

Houses, stores and factories are as important in the community as bill-boards, but local building regulations consistent with the general laws and state regulations do not have to receive the approval of any state commission in order to be effective. (See G. L. Chapter 143, Section 3; also Chapter 40, Section 24.)

For whose special benefit were bill-boards given this special advantage over everything else requiring regulation? Not, certainly, for the benefit of the towns and cities of Massachusetts. The principal beneficiaries are the big bill-board advertising corporations, whose expert legislative counsel have appeared at the hearings and worked untiringly to defeat this bill, as they last year succeeded in doing. Next come the men employed by them in the decoration of our highways and some concerns who sell them the materials for their 12 and 15 feet high bill-boards. It would be an economic benefit to Massachusetts if these men were turned to more useful employment and the materials put into the building of homes.

These corporations by national organization are seeking with some success to control the out-door advertising of the United States. One of the principal reasons they have not been able to exploit their business so successfully abroad is that in most foreign civilized lands - such for example as England, France and the leading South American countries - the control of bill-boards is vested in the local Municipalities.

The towns and cities of Massachusetts, however, are not asking in this bill for the full control enjoyed by foreign municipalities. The making of general rules for the state would be left exactly where it is now, - in the hands of the Highway Division; the bill asks only that the right of the cities and towns to "further regulate" by local by-laws, "not inconsistent with said rules", as contemplated by the law of 1920, be not nullified by the "weasel words" it proposes to strike out.

We do not wish to reflect in any way on the present Commissioners, some of whom wish to retain their unprecedented power; but the only other opposition that has appeared against the amendment is wholly selfish. The bill-board interests oppose it, because conformity to various local rules will cause them more inconvenience than conformity only to rules of state-wide application. But they cannot expect the people's mandate in the constitution to be overruled in order to save them any inconvenience. No good reason has been suggested why they should not be placed in the same position in regard to local regulation as other contractors.

None of the advocates of this bill at the hearings have had any private interests to serve, or are paid for their efforts. It was the same in the Constitutional Convention when counsel for bill boards interests tried in vain to prevent the passage of the constitutional amendment which was supported by the leaders of that convention.