

Tramway Topics

When converted to the duty, the tram was divided into six compartments and held 48 prisoners. Like all the other trams in Sydney, it deteriorated badly, so much so that one day about a year ago two men in the course of the short journey had no difficulty in sawing their way out to freedom.

DEATH AND RETIRING GRATUITIES.

Since our last issue, the undernoted retiring gratuities have been approved by the Board:—

Drvr. W. G. Gibson (61), 24 years' service, £302; Storeman T. W. Quin (65), 25 years, £668; Wheel Grinder J. J. Carter (65), 36 years, £639; Shed Labourer A. L. Edgecombe (65), 28 years, £520; Car Cleaner J. Henderson (50), 27 years, medically unfit, £326; Foreman Moulder J. E. Satchell (72), 14 years, £437; Con. C. C. Howe (48), 23 years, medically unfit, £266; Pit Labourer R. M. Thomson (46), 22 years, medically unfit, £195; Builders' Labourer F. A. Moody (65), 34 years, £558; Electric Welder C. Jonsen (55), 24 years, medically unfit, £97; Drvr. M. P. Faith (65), 34 years, £584; Signalman W. J. Manson (65), 34 years, £625; Watchman T. H. Wilson (58), 26 years, resigned, £82; Drvr. A. Fogarty (56), 21 years, resigned, £82; Drvr. A. J. Angleton (34), 11 years, resigned, £69; Rev. Clerk J. I. Bayley (29), 12 years, £104; Inspector H. McBean (65), 42 years, £870; Inspector J. H. Gillies (65), 31 years, £774; Depot Starter P. G. Blackham (65), 43 years, £729; Drvr. A. E. Milne (65), 39 years, £615; Drvr. B. H. Murdoch (48), 24 years, £82; Drvr. H. G. Wilson (55), 33 years, £266; Inspector T. Williamson (65), 28 years, £748; Drvr. W. F. McDonald (38), 11 years, £69; Car Painter W. L. Dernelley (43), 12 years, £92.

A death gratuity to the widow of the late Mr. R. J. G. Reynolds (53), 27 years' service, of £375, and another of £303 to the widow of the late Mr. E. A. Robertson (55), 25 years, have been paid.

THEY LIKE THEIR HORSE TRAMS.

They like their horse trams in Douglas, Isle of Man, while we, even after the lapse of more than 40 years, can still dip the bucket into the well of memory and draw up pleasant recollections of that leisurely ride from the pier to Onchan Point, with the lights from the three-mile Esplanade reflected in the calm waters of the bay. For sentimental reasons connected with vanished youth there will be many people even in Australia who will rejoice to know that the Douglas Town Council by 21 votes to 1 rejected a motion calling for the discontinuance of the horse trams. It is nice to think that there remains one place which has not been bitten by the craze for speed, and where the sight of people

doing their best to get nowhere in particular in a great hurry is unknown.

LORD ASHFIELD.

Story of a Lowly Lad Who Reached the Top.

The career of Lord Ashfield, who has resigned the Chairmanship of the London Transport Board following upon his appointment as a member of the British Transport Commission, illustrates once again how ability alone can take an ambitious lad from a lowly position to the top of his profession.

Albert Henry Stanley, first Baron Ashfield, was born at Derby in 1874 and while a child accompanied his parents to the United States, where his first job was that of boy messenger in the Detroit Street Railway Company. From messenger he went to odd-job man, and set himself to the task of acquiring a complete knowledge of the system, with so much success that at 18 years of age he was appointed Divisional Superintendent, the youngest man ever to hold such a position in the United States, or indeed in any other country for that matter. Two years later, and he is found in control of the whole street railway system of Detroit!

About here he took time off in order to serve in the U.S. Navy in the Spanish-American war, after which he resumed his march to the top by getting the appointment of General Manager of the Public Service Corporation of New Jersey. In 1907, at the ripe age of 32, he returned to his homeland as General Manager of the Metropolitan District Railway. Three years in that position fitted him for the Managing Directorship of the London Underground and its associated companies, in which capacity he began the work of unifying London's transport, a task which he continued when appointed Chairman of London Transport in 1933. Now he goes to a still wider sphere—one of the controllers of the whole of the transport of Britain.

A success story, if ever there was one, achieved, be it noted, despite the absence of all educational and social aids and influences.

GLASGOW'S ALL-NIGHT BUSES.

Fares on Glasgow's all-night buses have been increased. Casual travellers will pay 6d. irrespective of distance, while the normal charges are five stages (about two miles) for 3d., with 1d. for each additional two stages.

For 1946-47, the all-night buses made a loss of £20,000, the only trip to give a satisfactory return being the first about 1 a.m. But that, of course, is the experience of all-night services everywhere.

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THAT 4/-.

Another Aid to Inflation.

Doubts Arising Over the 5-Day Week.

That 4/- a week rise in the basic wage last week, which adds another £64,000 to the wages bill of the Board in a full year, keeps the ball of dearer living rolling along right merrily. It will be "passed on," of course, sooner or later—and, judging from past experience, sooner rather than later—with little additions creeping in here and there, so that, after we get through paying more for our milk, butter, tea, meat, bread, gas, electricity, railway travel, clothes, and so on, not forgetting that little extra donation to the Federal Treasurer, the 4/- will be as conspicuous as a snowflake in the river and of as much use to us as dust in the wind.

Since the Board made its first estimate of the cost of the 5-day week two years ago to the Arbitration Court (£298,000), the basic wage in Melbourne has increased by 15/- a week (including the 7/- and 4/-), which makes a difference to the wages bill of well over £200,000 a year. As overtime has to be paid on the higher wage, the final cost of the 5-day week compared with the 1946 estimate cannot be less than £500,000.

Mention of the 5-day week, rosters for which will be posted on the 15th April, reminds us that the proverbial second thoughts are stirring among those members of the A. T. & M. O. Employees' Association who voted so blithely some months ago in favour of that proposal. After two months' experience, the present roster is recognised generally as the best yet compiled, and doubts are being expressed freely whether the 5-day week will be any more satisfactory than the long week-end, which was going to be such a wonderful thing. It has occurred to those who have the deplorable habit, from the "Commo" point of view, of thinking

for themselves, that 40 hours spread over 5 days instead of 6 must inevitably result in a much longer working day. It is being argued that the extra day's leisure will be more than required to offset the strain of five long days, so that in the end the individual will be no better off than he is with the present 6-day week. Investigations made during recent weeks has brought us the undernoted opinions from the depots named:—

Kew.—Majority of the staff seem to favour continuing with the present rosters.

Glenhuntly.—Outside the Depot Committee and the delegates, 60 per cent. favour the present rosters, which are considered the best ever worked at the depot.

Hanna Street.—There is a definite swing in favour of retaining the 6-day week.

Camberwell.—If another vote was taken, there would be a 2 to 1 majority in favour of the present rosters.

Malvern.—There is a big majority in favour of the 5-day week.

Essendon.—The present rosters are very satisfactory. The older men view with concern the prospect of a 5-day week with its longer hours per day.

On the Inspectorial side, the consensus of opinion, it is gathered, is also in favour of the 6-day week, so there we have, to say the least, both sections of the traffic staff far from happy over the idea of the week's work being compressed into five days.

There is the final aspect—that in connection with this 5-day week the Board will be faced with the problem of how to find the huge sum necessary not only to meet the cost of the alteration, but to catch up with the higher prices prevailing for practically everything we use. Sydney and Adelaide have already increased each fare by 1d., so that the lowest ordinary fare is now 3d., and the Minister of Transport in N.S.W. has stated publicly that that addition is not sufficient.

BUSES CARRIED PICK-A-BACK.

As the Chairman informed one of the deputations from the A. T. & M. O. Employees' Association in December, the Board is having difficulty in procuring bodies for the 67 single-deck bus chassis procured from Leyland's. To meet the emergency, a Sydney tender for 30 bodies was accepted.

Because of the time and expense involved in sending the chasses by sea, it was decided to send them under their own power by road, and expense was cut again by carrying 15 chasses pick-a-back on other chasses.

Mounted on 8" x 4" sleepers bolted to the frame of the driven vehicles, the chasses were held in position by wood blocks at the side, front and rear of each wheel, and were securely lashed in addition. By filling all tanks, enough fuel for the double journey was carried. Deliveries are expected to begin at the end of February.

SYDNEY TO LOSE £500,000 THIS YEAR.

Although the N.S.W. Government's trams and buses had an increase of £811,000 in revenue for the six months which ended on the 31st December, the Minister for Transport (Mr. O'Sullivan) has announced that the higher wages and improved conditions had absorbed it all, and that the Road Transport and Tramways Department was still likely to show a loss for the year of £500,000. The Premier (Mr. McGirr) was even more pessimistic, for he has budgeted for a loss of £547,000.

The announcement of the 2/- rise in the basic wage in February was followed promptly by the intimation that there would have to be another increase in fares.

TROLLEYBUSITIS.

An Amusing Outbreak of the Disease.

Early in January there was, thanks to the strike, a slight outbreak of what we may term trolleybusitis in a section of the Melbourne Press. Transport men found it diverting because the writers from all the evidence did not possess even slight elementary knowledge of the vehicle. One young gentleman, for instance, informed his readers that a point in favour of the trolleybus was that "they eliminated overhead gear—standards and cables in the middle of the streets," obviously in cheerful ignorance of the fact that the vehicle requires four overhead wires for a double track in place of the tram's two. He cited approvingly London's trolleybuses, unaware that there have been no trolleybus extensions in London for more than seven years, and that 15 months ago the London Transport Board intimated that it was going to abandon trolleybuses, despite a capital expenditure of £7,000,000 in five

years, and that its policy was to replace them with Diesel buses.

It may, or may not, be significant that in Australia the route mileage of trolleybuses has increased by only a few miles since the vehicles were first introduced, and certainly in the largest street transport system of the Continent, Sydney, there has been no move to add to the initial installation. Even were it desired to do so, many months would elapse before the necessary vehicles could be obtained. Transport authorities everywhere are finding it a matter of the greatest difficulty to procure buses of any kind in the numbers required for replacement purposes, let alone vehicles for new services. Steel, timber, glass, paint, are in such short supply, with small components and accessories also scarce and spasmodic in delivery, that the manufacturers of buses in Britain are utterly unable to keep pace with the demand for vehicles wanted urgently to replace rolling stock which has been worn out by the arduous demands of the war years. London Transport, for example, has had to hire 300 buses from private operators, and even with these is still a long way short of bare requirements.

No transport man has any objection to trolleybuses as such. In their own sphere, outside the areas of mass loading, they can do a good transport job, though a suggestion to catapult them into the middle of an efficient, co-ordinated tramway system is just stupid, and if put into effect would be financially bad. They would complicate quite needlessly the problems of overhaul and maintenance, and they would not be available for reinforcing services edsewhere in response to some traffic emergency. With their expensive overhead gear, so susceptible to dewirements, plus the rubber tyres which limits the loading capacity, they cannot compete with the tram in moving peak crowds, and no transport authority anywhere in the world has ever attempted to use them for that purpose.

On the other hand, the tram reaches its economic best when handling dense traffic. It is unquestionably the best street transport vehicle for large cities. The last issue of the "Transit Fact Book," the official journal of the American Transit Association, says that "the reliance placed by the large cities in the street car is evident from the returns, which show that only a little more than a quarter of the bus passengers, and less than a quarter of the trolleybus passengers, originated in cities of over 500,000, whereas approximately 70 per cent. of all street car passengers came from such urban areas."

This predominance of the tram in the largest cities of the States can be shown in another way.

THE BILL FOR IT ALL.

The "unwarranted tram stoppage," as the Conciliation Commissioner (Mr. Blackburn) called it, which lasted from the last trams and buses on the evening of January 3 to the morning of January 17, caused a loss of approximately £154,000 in revenue and £60,000 in wages to those concerned. It was the longest and costliest strike in the history of the Board.

From the Board's point of view, there was at least one good feature—the stoppage enabled the Bus Superintendent and his staff to catch up a bit on the arrears of maintenance.

AN EXTRAORDINARY AWARD.

Wage Increase Nine Times the Net Income!

Even more so than in Australia, prices of everything appear to be spiralling viciously in the United States, and the cost of providing transport is no exception; in fact, it seems to be one of the leaders in the inflation race. Some recent wage increases appear to have been given without any thought at all to either the ability of the undertaking concerned to pay them or to the public re-action to the immediate rises in fares.

By a majority decision, for example, the Arbitration Panel in Washington, D.C., signed an award which gave the employees of the Capital Transit Co. an increase of 15 cents. an hour, bringing up their wage to 1 dollar 35 cents. per hour, with the overtime rate at 2 dollars 2½ cents. per hour. With other increases relating to holidays, night work, Sundays and other allowances, the award increased the Company's operating costs by 2,310,000 dollars per annum, just nine times more than the total net income of the Company for the first nine months of the year! As most of the items were made retrospective to July 1, the Company had at once to find 500,000 dollars, not an easy matter when one is already more than 1,000,000 "in the red."

As operations have been conducted at a very heavy loss, the Company had no option, pending the granting of its application for substantial increases in fares, but to cut down services during the off-peak hours, and wipe out entirely the peak hour express services.

PRISON TRAM'S LAST LOAD.

Just the other issue we told how in one town in Germany trams have to be used as hearses. Now comes the news that in Sydney the prisoner's tram, which has made four trips daily between Long Bay gaol and Darlinghurst Police Station for the last 30 years, has made its last journey.

In cities with populations of from 500,000 to 1,000,000 and upwards, the tram route mileage is 5,240 as compared with but 278 miles for the trolleybus, while the trams in such cities last year transported 6,343,000,000 passengers as against the 305,000,000 carried by the trolleybus.

RAPID TRANSIT WITH P.C.C. TRAMS.

From plans now in preparation, Cleveland Transport System hopes to be able in October next to start on the construction of a four-mile stretch of rapid transit roadway at a cost of 8,000,000 dollars. The job involves building 2,000 ft. of subway, nine bridges and underpasses and more than 1,000 ft. of deep cut with reclaiming walls.

When the change in service is made to the rapid transit route, new P.C.C. trams of the type which have been so successful on the Superior Avenue route will be put into operation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

Inspector Cameron, who had the misfortune to lose his wife early this year, desires to acknowledge gratefully the many floral tributes and expressions of sympathy received from all sections of the staffs in Camberwell, Hawthorn and Kew Depots.

ANOTHER COMPLIMENT.

Perth Asks for Our Roster Expert.

Perth seems to be adopting the sensible and logical course before deciding whether the 40-hour week should be spread over six or five days.

Rosters have been prepared for both, and while the Western Australian Tramways Department would prefer to have a 6-day week the Perth Tramways Employees' Union has not come to a decision. It has been decided to hold a ballot, but before that is done the Union desires that the rosters be examined by an expert to ascertain whether they could be improved, and whether certain runs which are considered to operate harshly cannot be amended. As the Union recognised that no member in its ranks had sufficient knowledge to fit him to make such an examination, it requested the Department to procure the loan of an expert from Melbourne to examine and report upon the two rosters.

Although the Commissioner has full confidence in his rostering staff, he at once agreed to the request, and air-mailed our Chairman (Mr. H. H. Bell) asking for the loan of one of our roster experts. Appreciating the compliment paid to our staff by both the Commissioner and the Union, Mr. Bell promptly telegraphed his willingness to assist. The Assistant-Manager (Mr. Misson) flew to Perth and spent 10 profitable days in that city.