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# Tramway Topics

The Official Bulletin of The Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board

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## A GREETING FOR CHRISTMAS.

Before another issue of "Tramway Topics" can appear, Christmas will have come and gone. On behalf of the Board and myself, therefore, I take this opportunity of conveying good wishes to you all and of wishing you a most happy Yuletide.

This is my first Christmas among you. During the past few weeks I have been able to see most of the Depots, the Garages and the Workshops, and to meet quite a number of you. I hope by next Christmas to speak to you with much greater knowledge of the Melbourne tramways.

Good luck and health to you all.

R. J. H. Risson,  
Chairman.

**£200,000 !**

## Record Payment to Consolidated Revenue.

### How These Payments Became Chargeable to the Tramways Board.

For the current financial year the payments by the Tramways Board to the Consolidated Revenue of the State in respect of the Government's payments to the Fire Brigades Board and the Infectious Diseases Hospital are going to amount to no less than £200,000, a sum which exceeds last year's record by £50,000, and which has to be paid even if the undertaking is run at a deficit—a result which at the moment seems a certainty. The Board has protested strongly against this unprecedented drain on its funds; but only a super-optimist will dream that the 22-year-old recommendation of the Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts, that the Board be relieved of these payments, will be adopted. By the 30th June next the total taken from the Board will

have reached the enormous total of £3,500,000.

How did these payments come to be imposed on the Tramways Board? A generation has passed since this act of political brigandage, which would undoubtedly have earned the professional admiration of the late Mr. Kelly, received the sanction of Parliament, so it may not be out of place to tell the story for general information.

Let it be kept in mind that previous to the passing of the Tramways Act all the tramways, cable and electric, in the metropolitan area with the exception of the small electric system in North Melbourne and Essendon and the tramways of the Victorian Railways, were the property of the municipalities—the State was not interested in them to the extent of a penny piece. For a year or two prior to 1916, when the lease of the cable tramways to the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company was to expire, there had been quite a lot of talk about the necessity of appointing a Board which would act as the tramway authority for the metropolis and form the various systems into a coherent whole. The first step was legislation providing for a temporary Board for the cable system. That having been done, representatives of the municipalities, the owners of the five Tramway Trusts, held various abortive conferences, following upon which the Peacock Government took a hand in the matter and in 1917 introduced the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramway Authority Bill. It was not persevered with, and so it was the Lawson Government of 1918 that passed the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Act.

In the Peacock Bill, Section 77 (Section 88 of Act No. 2995) read originally that provision should be made for the determination of the total amount of each municipality's contribution to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Loans Redemption Fund, and provided further that for the purposes of the determination the cable surplus should be deemed to be



£827,000. In return for the seizure of those profits, which were, of course, the property of the 12 Councils who had raised the necessary funds for the construction of the cable lines on the security of their rates, the Government pacified the Councils partially by undertaking to write off a similar amount from the debentures which would be due for payment by the Councils in 1936.

That procedure, the seizure of the cable tramway profit, seems obscure until it is known that the Government had a loan of £4,000,000 falling due in London, and that the negotiations for conversion would be facilitated by the intimation that the Government would re-pay £1,000,000, leaving £3,000,000 to be converted. The snag was that the Government did not have the £1,000,000. The Government resolved to get it by grabbing the estimated cable profit of £827,000 and raising the balance from other sources. When the cable accounts came to be adjusted, however, the Government was dismayed to find that they would be £60,000 short of the estimated amount. But that little difficulty was adjusted easily; the Government promptly passed another Act (No. 3023) making that £60,000 a charge upon the first year's revenue of the new Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board!

That arrangement having been completed, Section 77 was altered so as to make the Tramways Board responsible for recouping the moneys hitherto paid by the Government to the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board, the Infectious Diseases Hospital and the Licensing Fund. How this alteration making the Tramways Board liable for those payments was brought about was told by the then Hon. Arthur Robinson (later Sir Arthur Robinson) in the Legislative Council. (The full report can be read in *Hansard*, 14/8/18, pages 637 to 644 inclusive). At one of the conferences with the representatives of the municipalities prior to the introduction of the Bill he stated that he had said—

"I am prepared to place the responsibility for these payments on the municipalities, and not on the tramway receipts, if you prefer it that way. You say that the amount should not be taken from the tramway receipts. Will you pay them from the municipal receipts? The Government is not going to pay them in future. When they saw the position I took up they consented to the proposal of the Government."

From that quotation it will be seen that the objection by the municipalities to the Government's proposal to saddle the Tramways Board with these payments was countered by the blunt threat, "Either the Tramways Board pays them or you do." Faced with such an ultimatum, it is scarcely surprising that the municipalities, in Mr. Robinson's euphonious

phrase, "consented to the proposal of the Government."

The spokesmen for the Government in these days of 1918 did not turn out good prophets; they estimated that the payments would not exceed £70,000 per annum, a sum which, it was thought, would be secured easily out of the profits of the undertaking! With the exception of four years, the exactions have never amounted to less than a six-figure sum.

**SYDNEY'S "DISTURBED" OUTLOOK.**

"Notwithstanding remedial financial measures applied by the Government," writes the Auditor-General of New South Wales (Mr. E. H. Swift) in his annual report on the accounts of the Department of Road Transport and Tramways, "the outlook for the immediate future remains disturbing."

...Mr. Swift mentions that the loss for the year which ended on the 30th June last was £272,008. Working expenses, as in Melbourne, soared steeply, going to £7,826,957, which was £518,151 more than in the previous year. Of that increase, wages, salaries and pay-roll tax was responsible for all but 6 per cent. of the total.

Carrying 309,757,000 passengers, the trams earned £4,821,976, while the buses brought in £3,061,592 from 163,429,000 passengers.

For the year, the State's railway, tram and bus systems failed to pay debt charges amounting to more than £2,000,000, which sum had to be made good by the Consolidated Revenue.

**CHICAGO AND STAGGERED HOURS.**

A preliminary survey undertaken at the instance of the Mayor of Chicago by a Traffic Commissioner on the proposal to revive the staggered hours of the war years shows that a large number of the "Loop" district employees would like to go to work half an hour earlier and go home 30 minutes sooner and so avoid the evening peak congestion. A much smaller number favours going to work half an hour later than at present.

**"FLAT FARE DOES NOT MAKE SENSE."**

**Zone System Extending in the United States.**

"It does not make sense to carry a passenger 20 miles, or even 10 miles, for the same price that you charge a person who rides a tenth of that distance," writes Mr. Harley L. Swift, the President of the Harrisburg Railways Company in "Mass Transportation," and he goes on to point out that railroads, cross-country transport companies and freight hauliers charge in direct ratio to the distance the passenger or package is carried. Urban transport, he asserts, should adopt the same formula.

The fact that tremendous short-haul traffic is being

missed through high flat fares is being brought home to many undertakings, which are finding that flat fares in excess of 10 cents. are not producing the revenue necessary to meet the ever-rising operational costs. There are at the moment 29 cities with flat fares in excess of 10 cents, the highest being the 15 cents. of the Rapid Transit Lines of Chicago. The Surface Lines (trams, trolleybuses and buses) of that city charge 13 cents.

In all, 323 of the cities of the United States with populations of more than 25,000 have increased their fares within the last two years, 15 of them on no fewer than three occasions. Yet, comments Mr. Guy C. Hecker, the Executive Manager of the American Transit Association, the increased revenue gained, although traffic declined by 7.9 per cent., failed by 162,200,000 dollars to cover the additional costs, including depreciation.

Mr. Hecker notes that there is increasing interest in zone fares, and mentions that several properties are engaged in extensive studies of the possibilities of such fares, "not only to obtain needed additional revenue, but to maintain the highest possible volume of riding."

**THE MONTH'S GREAT THOUGHT.**

"Those who would abandon trams completely in Melbourne often forget that London's buses are only supplementary to its great underground railway system."—"The Sun."

And no one, we might add, has done more to help the 423,954 daily readers to forget, or ignore, that fact than "The Sun."

**THE WORLD'S FIRST UNDERGROUND.**

On the 19th July next the Paris "Metro" will celebrate its jubilee, and no doubt our French friends will see to it that the occasion will be marked in a manner appropriate to the world's leading underground. Perhaps a qualification would be necessary for that statement were information available from behind "the iron curtain" as to the traffic on the rapidly-expanding Moscow underground. We have seen it asserted that last year Moscow's trams, buses and underground dealt with more than 4,000,000,000 passengers, though the proportion carried by each was not stated.

So far as is known, then, the intensity of underground traffic per mile of double track each year is greater in Paris than in any other city of the world, the figures being:—

Paris Metro	11,520,000
New York Subway	9,600,000
Berlin U-Bahn	7,360,000
London Underground	4,960,000

The Metro has a mileage of 89, with 343 stations, 458

booking halls 34 lifts and 79 moving staircases. As many as 3,000,000 passengers have been carried in a single day.

**THE LATROBE STREET EXTENSION.**

Lack of manpower and the hiatus in rail deliveries through the coal strike has delayed the completion of the Latrobe Street extension far beyond the anticipated date. Including what is necessary for the section in Spencer Street between Latrobe Street and Lonsdale Street, the final parcel of rails is now being put through by B.H.P. at the Port Kembla works.

In the meantime, the men who can be utilised are working on the Latrobe Street-Elizabeth Street junction, work which, it is hoped, will be completed before Christmas.

**NO MONEY FOR RENEWALS.**

Edinburgh's Transport Department functioned at a loss of £61,413 for the year which ended on the 28th May last. Actually, that does not tell the complete story, for the customary allocation to the Renewals and Reserve Fund was not made. In the past it has been the practice to appropriate £86,229 (1.5d. per mile) from the tramway section, and £50,000 from the bus revenue for these purposes. It looks as if the Transport Committee had shied from asking the Corporation to make good the total deficiency of £200,000, but that is where it must come from eventually, unless, of course, there is a large and totally unanticipated increase in revenue.

For the period under review, the total revenue for the combined services at £1,877,676 was £14,986 above that for the previous year. The passenger total advanced by 1,745,936 to 283,671,294.

**USE OF TWO-WAY RADIO.**

In a recent issue we told of our experiments with a headway recorder, and mentioned that the idea is to use that instrument in conjunction with motor patrol cars equipped with two-way radio, the object of the whole installation being to reduce materially traffic delays through the earlier reporting of interruptions. Now, "Bus Transportation" reports that planned use of two-way radio to inter-city bus operations has proved economically feasible and has improved safety and passenger convenience. It is pointed out, however, that its use is not economical for small fleets.

There are now three radio-operated bus systems in the United States—Chicago-Milwaukee-Madison, Chicago-South Bend-Detroit and Chicago-Grand Rapids-Muskegon. A year's experience has demonstrated that on these three heavily-travelled routes the two-way radio installations have saved money through the quick correction of minor road failures without having to send out repair crews, the elimina-



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tion of unnecessary secondary mileage and the consequent reduction in overtime payments.

Compared with the non-radio equipped buses, the radio-equipped vehicles covered more miles, doubled the mileage per road failure and cost less per mile to maintain.

### GERMAN TRAMWAY EXTENSIONS.

This will be horrible news to Mr. Harley Styles, but it can't be helped—since the end of 1945 new tram lines have been laid in Frankfurt-on-Main, Mainz, Rostock, Augsburg, Hamburg, Brunswick, Berlin, Ulm, Kassel, Cologne and Offenbach.

Further extensions are now under construction in Frankfurt, Nuremberg, Duisburg, Stuttgart and other cities.

### FARE CONCESSIONS.

#### Ordinary Passengers Pay For Them.

An application by the Bolton Corporation Transport Department to grant half-fare concessions to the town's unemployed old-age pensioners when travelling on the Corporation's vehicles has been refused by the North-Western Licensing Authority.

The judgment is interesting to us here because it shows how correct is the view of the Board that periodical tickets can be given only to the prejudice of those not able to afford the money for a monthly, quarterly, or yearly ticket. "Generally," said the Chairman of the Authority, "the effect of these and other fare concessions is that *the fare paid by the ordinary passenger is in the form of a subsidy to the person who obtains the concession.*"

Capetown Electric Tramway Company has also made the discovery that pre-paid monthly tickets, sold at a big discount, are uneconomic, and that the main result, apart from selling transport at a loss, is to subsidise people in the higher income groups, who can afford to pay for a monthly ticket in advance, at the expense of the lower income groups. The tickets are, therefore, to be abolished, and fares on the buses are to be increased.

### BAN ON RATE AID FROM TRANSPORT.

In approving Newcastle-on-Tyne's application for increased tram, trolleybus and bus fares, the British Ministry of Transport has laid down the important principle that in future no contribution in aid of the rates can be made without the consent of the Ministry. Any surplus shown by a Transport Department must be retained for the benefit of the undertaking.

If that rule had been in operation during the last

30 years many a municipal transport undertaking would to-day be in a much healthier condition, both as regards finance and rolling stock. In the fat years, the surpluses were mostly put to the General Rate Fund, the Renewals Fund only occasionally getting a bit of a dole, the result being that when reconstruction was necessary and new equipment and rolling stock was essential, the unfortunate Transport Departments had no money with which to meet the bills. How happy Glasgow would be to-day, for instance, if in the dear, dead days beyond recall it had not bestowed two or three million pounds on what is lyrically known as the Common Good!

### "MOST ECONOMICAL."

"One general conclusion may be stated, and that is that it has been found that a schedule calling for less than 10-minute intervals between vehicles, the tramcar is the most economical."—Mon. G. Bourgy, Director and Engineer, Tramways Unifies de Liebe et Extensions, in an article describing the trolleybus section of the Liege undertaking.

### APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS.

The following appointments to the Official and Clerical Staff are notified:—

R. W. Robinson, Victoria Parade, Per. Way Checker; R. L. Mansfield, Bank Street, Emergency Driver.

### RETIRING AND DEATH GRATUITIES.

Since our last issue, the Board has approved of the undernoted retiring gratuities:—

Bodymaker H. G. Thorne (65), 26 years' service, £637; Con. H. J. Mitchell (58), medically unfit, 31 years, £477; Pitman H. W. Dalrymple (65), 34 years, £800; Bus Driver M. S. Burgess (35), medically unfit, 11 years, £96; Bus Driver E. C. Bond (54), medically unfit, 32 years, £508; Drvr. A. J. B. Mackenzie (40), 10 years, resigned, £80; Con. R. E. Burgess (45), 15 years, medically unfit, £240.

### IT WOULD BE NICE — IF CORRECT.

"... the current revenue will be ample to accommodate all of the justifiable demands of the Association."—J. R. Andrews, Editor, "Tramway Record."

That assertion regarding revenue would be very nice, if correct. Unfortunately, with five months of the financial year gone, nothing has occurred to foster the hope that the operations which will conclude on the 30th June next will result in anything but a deficit.