on work performed by means of a clocking system which enabled the Goods Transport Officer to keep a record of times taken for deliveries. The suggestion made in evidence that the Commission should own all the trucks necessary to carry out transport work was not favoured by transport officials, experience having shown that the system of hiring lorries produced the better results. It was also claimed that the rates paid for hired transport compared favourably with those paid in other capital cities and with the actual cost of working the Commission-owned lorries.

Passenger Car Services.—Six cars were purchased by the Federal Capital Commission for the use of Ministers. These cars are made available to Ministers as required, and accounts are paid by the Departments concerned.

With regard to transport for Members of Parliament, the Parliamentary organization provides for conveyance of members and their luggage to and from the railway station. If however, a member requires a car for private purposes he is obliged to pay the Commission the prescribed rates of 10d. per mile and 3s. 4d. per hour detention.

Special Duty Cars.—Special duty cars are allotted to officers whose duties necessitate continuous movement about the Territory to the various works. Officers drive the cars themselves and are required to submit weekly returns giving details of places visited and the number of miles run. Checks are imposed on the use of these cars by means of speedometers, weekly returns, statements showing petrol issued from authorized bowlers, and the internal audit system. It is recognized that there is no absolute check on these cars being used for private purposes; but experience has shown that the extent of abuse has been negligible.

A number of officers of the Federal Capital Commission use their own cars on official business, for which they are paid 8d. per mile. These officers are required to submit weekly returns showing the places visited, the number of miles run and the nature of business performed. The existing Public Service rates for the use of private cars on official business are 7d. per mile for cars above 12 h.p., and 6d. per mile for cars of 12 h.p. and under. It is claimed that 8d. per mile in Canberra is inadequate, having regard to the fact that petrol is 2s. 6d. per gallon compared with 2s. in other capital cities, and that tyre replacements, accessories, &c., are much more costly. Moreover, it is stated that wear and tear on tyres is greater owing to the numerous curves to be negotiated and the loose and uneven surface of some of the roads.

Accounts.—The transport accounts of the Federal Capital Commission were kept on a strictly commercial basis, costing systems and mechanical aids being extensively employed. A capital account and a working account were kept for each vehicle. The former showed the capital cost, whilst the latter showed the working expenses and earnings of each vehicle, as well as the number of miles run. The working expenses included cost of petrol, oil, wages, maintenance, interest, depreciation, and other incidentals. Earnings were based on fixed charges, calculated as nearly as possible to the actual costs to the Commission. For example, for passenger cars there was a fixed charge of 10d. per mile and 3s. 4d. per hour detention, whilst the rates charged for trucks and lorries engaged on works were based on the capacity of the respective vehicles. To avoid fluctuation in mileage costs a regular monthly charge was made against the working accounts to provide for expenditure on repairs and maintenance. A reserve was thus created and expenditure on these items was charged thereto as incurred. Another advantage claimed for the system was that it revealed at any time approximately the true value of any vehicle. The submission of monthly returns to executive officers showing full details of the working of each vehicle also formed part of the accounting organization. These returns, it was stated, were carefully examined, and any abnormal features investigated. It was pointed out that the Transport Branch did not aim at making a profit, the object being to give service at cost.

Interest and Depreciation.—Interest was charged at the rate of 6 per cent. Depreciation, which was very heavy in the Federal Capital Territory, was provided for on the following basis:—

	£
Fords and Morris-Cowleys	52 per annum
Armstrong-Siddleys and Crossleys	65 "
Trucks	52 "
Dodges	130 "
Thornycroft 5-ton lorries and Graham Dodge buses	169 "
A.E.C. buses	221 "

PURCHASE AND SALE OF CARS.

In evidence tendered to the Committee it was shown that no car was purchased by the Commission without the approval of the Chief Commissioner. It was stated that the policy of the Commission has been to purchase British cars. Old cars were offered for sale by public tender, the Tender Board of the Commission deciding whether the prices offered were reasonable. Acceptance of tenders was determined by the Commission on the recommendation of the Tender Board.

PUBLIC FACILITIES.

Garage Accommodation.—The only garage accommodation in Canberra for the general public was at Hotel Canberra and Brassey House. The Hotel Canberra garage provided accommodation for 34 cars, whilst six cars could be accommodated at Brassey House.

Motor Repair Work.—There was only one private garage in Canberra in which motor repairs could be undertaken, and that was in the industrial area at Ainslie. The service stations at Eastlake were not permitted to do any repair work, the reason being that the approved city plan provided that the industrial area should be north of the Molonglo River.

Private Car Hire.—It was represented that unreasonable charges were made by private enterprise in Canberra for motor car hire. Some form of control was thought desirable.

TRAFFIC CONTROL.

The Motor Traffic Ordinance, which is based substantially on the New South Wales traffic regulations, is controlled by the Federal Capital Commission as the executive body. Though provided with certain powers under the ordinance, it was stated that the Police Force had no executive authority. It was pointed out in evidence that the presence of garden plots in the centre of cross roads, the difficulty of negotiating turns from one thoroughfare to another, and the general layout of the city, rendered motoring dangerous if great care were not exercised. Opinions had been expressed that the presence of garden plots along the roads, particularly along the main arteries of traffic, constituted a danger to human life and a hindrance to traffic. On this matter, however, there appeared to be a considerable conflict of opinion.

Though power exists under the Traffic Ordinance to provide for speed limits, no such limits have been imposed, the only restriction placed on speed being that a driver of a car must not proceed in a manner dangerous to the public. It was stated in evidence that the imposition of speed limits would appreciably reduce the cost of road maintenance. Heavily-laden lorries travelling at high speeds were, it was said, responsible for most of the damage to the roads.

Under existing arrangements, licences to drive motor cars were issued by the Federal Capital Commission. It was stated that some of the tests for the issue of such licences were made by the Commission, and others by the Police.

Evidence shows that motor lorries registered in New South Wales have been carrying workmen between Canberra and Queanbeyan at a price much lower than charged by the owners of licensed public vehicles in the Federal Capital Territory. The vehicles in question are not licensed to carry passengers, and it is claimed that their operations are seriously affecting the business of owners of registered public vehicles and the City Omnibus Service. The present competition is considered most unfair to owners of licensed vehicles who are required to provide safe and commodious vehicles, and to pay special licence-fees for conducting a passenger service.

FOOTPATHS AND LIGHTING.

The absence of footpaths and lights along the main thoroughfares was said to represent a serious danger to pedestrian traffic, particularly at night time.

COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

After careful consideration of the evidence placed before it, the Committee is unanimously of opinion that certain matters connected with the transport service in the Federal Capital Territory call for early attention. The Committee fully recognizes that in the early stages of development of a national city it is difficult to provide adequately for all the immediate needs of a fluctuating population, and that time, progress and experience must, of necessity, be the main guiding factors in the provision or expansion of public utilities.

The Committee also recognizes that adequate transport facilities constitute a vital factor in the industrial, commercial and social life of a community, and, in the light of evidence tendered during the inquiry, the Committee is convinced that the existing omnibus service is not in keeping with the development of the city and the needs of the people.

It was stated by the transport authorities that the operation of a new time-table from the 1st March, 1928, following upon the purchase of four new omnibuses, would ensure a much improved service. From observations made and information received, however, the Committee is forced to the conclusion that the recent addition to the fleet is not sufficient to adequately cope with the traffic offering. The Committee is of opinion that the small omnibuses are not suitable for the service required of them, their very limited carrying capacity and already manifested liability to frequent breakdowns rendering them of little value.

The Committee is not satisfied with the methods that were employed by the Federal Capital Commission in relation to the purchase of the new omnibuses. When tenders were received, the Committee considers that some competent officer should have been despatched to inspect the various types of vehicles offered to ascertain their relative merits for the purpose required. Evidence shows, however, that no such inspections were made. The Committee also views with disfavour the fact that it has been found necessary to make such a number of alterations to the new vehicles.

Other factors operating against the efficient conduct of the city omnibus service are:—

- Infrequency of the service;
- Non-observance of time-tables;
- Failure of drivers to stop buses when hailed;
- Overcrowding of buses;
- Inadequacy of night service causing serious restriction on social life;
- Absence of shelter sheds;
- Absence of suitable destination boards and distinctive lights on buses;
- Absence of lights and notice boards at termini and main sections.

Recognizing the necessity and importance of an efficient transport service, and the desirability of alleviating the existing disabilities suffered by the people, the Committee recommends:—

- The provision of check clocks to ensure observance of time-tables;
- Stricter supervision of drivers and conductors;
- The erection of shelter sheds at termini and main stopping places;
- The installation of destination boards on omnibuses, with provision for distinctive lights for night service;
- The provision of lights and notice boards at termini and main intermediate sections.

The Committee considers the adequate provision of footpaths and street lighting an urgent necessity. It is recognized that a considerable amount of work has already been done in the direction of affording facilities for pedestrian traffic; but the Committee is strongly of opinion that, in the interest of public safety and convenience, special attention should be given to these very important utilities in connexion with the future constructional activities of the Commission. The Committee also holds the view that, wherever possible, footpaths should be constructed along the shortest possible routes leading to the various centres of population. By this means pedestrian traffic would be largely removed from the main thoroughfares, thereby minimizing the danger to human life and giving greater facility to vehicular traffic. Moreover, the provision of footpaths as suggested should be much more economical than constructing footpaths parallel with the main roads.

With regard to traffic control, the Committee is of opinion that, in the interests of public safety, speed limits should be imposed. The damage done to the roads by heavily-laden vehicles travelling at high speed also influences the Committee in its opinion on this matter. On the question of speed limits, the following extract from a report by the Special Traffic Officer of the Victorian Police Department, who recently returned from a world tour of inspection, is of interest:—

"In almost all the cities I visited there are speed limits. In America the most generally adopted method for formulating speed regulations has been to distinguish rates for specified areas, and, in addition, to make special regulations for various localities such as railway crossings, schools and parks. The rates permitted range from eight to twenty miles per hour, and in open country roads from ten to thirty-five miles per hour. Speed limits are also general in England, and range from ten to thirty miles per hour in congested areas."

The present system of having two examining bodies to conduct tests preliminary to obtaining motor licences is not favoured by the Committee, its opinion being that, for the sake of uniformity, there should be only one examining authority, and that, in the interests of public safety, tests should be strict and comprehensive.

Instances of unreasonable charges for private motor hire having been brought under notice, the Committee is of opinion that there should be some regulation of charges made by private enterprise for car hire. To this end, the Committee recommends that, in the interests of the general public, legislation should be enacted, on lines similar to that in existence in other capital cities, to regulate and control cars plying, kept or let out for hire.

The Committee considers that immediate action should be taken to compel owners of all vehicles carrying passengers for gain to comply with the law. The Committee is of opinion that it is most unfair to owners of registered public vehicles to have to compete with vehicles which are unlicensed for the conveyance of passengers and do not conform to the requirements of the law.

It was revealed in evidence that an employee of the Transport Branch of the Federal Capital Commission was dismissed from the service in March, 1927, because of serious improprieties. In September, 1926, the same employee was charged with a number of irregularities, some of which were proven. Careful consideration of the evidence tendered in relation to this matter induces the Committee to the opinion that action should have been taken earlier to dispense with the services of the employee in question.

The Committee takes a serious view of the absence of garage accommodation at most of the hotels in Canberra. It is felt that it is not reasonable to expect residents and tourists staying at the hotels to leave valuable cars out in the open, unprotected and exposed to all weathers. Already reported losses include a motor car, large quantities of petrol and many fittings. Moreover, the Committee considers that the absence of garage facilities is not calculated to create a favorable impression in the minds of visiting tourists. Apart from the question of convenience, the garages should represent a fair source of revenue to the Commission.

Walter Kingsmill
WALTER KINGSMILL,
Chairman.

Office of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts,
Parliament House,
Canberra, 21st March, 1928.