



FABIAN TRACT, No. 33.

THE FABIAN MUNICIPAL PROGRAM, No. 4

# MUNICIPAL TRAMWAYS.

(RE-WRITTEN MAY 1895.)

## Why we want Municipal Tramways.

In every large town or thickly populated district, tramways have now become a necessity. Unhealthy areas are constantly being demolished, with the result that the workers are driven from the slums and rookeries where they used to herd. They are thus being more and more forced to live in the suburbs of great cities; and cheap, rapid and regular means must be provided to convey them to and from their work.

The companies are organizations of capitalists for running tramways as a means of gaining profits. They only care for big dividends; and dirty cars, high fares, and shamefully overworked drivers and conductors are matters of quite secondary importance. Supply and demand, they say, must arrange these details. The first business of the directors is to earn a good dividend; and it is their last business also. So long as the dividends do not go down, the shareholders ask no questions. This system may suit the capitalists well enough, but it suits no one else.

### I. TRAMWAYS MUST BE WORKED IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

We want tramways for the public; low fares; comfortable cars; and well ordered waiting-rooms at every terminus, properly warmed in winter, and provided with time-tables. We want lines pushed into suburbs and through trams running at frequent intervals, in order to induce the workers to live out in the healthier districts.

### II. FAIR TREATMENT OF LABOR.

We want tramway men properly paid for a forty-eight hours week. No public body can work a man 115 hours a week for 21/- (as the Bradford company did), or 98 hours for 24/-, as till recently was common enough in London.

### III. THE PROFITS FOR THE PUBLIC.

The shareholders have made dividends enough out of their monopoly. In future we want the profit for the public.

## The Tramways of the United Kingdom.

There are in the United Kingdom thirty-seven public authorities and 116 companies owning tramways. These tramways use 30,528 horses, 564 locomotives, and 4,179 cars. The number of men employed is not given, but it must amount to something like 20,000. The total number of passengers carried during the year 1893-4 was 616,972,830. On 975 miles of lines in use, £14,388,698 has been expended. The gross receipts during the year were £3,615,837, and the net profit was £756,781; giving a return of over  $5\frac{1}{4}$  per cent., or something like 1 per cent. greater profit than is obtained from the capital invested in railways. It is obvious therefore that municipalities, which can now borrow at 3 per cent., can profitably invest in tramways yielding  $5\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. The clear  $2\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. surplus on the £10,501,164 of capital belonging to private shareholders is £236,275

a year. This is the golden stream which the apathy of public authorities allows to flow into the pockets of the capitalist class.

### Municipal Ownership at Work.

Already thirty-seven local authorities own their tramlines, and in most cases lease them to companies which pay a considerable rent. For example, Birmingham has leased its lines so as to yield 4 per cent., and after 1896 5 per cent., on the cost, and the company contributes to a sinking fund which will have paid off the capital expended by the time the lease expires. Manchester has received nearly £60,000 in relief of rates over and above interest on capital, and £77,000 has been received towards repayment of the principal. London, indeed, is said to be the only large city where the tramway companies have used the streets without paying for the privilege.

By the Tramways Act, 1870, under which tramway companies are formed, the local authority has power at the end of twenty-one years from the date of the concession to take over the lines at the actual value of the stock and plant. In 1891 the London County Council availed itself of the first opportunity of beginning to acquire the tramways; and after vehement opposition from the Moderates, and lawsuits carried to the House of Lords, it has succeeded in acquiring, for £129,798, four-and-a-quarter miles of tramlines and plant which were valued by the company at £604,090. As the opportunity for taking over the remainder has not arrived, the County Council cannot at present conveniently work the part it has acquired, and it has therefore agreed to lease its property to the London Street Tramways Company for three or five years, providing in the lease that the cars be kept in order to the satisfaction of the L.C.C. inspector, that workmen's cars be run, that fares be not raised on Sundays and holidays, and that no employee be worked longer than sixty hours in a week, eleven hours in any one day, or an average of ten hours each in any two consecutive days; and finally that a rent be paid yielding  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. on the Council's outlay. Moreover, the newly-elected Council has applied for power to work the lines itself, and the House of Commons has passed the Bill.

Every other local authority where tramways exist will have a similar opportunity as the twenty-one years' term expires, and should on no account neglect to use its power. By insisting on proper terms in the lease, not only financial gain but many other advantages can be secured. Manchester, for example, has since 1875 stipulated for a service of workmen's cars, morning and evening, at hours to be approved by the Council, and at fares not exceeding  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per mile with a minimum of 1d. Edinburgh has recently purchased thirteen miles of tramways for £185,000, borrowed at 3 per cent., and has leased them to a company at 7 per cent. on all the capital expended. It has bargained for an improved service, and for a reduction of hours of labor from sixty-one to fifty-four.

### Municipal Management at Work.

A number of towns have already evicted the capitalist from their tram lines with marked success.

*Huddersfield* (steam tram) led the way in this reform. Its men have an eight hours day and fair wages. The policy of the Town

Council has been to extend its tramways over its large area (the town is a collection of villages, and there are twenty-three miles of single track lines for a population of 100,000), and to provide a good, cheap service, even at some expense to the ratepayers. The latest return for ten months to January, 1895, shows a loss of £1,020 after allowing £7,916 for interest, sinking fund and depreciation.

*Blackpool*, during the year ending March, 1894, the first complete year of municipal management, obtained a profit of £2,239, or over 7 per cent. on a capital of £31,433.

*Plymouth* purchased its tramways mainly "in order to get rid of the company management, which had failed to give the public an efficient service, and which had exhibited no inconsiderable disregard of public convenience and remonstrances. And in the second place, to place the direction and control of the policy of tramway extension in the hands of the Council as representing the general body of ratepayers for the general benefit of the borough, instead of leaving the tramway-system to be developed and extended for the purpose of securing profits to shareholders without regard to local necessities" (Report of Town Council, 31st December, 1894.) For six months to September, 1894, there was a loss of £601, after payment of interest and £197 to sinking fund, and £234 as an exceptional charge for interest. But as the number of passengers carried increased in eleven months of 1894 by 198,578, or 23 per cent., the Corporation is confident of the future. Time-tables have been issued, a waiting-room fitted up, and the employees provided with partial uniform.

*Glasgow*, for the first six months of public management ending 31st December, 1894, had a credit balance after reducing fares in some cases 33 per cent., paying a rent to the city funds at the rate of £9,000 a year, as well as all charges and interest.

*Leeds* took over the management of fourteen miles of its tramways on 1st February, 1894, and for five months to June 30th, the net receipts were £1,355, being at the rate of 2 $\frac{3}{4}$  per cent. on a capital of £117,357.

### Free Trams for the Future.

What we want is free tramways. Roads and bridges are free to all. Already we have a free steam ferry on the Thames at Woolwich. It is for the benefit of all that some should live far from the centres of the towns. Indeed, the re-housing of the people will necessitate the spreading out of the population over an ever wider area, and will compel many more workers to live at a distance from their work. Why should those who do this have to expend money as well as time as a penalty for so doing?

The municipalities must not merely own the tramways but must work them in the public interest. They must have power to make the tramways as free as the highways for the use of all, and the cost must be paid out of the Unearned Increment of Land Values, which now goes into the pockets of the landlords.

The statistics have been chiefly obtained from (1) Board of Trade Return of Tramways, 30th June, 1894 (H. C. 270); (2) *Municipalities at Work*, by F. Dolman (Methuen, 1895); (3) Information supplied direct by the municipal authorities of the places named.

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