

Municipal Ownership in England

Once again we have received the valuable statistics prepared by Mr. James Carter, Borough Treasurer of Preston, England, showing the "Rates (Taxes) levied in various towns, together with charges for gas, water and electricity; also Profits and Losses on Municipal Undertakings (Municipal Ownership) by which rates in these towns have been reduced or increased."

This is the 28th year in which Mr. Carter has issued this valuable pamphlet, and, as usual, he prefaces it by saying that it "is not intended to demonstrate the desirability, or otherwise, of Municipal Trading."

As usual, we shall give an analysis of the various tables which form the pamphlet, summarizing the lists and information, so as to give our readers the gist of the information, and the results to be deduced from it.

The rates (taxes) in the various towns show a wide divergence, the highest being in the City of Norwich, 10s. 7d. (\$2.64,) which is closely followed by West Ham and Stoke with 10s. 6 d. (\$2.62,) while the lowest is the City of Oxford, where the rate is only 4 s. 8 d. (\$1.16), or considerably less than half; the next lowest are Blackpool and Bournemouth, two seaside resorts, with 5 s. 0 d. (\$1.25).

The charges for water, gas and electricity naturally show a very considerable divergence.

The charge for water for domestic purposes is based on the taxable value of the house, taken at £15 (\$75), and varies from 7 d. (14c.) in Worcester, 8 d. in Worthing and 9 d. (18 c.) in Brighton and Southampton to 4 s. 6 d. (\$1.12) in Chatham, where a private company owns the waterworks. Ashton, Bacup and Bury come next highest with 2 s. 0 d. (50 c.)

Gas varies by the 1,000 feet from 1 s. 1 d. (27 c.), in Widnes, where the works are municipally owned to 3 s. 7 d. (89 c.) in Lowestoft, where a company owns the plant. But two companies, in Sheffield and Plymouth, charge the next lowest rates, namely, 1 s. 3d. (31 c.) and s. 7 d. (39 c.) respectively; while two other companies, in Swindon and King's Lynn, charge 3 s. 6 d. (87 c.) and 3 s. 5 d. (85 c.) respectively.

Electricity for domestic lighting, charged by the B. T. U., varies from 2¾ d. (5½ c.) in Bury, where the ownership is municipal, to 6½ d. (13 c.) in Bournemouth, where a company supplies it; while privately owned plants in Oxford and Hove come next to the highest with 6 d. (12 c.).

In no less than 109 towns are the rates, or taxes, reduced by the profits derived from Municipal Undertakings, which include markets, gas, water, electric light, tramways, estates owned, etc. The largest total of profits is in Manchester, where no less than £188,500 (\$942,500) of profits is used to decrease the taxes, this being made up of £14,000 (\$70,000) from markets; £50,000 (\$250,000) from gas; £24,500 (\$122,500) from electric light; and £100,000 (\$500,000) from tramways.

Next comes Liverpool, with profits of £167,399 (\$36,995) and Leeds with £115,235 (\$8,576,175).

The amount by which the taxes have been decreased is largest in Densbury and Wallasey, where 1 s. 8½ d. (42 c.) has been deducted; Nottingham comes third with 1 s. 6½ d. (38 c.) and Darlington fourth with 1 s. 6 d. (37 c.).

In four towns, the smallest amount has been deducted, ¼ d. (½ c.), namely Eccles, Hove, Islington and Leamington.

The total amount of the profits by which the rates have been reduced in these 109 towns is the enormous sum of £1,655,699 (\$8,278,495).

The other side of Municipal ownership is given in a table of 55 towns in which there have been "deficiencies the total being £363,208 (\$1,816,040), by which rates have been increased.

But a peculiarity about this list is that out of the 55 towns, all but 5 are included in the previous list as making profits.

Another feature of interest is that no less than £124,865 (\$624,325) of the losses is due to waterworks, which are a necessity; and £147,983 (\$739,915) is due to the docks in Bristol and Preston, which may otherwise be paying investments in the business they bring.

Deducting the total deficiencies, or losses, from the total receipts, it is seen that the net profits are:—£1,292,491 (\$6,462,455).

The only deduction is that Municipal Ownership in England, in spite of all that its enemies say, is profitable, and that the taxes in many towns would be much heavier if they were not reduced by the profits on Municipal Undertakings.

Announcement

We have made arrangements for a service of specially written articles on the Guild Halls and City Halls of the older countries, which will be started in our February issue. The ancient and historic Guild Hall in London will be the first to be dealt with and as this is probably the most historic public building in Europe if not anywhere in the world, there is any amount of material of special interest. We believe the contrast of these old buildings with associations of a most interesting nature through many hundreds of years will prove interesting from an historic point of view, as well as a comparison with our modern "Town or City Halls", with which our readers are so closely allied. The articles will be illustrated.

Paying Public Ownership

The Hydro-Electric Commission of Ontario is in the happy position of having so successful an enterprise that they are able—not to declare a dividend, as a private monopoly would do, but—to declare a reduction in rates for the next year. The new rates will mean a saving to the municipalities who are customers of about \$100,000 a year.

For example it was expected that the price to Toronto would be reduced from \$18.50 to \$16.00, but the revised price is only \$15.00 which means \$60,000 a year to Toronto alone. London will pay \$24.00 instead of \$28.00, thus effecting a saving of over \$12,000.

The Commission has found that business so far has resulted in a surplus of \$62,000, and the customers are to get the benefit.

This is one more instance of Public Ownership paying—the basis of success being the best business methods, both for construction and management.

Over Crowding and Health

The census of 1901 shows that there are 46,134 one-room houses; 74,715 two-room houses; 97,674 three-room houses in Canada.

An example of results is seen in Offenbach over Mein, where much has been done in housing improvements, the death rate having gone down from 23.6 to 14.1.

In the most congested ward in Birmingham, England the infant death rate is 351 per 1,000, while in the Garden City of Bournville, only 4 miles away, the rate is 65.