

Chair

Listeners in - ~~As~~ Chairman of the Melbourne and

Metropolitan Tramways Board, it affords me great pleasure to place

before you this evening a few facts concerning the tramways of this

magnificent City of ours. I wish to assure you at the outset of

my remarks that I will as far as possible studiously avoid quoting

statistics, reserves, capital expenditure, car miles, route miles,

Kilo-watt hours, and things of a like nature with which a tramway

system is hedged in. It will not be difficult to get along without

the aid of minute details as the trams of Melbourne provide plenty

of interesting matter for a much longer talk than I am to give without

making a long excursion into figures.

Although some people are already beginning to speak of

trams as being obsolete it is not so very long ago that Melbourne

was hungering for them. Prior to the year 1885 Melbourne was without

them and had to rely for its street transport mainly on the horse

drawn bus. It is as well to make this clear at the start of my

talk as some people have been heard to express the opinion that our

cable trams are antediluvian and date back to Noah. The date on which

the first tram ran in Melbourne was November 11th, 1885 and it was on

the Flinders Street line by the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company.

This Company was formed to take over a lease of the lines constructed

by the Melbourne Tramway Trust. The Trust represented the 12

inner municipalities and after laying the lines it leased them to

the Company till June 30th 1916. When the Company's lease expired

the trams were run for three years by a temporary Board. This Board carried on until the present Board took over in November, 1919. The new Board, in addition to taking control of the cable tramways, also took over the whole of the electric services which had been constructed and were being run by the different Municipal Trusts. Gradually,

However, we Now a word on the constitution of the present Board:-

In selecting the members of the Board the Government of the day aimed at securing the representation of the whole of the Metropolitan area, by persons having Municipal experience or having been concerned in the operation of tramways. I was appointed Chairman and for colleagues I have Mr. Thomas O'Loughlen Reynolds, formerly Councillor of Coburg and Chairman of the Coburg Trust; Alderman Cabena, who at the time of his appointment was Lord Mayor of Melbourne and still is an Alderman of the City; Mr. Colin Templeton, who was Chairman of the temporary Board; Hon. J. G. Membrey, one of the members of the Traffic Commission appointed in 1910 which reported on the future requirements of the tramway system of Melbourne; Mr. E. H. Willis, then Mayor of Prahran; and Cr. H. H. Bell of Richmond, who was a member of the Hawthorn Tramways Trust. Paris 151, and Manhattan New York 175, the track mileage per

100,000 You will see that in choosing the members of the Board the Government aimed at securing the services of men who were likely, from their knowledge and experience of municipal and tramway matters, to render valuable service. to formulate a general scheme of tramway

developments, there are certain considerations to be borne in mind if

the best results in the interest of the community are to be attained.

Our task from the outset was a difficult one. We were given the task of co-ordinating seven different systems and welding them into an organic whole. Each system had its separate staff, its own type of cars, its own method of operating, and, generally speaking, methods in many cases very diverse from each other. Gradually, however, we managed to draw the loose ends together until we got a compact organization.

One of the first things we were required to do was to prepare and adopt a General Scheme for the future development of the Tramways of the Metropolis. The investigations made by us in regard to the scheme involved making extensive enquiries in Great Britain, Europe and America as to the state of development of tramways in those countries. These enquiries proved most interesting and instructive, and showed that Melbourne - so far from being backward in the matter of passenger transport - was comparatively better served than many of the older and larger cities in the world. It was found that whilst the Metropolitan tramway area of Melbourne with 6 people to the acre had 17 miles of track for every 100,000 people, London with a density of 60, Paris 151, and Manhattan New York 175, the track mileage per 100,000 people in those cities was considerably less than Melbourne, notwithstanding ~~that Melbourne has an~~ that Melbourne has an

electrified fast transit suburban railway system unsurpassed in any city. *No city the size of Melbourne has such a large track mileage per 100,000 of population*

When proceeding to formulate a general scheme of tramway development, there are certain considerations to be borne in mind if

the best results in the interest of the community are to be attained. If the scheme is properly drawn up it means that transit facilities can be made to precede the population, not follow the population. The city under such a principle of transit development is enabled to grow and expand in an orderly and pre-determined manner. This principle is fundamental. Failure to consider it is chiefly responsible for the transit conditions now prevailing in ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~largest~~ ^{largest} cities. *In ~~most~~ ^{most} cases transit ~~has~~ ^{is} being provided in response to the urge of immediate necessity. There was no comprehensive plan available to be fitted into; consequently there was no orderly transit development; it was all piecemeal development. The inevitable result was a conglomeration of transit lines, not a transit system. That was all wrong.*

The amount of detailed work done by the Engineering staff to compile the statistics necessary to guide the Board ^{*in the preparation of its general scheme*} was immense, but without it the scheme would have been a haphazard affair. The scheme prepared was a comprehensive one and received the full endorsement of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, to whom it had to be submitted under the Board's Act, for consideration and report to Parliament. The comments made on it by the leading railway and tramway authorities abroad were highly complimentary. It would take up all the time allotted for this talk to even outline the scheme, with its pile of statistics, to say nothing of the maze of figures you would be led into. I will therefore compress a few

of the outstanding features in ⁱⁿ tabloid form. In the first place, the report covers 40 pages, to say nothing of maps and graphs. There are graphs covering every phase of the transport problem. In preparing the Scheme we aimed at providing service as far ahead as 1941. By that time it was estimated that the population of Melbourne would be ^{over 1,100,000} about 1,100,000, and to provide tramway transport for this number we proposed to have 266 miles of track. At present, we have about 125 ^{route} miles, so you see there is a lot of work ^{when electrified} mapped out for the next 15 years. One must not ^{assume} ~~assume~~ that all this work will be gone on with. It merely represents what the Board proposes to do. Before any line costing more than £20,000 can be constructed Parliament has to give its permission. A glance at the map we prepared showing the proposed lines would interest you. You would see that there were lines exactly where you thought they should be, and there are others where at present you would never dream of putting a tram. But you must not forget that we have to provide for 1941. One of the most important tracks of the future will be down Hoddle Street and Punt Road to St. Kilda Junction. That will be the principal line near the City; but if the scheme is carried out there will be many other routes ^{in the suburbs} ~~on the outskirts~~ in such places as Orrong Road, Glen Eira Road, North Road, Centre Road, South Road, Hampton Street and Bluff Road. There will be quite a little network round Williamstown. Already some of the lines proposed in the Scheme have been built. For instance there is the William Street Electric line from Flemington Bridge, the East Kew Extension, and the Church

Street line. In all modern schemes of transport the aim is to get through-routing. It is not desirable to have lines terminating in the City, and in the General Scheme we aim at through-routing. One might ask where it is proposed to take the William Street electric line to. Well, in time we hope to extend that service down William Street to the Electricity Commission's building, take it round in front of the Western Markets in Little Flinders Street, and then link up with South Melbourne line in Market Street. ^{when electrified -} Of course, it must not be forgotten that included in the scheme is the conversion of the Cable lines to Electric ^{traction.} This has already been commenced and from now on till the whole of the old system has been dealt with we will be tearing up the old lines and replacing them with the electric service. "The old order changeth, giving place to the new."

Much thought was given to the plans for the conversion to electricity. It was recognised that the Cable service had proved wonderfully efficient and cheap to run. It carried no interest burden and was earning the largest portion of the Board's revenue. As the City grew, however, and the suburban population became denser, it was seen that if speedy, comfortable transport in the one vehicle was to be given, and if the system was to have flexibility, the cable link would have to be taken out of the chain. Nowadays passengers are not content to go a mile or two in one car and then get out and wait for another to take them to the end of a 3-mile journey in the same direction. It is this break of service that

has done so much to militate against the efficiency of Melbourne's tramways. In a few years it is hoped to have all the lines through the City electrified and thus remove one of the biggest draw-backs to an efficient service. Another reason for the conversion is the fact that the cable system is unable to stand up ^{to} modern demands. The electrification of the St.Kilda Road has enabled us to make a start with direct routing to the City. On Sunday week we hope to bring the Commercial Road and Malvern Road trams right into Town. This will be a great boon to the passengers who in the past have had to leave the tram in all weathers and change to another to carry them into the City. In turn, we hope to relieve the passengers who are forced to change at Victoria Bridge and at Hawthorn Bridge.

One cannot refer to conversion work without thinking of the wonderful changes that have taken place in the methods of construction since the Cable lines were laid. It was of advantage to the original Tramway Trust that it had not to uproot an existing system but to withstand the shocks of time. One can scarcely imagine the time it would have taken to remove the Cable lines by the means formerly available. Just fancy digging out all the concrete by man power ! The time and cost would have been prohibitive. The massive construction of the cable tunnels and the difficulty experienced in tearing them out, even with the aid of steam picks and electric drills, was a matter which required much thought and skill. How different are the methods now adopted to those in vogue when the Cable lines were laid. There were

no concrete mixers in those days. It was all hand work, and the material was all horse-drawn. There were no Leyland lorries to back in and tip 5 or 6 tons of screenings on to the job, and if a rail had to be cut then it had to be cut with chisel or saw. Today a mere breath of an acetylene torch - and the thickest rail is cut in two! Methods are not the only things that have changed since the cables were put in. Prices also have altered. Take wood-blocks for instance; we are now taking up blocks that cost £8 a thousand and replacing them with blocks at £20 a thousand. The cement that takes so much getting out was worth £3. 3. 0 ^{per ton} ~~a hundred~~ ^{yard} when it was put in; today it costs £5. 5. 0. That is the price of ordinary cement, but the quick-setting French cement (Cement Fondet) which sets in a few hours costs £10 per ton, and we use a considerable amount of it. Tar is another thing that has soared in price. In the old days they almost paid you to take it away from the Gas Company's Works. Most of the tar used in connection with laying the first lines cost a halfpenny a gallon, today we are paying 9½d. per gallon.

It has been the aim of the Board to keep up to date in transport matters, and no effort is spared to give the public the benefit of the latest improvement. We have been fortunate in having the assistance of as fine a body of officers as could be desired. With the various services we took over we secured a most efficient corps of trained men who had grown up with the various Trusts. The leading men were brought into the Head Office, and with the experience they had gained in

smaller organizations it did not take them long to take control of the enlarged activities. With the General Scheme, and the conversion in view, we decided to secure the services of the best Engineer possible to take charge of that end of the business. In this venture we were fortunate in being able to get Mr. T. P. Strickland to take the position. Mr. Strickland is an Australian who after a brilliant University career in Sydney went to America and Canada and worked with several big engineering concerns. He then returned to Sydney to fill an important position with the Railway Commissioners who run the trams there. As Manager, we secured the services of Mr. A. D. Murdoch, whose experience as a tramway manager in Great Britain and this State has proved of immense value to the Board. As Secretary, we have Mr. W. O. Strangward, a leading Accountant ^{whose ability is} ~~and one of the best-known~~ ^{to all} City business men.

I trust you won't think ill of me if I ^{were to} spend a few minutes in boosting up our tram service. No, I won't do that, I'll simply read what Mr. Saxil Tuxen says about them. Mr. Tuxen is a leading surveyor and engineer and a member of the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission. Last year he went for a trip to America and on his return he wrote an article on Tramways in the "Age" in which he said -

"There are very few Cities in America where the trams are on a sound financial footing, and in consequence the companies cannot afford to properly maintain their tracks and rolling stock. Many of the tracks met with are in a disgraceful condition, and the pavement between rails so bad that it is difficult for vehicles to travel on it. What a contrast with our track work and pavements, which are generally the best part of the road. The American cars are dirty and

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regards

"noisy and rattle over the uneven rails in a way that makes a tram
 "ride anything but an enjoyable experience. The schedules are much
 "slower than our own, and the fares, generally speaking, much
 "higher. In most Cities little consideration is given to the comfort
 "of passengers, and hardly any of the cars make provision for smokers
 "I never felt so proud of the Melbourne trams in my life as I did
 "in America."

That is the opinion of a citizen whose training as an engineer and
 town planner made him look deeply into the subject of transport.

When Mr. Tuxen said he was proud of our trams he had every reason to
 be, for our service is superior to any in the world. Our cars are the
 most up-to-date. They are comfortable, clean and fast. Our tracks
 are well laid and kept in good repair and wherever possible they are
 run through Reserves. Our men are courteous, and their uniforms are
 clean and tidy. Of course there are instances where individuals fall
 short of the standard required in the Service, but don't forget that
 there are over 5,000 men in the service of the Board, and it would
 be wonderful if some of them did not trip occasionally. Taking them
 all round, though, I think you will admit that they are a courteous
 and capable set of men.

Now as to the speed of our trams - It will no doubt surprise
 you when I tell you that our much maligned old cable trams are amongst
 the sprinters of the tramway world. There's not an electric tram in
 Great Britain that has a better average speed per hour than our cable
 cars; and our electric cars, of course, are well ahead of anything.

In passing I would like to refer to how the Board regards the question of bus transportation. Contrary to what a number of people think, we are not antagonistic to buses. Under ^{suitable} ~~certain~~ conditions they form a most important part in the transport system of a big city like ours. The ideal system is secured by the proper utilisation of trams, buses and electric trains. To secure efficiency and economic working there should be co-ordination of all three services, each in its own sphere. This is not only the opinion of the Board but is also the view held by the leading passenger transportation authorities in Great Britain and America.

No talk on tramway matters would be complete without reference to the increased fares. Perhaps there are some listening in tonight who expect to hear from me on this subject. I have only time for a brief remark. I would point out that the tramways are the property of the people. They are run for the convenience of the people, and our aim as a Board is to give service at cost; that is our slogan - Service at cost. No one can object to that. It is therefore cost that governs fares. If wages of conductors and drivers go up as they have done; if the price of material goes up and the cost of construction is increased; it follows that fares must also rise. I won't worry you with details. You all know as well as I do that the cost of practically everything has gone up tremendously, and as a result there was nothing left for us but to ask you to pay more for your transport. We've done our best to soften the blow by increasing the concessions in regard to through trips and children's fares.

LISTENERS-IN, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE.