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 PROFIT 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 forty-two public authorities and 117 companies owning tramways. These tramways use 37,342 horses, 492 locomotives, and 4,864 cars. The number of men employed is not given, but it must amount to considerably over 30,000. The total number of passengers carried during the year 1896-7 was
788,569,669. On 1,031 miles of lines in use, £14,865,110 has been
expended. The gross receipts during the year were £4,235,936, and
the net profit was £1,037,149; giving a return of almost 7 per cent.,
or something like 3 per cent., greater profit than is obtained from the
capital invested in railways. It is obvious therefore that municipal-
ities, which can now borrow at 3 per cent., can profitably invest in
tramways yielding 7 per cent. The clear 4 per cent, surplus on the
£10,405,622 of capital belonging to private shareholders is £416,224
a year. This is the golden stream which the apathy of public author-
ities allows to flow into the pockets of the capitalist class.

**Municipal Ownership at Work.**

Already forty-two local authorities own their tram lines. In
the past the rule has been to lease the lines out to companies which
pay a considerable rent. For example, Birmingham 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. Between 1891 and 1898 the
London County Council repeatedly availed itself of these powers.
Considerable opposition was shown by the Moderates; and the com-
panies refused to give way until they had been defeated in several
law-suits, carried even to the House of Lords. In 1891 the Council
purchased 44 miles of tram lines and plant for £129,768, though the
company had asked £604,090. It leased them to the London Street
Tramways Company for a short term. In 1897 the Council pur-
chased 43½ miles, at the price of £10,000 per mile of double lines,
from the North Metropolitan Tramways Company. A great struggle
took place over this, the Moderates wanting to lease out the lines,
the Progressives demanding that they should be worked by the
Council itself. Eventually the Moderates won, and leased them,
together with the 44 miles of lines purchased in 1891, to the North
Metropolitan Tramways Company for fourteen years, providing in the
lease that workmen’s cars be run, that fares be not raised on
Sundays and holidays, and that the hours and wages of labor be not
worsened. The rent is a fixed sum of £45,000 a year, and a further
sum equal to 12½ per cent. on the amount by which the gross receipts
in each year exceed the gross receipts in 1895. It is estimated that
the ratepayers will, by 1910, have benefited to the extent of £582,032.
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 3d. 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.**

But the municipal policy on tramways has now changed. The up-to-date town now runs its own trams. 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-one 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 return for 1895-6 shows a clear profit of £1,178 after paying interest and sinking fund.

**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). The receipts have so far covered cost and interest, but not quite the sinking fund. The authorities are confident that even this item will in a short time be covered by the in-takings, and that there will be a surplus to go into the coffers of the municipality. Time-tables have been issued, a waiting-room fitted up, and the employees provided with partial uniform.

**Glasgow** took over its lines in 1894. It has reduced the fares, and both as regards wages and hours greatly improved the condition of its servants. The undertaking has proved an unqualified success. For the year 1896-7 there was a profit of £84,596.

**Leeds** has been equally successful. It also took over its lines in 1894. It has made a profit from the first. In 1896-7 the net receipts were £13,664, from which sinking fund had to be paid. This is equal to 6½ per cent. on a capital of £210,699.

**Blackpool**, during the year ending June, 1897, obtained a profit of £3,167, or about 5 per cent. on a capital of £62,934. In the year 1894-5 the net profit was £3,442, or nearly 7½ per cent. on a capital of £47,826.
Liverpool bought out its tramway lessees in 1897, and is now working the lines itself.

During 1897 and 1898 most of the large towns applied for powers to work their own trams. Every year sees an addition to the number of municipal services.

**Free Trams for the Future.**

The next move onwards must be 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 town. 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, 1897 (H. C. 375); (2) Municipalities at Work, by F. Dolman (Methuen, 1895); (3) information supplied directly by the municipal authorities of the places named; (4) Duncan's Tramway Manual.

**FABIAN SOCIETY.**—The Fabian Society consists of Socialists. A statement of its Rules; particulars of the conditions upon which members will lecture in London or the country; and the following publications can be obtained from the Secretary, at the Fabian Office, 276 Strand, London, W.C.

**FABIAN ESSAYS IN SOCIALISM.** (50th Thousand.)

Library Edition, 6/-; or, direct from the Secretary for Cash. 46 (postage, 4d.).

Cheap Edition, Paper cover, 1/-; plain cloth, 2/-.

At all booksellers, or post free from the Secretary for 1/- and 2/- respectively.

**FABIAN TRACTS and LEAFLETS.**

Tracts, each 15 to 32 pp., price 1d., or 9d. per dos., unless otherwise stated.

Leaflets, 4 pp. each, price 1d. for six copies, or 1s. per 100.


Boxes for set, 1s., post free 1s. 3d.

### III.—On Local Governing Bodies: How to use them.


**FABIAN MUNICIPAL PROGRAM (Nos. 30 to 37).**

1. The Unearned Increment. 2. London's Heritage in the City Guilds.


### IV.—On Books.

29. What to Read. A List of Books for Social Reformers. Contains the best books and blue-books relating to Economics, Socialism, Labor Movements, Poverty, etc. 3rd edn.; revised 1896. Stiff cover, 6d. each; or 4/6 per dos.

Printed by G. Standring, 7 Finsbury St., E.C., & published by the Fabian Society, 276 Strand.