

Tramway Topics

The Official Bulletin of The Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board

Volume 3

September, 1945

Number 31

THE YEAR'S WORK.

New Records for Revenue, Passengers and Expenses.

As was only to be expected, the rate of increase in revenue earned and in passengers carried during the year which ended on the 30th June last, while far below the levels of the four previous years, was sufficient to set up new records in these directions. Due to the reductions in staff at various establishments in the Fisherman's Bend and Mari-byrnong areas, the revenue earned by the buses fell quite a bit below last year's figure. The substantial losses sustained in operating the bus services in these two districts, coupled with a new high record in expenses, meant that the net improvement for the year was but £11,010 on operation.

All the indications since the start of the current financial year conduce to the belief that we are approaching, if we have not already reached, the high water mark in revenue and passengers. Certain it is that we may expect from now on a most substantial reduction in the bus traffic to the aircraft and munition plants. There will be no sad tears shed over that, however, for the transport of aircraft and munition workers has been the most unprofitable form of activity ever undertaken by the Board. It may be that as the months go on and more peacetime industries get into production that the general traffic will increase; but that seems to depend upon how soon materials of all sorts will be available. At the moment there is nothing to suggest that even the small increase reported for the last year will be maintained this year. With the extra petrol now available for private users, along with the possibility that rationing will be ended before very long, it is certain that more people will be using their cars to get to and from business. During the past

year, the number of motor vehicles of all classes on the roads went up by 11,770, and it is only reasonable to anticipate a further increase this year. During the period under review, 273 private buses operated over 84 routes, while 36 motor cabs were running over 11 routes.

The very marked reliability of the tram as compared with the bus was again strikingly evident. While the number of trams withdrawn from service because of defects amounted to 3,429, the number of buses withdrawn was nearly three times as great, 9,232, although the average maximum number of trams in service daily was 581 as compared with but 229 buses. On a percentage basis, the trams withdrawn per 1,000 miles was .15 as against 1.13 for the buses. The miles lost per 1,000 miles were .0007 for the trams and 2.56 for the buses. The dependability of the tram meant more regular service; the frequency of breakdowns in the case of the buses meant frequently additional overcrowding and delay for those buses remaining to carry on the service.

During the year 136,353 trips were checked, and from these no fewer than 15,479 irregularities were reported. The extent to which over-riding of sections is being practised is glimpsed through the fact that 5,902 passengers were discovered doing so. Unpaid fares numbered 5,566. For the last few years ticket examiners have had to perform many other duties, and so the trips checked are but a fraction of those run. Assuming similar irregularities on the unchecked trips, it is clear that on a very conservative basis the Board is losing £250,000 a year.

While the letter-to-the-editor addicts burst frequently into song over the number of traffic offences they see committed by our drivers, it is apparent that the police do not see much cause for complaint.

During the year they felt it necessary to launch prosecutions against but 16 of the Board's employees. On the other side, we had 58 prosecutions for infringements of the Board's by-laws. The fines totalled £116, and the costs awarded against the defendants £48.

To mark the conclusion of a most successful year, the Board voted a bonus to all employees, including those in the Services. The cost was £27,900.

VIENNA CUTS ELECTRICITY TO KEEP TRAMS.

Vienna Town Council decided recently to cut electric supplies to private consumers still further in order to maintain the tram services.

Electricity in the Austrian capital will be in short supply until the large hydro-electric stations, so efficiently bombed by the Allied airmen, have been repaired.

THANKS FOR THE BONUS.

Many expressions of thanks, especially from men in the Services, have been received by the Board in connection with the bonus of six £1 War Savings Certificates. Typical of all is the following from a Sergeant in the A.I.F.:—

"I can say without fear of contradiction that there is no other business—Government, semi-Government or private—that has done so much, or considered their employees more, than the Melbourne Tramways Board . . . It is my ambition to return to my job when I have completed my work with the A.I.F., and show my gratitude by giving the Board the best that is within me."

GLASGOW'S RECORD FIGURES.

For the year which ended on the 31st May last, the 1,207 trams of the Glasgow Corporation Transport Department carried 571,600,000 passengers, the 544 buses dealt with 136,260,000, while the 50 underground cars served 34,200,000 passengers.

The Department is easily the most successful of its kind in the world. Although capital expenditure on the system up to date has reached £10,600,000, the outstanding loan debt is but £200,000, and against that there is £1,600,000 at the credit of the Depreciation and Per. Way Renewals Fund. At £4,572,000, the revenue for the year was a record.

Although not yet permitted to make bus bodies—an application on the subject will be dealt with

shortly—the Department is otherwise self-contained, and is one of the few municipal undertakings allowed to operate its own power station. That station is so efficient that, notwithstanding the present high price of coal—treble the pre-war cost—the expense of generating current was only 0.485d. per unit.

OUR CLOTHING FACTORY.

The continued receipt of orders for uniforms from the Railway Commissioners and the Police Department is a pleasing compliment to the quality of the work turned out by our Clothing Factory. During the year, 1,253 garments were supplied to the Railways and 204 to the Police, while 9,955 were manufactured for our own staff.

When a private contractor was making the uniforms there were never-ceasing complaints about delay and quality, both from individual members of the staff and the Tramways Association. Since the Stores Branch has been running the factory, these complaints have been eliminated. Workmanship and quality are alike excellent, while the manner in which the garment production is controlled enables uniforms to be manufactured and held in stock prior to the replacement dates.

The factory nowadays does not confine itself to uniform manufacture; roller towels, coin bags and filters for gas producer units are some of the other items which are now being turned out at Hawthorn, and which all help to make us independent of outside suppliers. Included in the uniform list were such items as 1,971 tunics, 2,575 pairs of trousers, 947 coats and skirts for conductresses, 525 summer jackets, 350 overcoats for conductresses and 800 for drivers and conductors, 633 khaki drill tunics, and 440 khaki cloth shirts for conductresses.

The establishment of the clothing factory has been a highly profitable venture for the Board. After allowing for the increased costs for labour and materials, there was for last year an estimated saving to the Board of £12,300 compared with the charges which would have been made by the previous private contractor.

TROLLEY BUS EXTENSION OPPOSED.

When a recommendation by the Transport Committee to extend the trolley bus system was submitted to the South Shields Council, opposition strong was experienced that the plan was remitted

back for further consideration. One Councillor contended that within 10 years trolley buses would be obsolete.

THE "OLD 'UNS" CARRY ON.

It was only the other day, when examining the records of the Medical Department, that we realised fully that during the last few years the greater portion of the task of keeping the services going fell upon the shoulders of the older employees, men with 20 years of service and upwards. Five of these "old 'uns" were examined during the year, their astonishing records being:—

(a)	Joined Service	1909.	No days lost through sickness
(b)	"	1911.	" " "
(c)	"	1912.	" " "
(d)	"	1912.	" " "
(e)	"	1913.	" " "

Another member of the old brigade went off injured on duty in June, 1944, after 45 years' service without one day lost. He was not happy until marked "fit for duty" after seven days of idleness. Joining the service in 1899 as a boy in one of the cable power houses, he is still fit and active and going strong.

TROUBLE FOR NEWCASTLE.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Corporation is meeting with opposition and expense over its desire to take its trolley bus system into neighbouring municipalities.

Wallsend Corporation considers that the Newcastle plans are prejudicial to Wallsend, and the Trolley Bus Bill is therefore to be opposed before the Select Committee of Parliament.

OUR S.W. 6 TRAMS.

While during the year Preston Workshops turned out 10 trams of the S.W. 6 type, bringing up the number in service to 50, with another seven on the point of completion, and six under construction, our programme in this respect is well behind schedule, due to shortage of staff and lack of space. In connection with the latter factor, major repairs, due mainly to collisions, to 192 trams, were chiefly responsible for the congestion, while the staff difficulty will be evident when it is pointed out that the number engaged throughout the year, notwithstanding the higher demands for repair, maintenance and construction, was below the 1938 figure. So far as space is concerned, some relief will be

gained when the extensions to the paint, carbody and truck shops are completed.

Notwithstanding all difficulties, however, the Workshops succeeded in maintaining the high standard of efficiency exhibited in former years. The number of trams available for traffic during peak periods averaged throughout the year 95.43 per cent. of the total stock—a remarkable figure. Just the other year an undertaking in the United States got a medal or something for an average of 87 per cent. Another efficiency test is the mileage per change-over for defects. There were 2,952 change-overs, the mileage per change-over being 22,960. For causes other than defects, 435 trams were changed over for broken windows, 549 for collisions, 711 through being soiled by sickness, 147 for flat wheels, and 120 for miscellaneous reasons.

With the fitting of 311 air-operated windscreen wipers, the total now fitted has advanced to 677, while 79 trams have been supplied with opaque glass to counteract the effects of glare.

BUSES CONSIDERED FOR A SHIP CANAL.

The Manchester Regional Town Planning Committee is considering a plan for the operation of regular water bus services, utilising DUKW's on the Manchester Ship Canal.

The proposal is to establish regular services across the canal between Irlam and Partington, at a point near the present Flixton ferry, and along the entire length between Manchester and New Brighton, the Merseyside seaside resort. Ramps to enable the buses to by-pass the canal locks by travelling overland for a short distance before re-entering the canal again could, it is claimed, be built at a small cost.

BERLIN TRANSPORT SITUATION.

With the re-opening of 64 of the underground stations, all put out of action by bombing, the transport situation in Berlin is improving. While it has been found possible to restore 27 of the bus routes in the outer suburbs—used as cross-city and feeder routes—much work has yet to be done in Berlin proper before the fine tram system can function as before.

MAINTAINING THE PERMANENT WAY.

Few people realise the amount of work which goes into the maintenance of the per. way, even if motorists show their appreciation by using it

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wherever possible. Despite all difficulties the tracks were maintained last year to a standard which, if less high than in pre-war years, nevertheless was at a much higher level than the rest of the road, the responsibility of the municipalities.

To mention just a few of the items—3,249 feet of double track was lifted and packed, 272,882 feet of double track was surface-patched alongside the rails, 424,223 feet were top dressed, and 9,343 feet of rails were re-fastened. Then 79,983 feet of rails were ground for removal of corrugations, 636 miles of single track were scrubbed, while the mechanical track cleaner operated over 16,965 miles of single track.

TRANSPORT TO PAY—AS USUAL.

All the world over, when a Government or a Municipal Council experiences a spot of financial bother, the street surface transport undertaking becomes the milch cow. Which is why such concerns support from their profits such totally-unrelated things as fire brigades and banquets to distinguished strangers, and hospitals and public parks. Cape Town City Council is the latest Corporation to use predatory fingers on transport funds. It proposes to balance its budget by raising the omnibus passengers' licence fee from 10/- to 12/6, for bus control tax from £2/10/- to £5, the licence for trolley buses from £40 to £50, the licence fee for motor cars plying for hire from £3 to £4 for a five-seater, and from £3 to £5 for seven-seaters, bicycles used for delivery purposes from 2/6 to 5/- with private bicycles at 2/6, while bus drivers and conductors' licences will be raised from 5/- to 10/- a year.

THE WIND BLEW—AND 438 MILES WERE LOST.

Mileage lost last year due to interruptions of power supply totalled 593. Footscray suffered to the extent of 438 miles, a very high wind causing a bad short circuit on the high tension line from Angliss' sub-station to the Board's sub-station.

The Board's automatically-controlled power supply system ranks high among the larger installations throughout the world. Altogether, there are 24 sub-stations, of which one of 600 KW. is portable, of a total capacity of 32,800 K.W.

RADIO FOR MONTREAL TRAMWAYS.

The Montreal Tramways Company is installing short-wave radio equipment on its breakdown and

service vehicles. Nine sets will be fitted in tower waggons and other vehicles used in the maintenance of electrical equipment, seven sets on tram and bus breakdown lorries, and two sets in the cars used by travelling inspectors.

It is something like 14 years since the Board commenced to use radio. Our tower waggons and the rolling stock emergency breakdown waggon are fitted with reception equipment, while at present we are receiving equipment for the night inspector's car.

A PEACEFUL INVASION.

The invasion of England by the Scots continues, and has extended into the field of transport. Within the first six months of this year four young Scotsmen have gone into England, three to become the General Managers of municipal systems, while the fourth was appointed Deputy General Manager. A London pressman once watched in the House of Lords the introduction of an Archbishop of York to the Lord Chancellor by the Archbishop of Canterbury. All three were Scotsmen. "How the devil do they do it," he asked gloomily.

RETIRING AND DEATH GRATUITIES.

Since our last issue, the under-noted retiring gratuities have been passed by the Board:—

Con. A. S. Hollow (37, resigned), £69; Con. C. J. Ryder (41, resigned), £75; Con. K. D. Rene (36, resigned), £58; Car Cleaner W. J. R. West (65), £417; Insp. E. C. Sherer (65), £585; Pitman G. W. Long (61), £606; Track Repairer J. C. McKenzie (65), £440; Watchman J. A. Peden (65), £527; Car Cleaner H. S. Greenwood (52), £331; Con. J. E. Lowther (43), £220; Shed-Lab. J. W. Sharpe (65), £565; Dr. W. E. Haley (49), £75; Dr. K. R. Elliott (34), £58; Elec. Mechanic A. J. Bradley (38, resigned), £81; Shed-Lab. A. E. Wright (65), £545; Con. E. R. Hallam (46, returned soldier, £290 and War Savings Certificates; Dr. A. E. Simmonds (65), £562.

Death gratuities were paid to the next of kin in respect of:—Dr. L. V. Newman (59), £313; Con. E. D. McLeod (56), £394; Con. M. J. Donnellon (48), £185; Dr. C. E. Perry (56), £278; and Control Room Supervisor F. O. Aumann (49), £331.