

TRIED PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

Liverpool Years Ago Took Over the Street Car Lines

Beyond all question transportation occupies first place among the municipal problems now commanding attention in Great Britain. Liverpool was one of the pioneers in tramway construction, though it was only recently that the municipality came into full possession of tramway properties. Its experience with the boasted English conservatism is fairly typical. After George Francis Train and other Americans had demonstrated at Birkenhead, a suburb of Liverpool, the practicability of tramways the city authorized a company to use its streets for that purpose. This was in 1869. Four years later the service was so insufficient that the city served notice on the company to remove its tracks. Subsequently a compromise was made by which the city reconstructed the lines at the cost of the company. In 1879 the company entered into an agreement with the city under which the latter purchased the existing lines for \$150,000 and completed various other lines, leasing the whole system to the company at a rental of 7 1/2 per cent on the purchase money from the date of construction, the lines to be maintained at the cost of the city. In 1895 the city made a lease to the company extending until 1915, but reserved the right to purchase under certain conditions.

Two years later the patience of Liverpool was exhausted. The company utterly failed to properly manage its affairs. Its rates were extortionate and its service worse. It absolutely refused to introduce mechanical or electrical power, and after due deliberation the city decided to acquire and operate the undertaking. Parliament granted the power, and in 1897 the entire system passed into the hands of the municipal authorities, the purchase price being about \$2,800,000.

The city went about the tramway enterprise in a thorough business way. It proceeded to engage the service of C. R. Bellamy, one of the foremost of English civil and mechanical engineers, a man fully conversant with the science and practice of transportation on both sides of the Atlantic. In two years' time the hundred miles of horse car tracks had been transformed to electrical traction, and in addition there had been laid forty miles of new track.

The citizens were delighted with the change. In the place of filthy, ill lighted and slow moving horse cars, running at long intervals, there was installed a system which in all respects compares favorably with the best modern practice in the United States or on the continent. More than that, the city made a sweeping reduction in the rates of fare.

It reduced the hours of its conductors and motormen from eighty to sixty a week and actually paid them more for the shorter hour day than they had formerly been receiving. The private company sold the men's uniforms and received a tidy profit from the transaction. The city gave uniforms to its men and only insisted that they keep them clean and in good repair, so as to reflect credit on their employer.

The first year of electrical traction and of a trial of all of those radical reforms was 1901, and when all expenses had been paid there remained a profit of more than \$700,000. The best the private company had been able to show with its high fares, low wages and niggardly policy was \$184,000. After paying into the sinking fund, meeting interest charges and setting aside \$175,000 for renewals and depreciation there remained a large sum.

The profits for the second year were \$865,000, an increase over the preceding year of \$165,000. The tramways department contributed \$125,000 of this to the general tax fund.

In addition to its voluntary contribution to the general fund the municipal tramway pays its taxes just as if it were a private corporation. This practice is common with the municipal enterprises of all cities in Great Britain. Municipal tenements and cottages, municipal gas plants and electrical lighting and power stations, tramways, markets and all other revenue seeking institutions pay not only city but also income taxes. Last year Liverpool's tramways paid in taxes a sum exceeding \$65,000. The city owns the electrical power plant, but the tramways department was charged with every unit of power it used. It therefore stands squarely on its own bottom.

Almost simultaneously with its purchase of the tramways Liverpool set about to acquire the electric lighting and power industry. The private company was a fairly prosperous one, but parliament gave Liverpool the right to

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purchase its plant. After protracted negotiations a price of \$2,000,000 was agreed on. Of this sum \$600,000 was a bonus, while the balance represented the actual value of the plant turned over by the company.

The city did not make this purchase for the sole purpose of generating electricity for its municipal use. It sought and obtained a grant which enabled it to furnish light and power to all users. The advocates of this step urged that numerous benefits would follow from the installation and operation of a municipality owned and operated plant. The city would obtain its light and power at cost, private users would receive theirs at a minimum advance over the actual cost, and manufacturers and merchants would therefore have an advantage over outside competitors, who were compelled to pay rates which yielded large dividends to private owners of light and power plants. Again, the surplus profits would go to the relief of tax rates, thereby making the circle of economy complete.

Immediately after the acquiring of this property the tramways also came into the possession of the city, and the question arose whether or not to make one generating system serve for all purposes. The opinions of experts were called for. It was the consensus of opinion that a pressure of 500 volts would enable the same plant to be used for lighting and traction and that there would be a distinct gain as regards first cost, management, economy and surplus power attained by combination. It was therefore decided to erect two large power stations,

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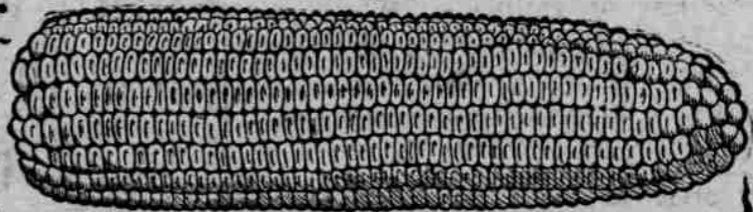
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Each station has a capacity of 20,000 horsepower, but so great has been the demand made on them that new ones are needed, and some have already been constructed. England has learned to use the refuse swept from the streets for fuel. Several small power stations deriving their power from the burning of the refuse are now in successful operation, and it is expected that the total supply from this source will reach 10,000 horsepower. A few years ago Liverpool spent large sums of money for the purpose of throwing this material and its stored up energy away. When the plant passed from the control of the private company its output was less than 3,000,000 units. It has grown in seven years to ten times that amount.

When the city purchased the undertaking from private interests the rate charged for lighting was 7 1/2 pence per unit and for power 5 pence per unit. At the present time the rates are 4 pence for lighting, 2 pence for street lighting, 2 pence for power up to 3,000 units per quarter and 1 1/2 pence there-

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