

Municipal Ownership in England

We have again received the valuable and interesting pamphlet compiled annually by Mr. James Carter, Borough Treasurer, Preston, Eng., which shows the—

“Rates (or taxes) levied in various towns; together with the charges for Gas, Water, and Electricity also Profits and Losses on Municipal Undertakings (Public Utilities, etc.) by which rates in those towns have been reduced or increased.”

This is the 30th annual statement issued by Mr. Carter, and it is complete and well arranged, so that it contains a mass of valuable information.

Mr. Carter is, as usual, careful not to be drawn into the controversial question of whether Municipal Undertakings are profitable or otherwise. He prints a note as a preface, which says that “this Statement is framed with the object of showing the actual rates levied in various towns and the extent to which such rates have been increased or reduced by Municipal undertakings and estates, and is not intended to demonstrate the desirability or otherwise of municipal trading.”

Of course, this does not preclude any student of the array of statistics prepared by Mr. Carter from drawing his own deductions from them.

The facts are simply and tersely given. The inference to be drawn from them on the momentous question of Public Ownership seems indisputably in favor of it—that is, in England.

For, as will be seen, the balance of profits, used in reducing rates (taxes) is tremendous.

But this does not imply that Municipal Ownership must necessarily be profitable in Canada, for example, where conditions are so entirely different.

No less than 116 towns have made profits, which have been used in reducing the rates, many of them have also made profits which have been added to the Reserve Fund of the particular utility. These towns have made the enormous total profit of £2,919,202 (\$14,596,010), all being used for reducing rates.

The reduction in the rates varies all the way from $\frac{1}{4}$ d (half a cent) in Bournemouth, Eccles, Stalybridge and Stoke up to 1s $7\frac{1}{2}$ d (39 cents) in Warrington; Yarmouth coming a close second with 1s 7d (38 cents).

But Mr. Carter gives the other side of the story, and lists 63 towns which have made a total loss of £391,188 (\$1,955,940), and thus burdened the rates all the way from $\frac{1}{4}$ d (half cent) in Dewsbury, Hastings, Hull, Leeds, Luton and Peterborough, up to 2s $0\frac{1}{2}$ d (51 cents) in Bacup.

But even these losing towns figure in the profit-making ones, with three exceptions, Bootle, Merthyr Tydfil and Tynemouth. While out of the total losses of £391,188 (\$1,955,940) no less than £237,273 (\$1,186,365) is due to the public ownership of water-works, which are a necessity, apart from whether they result in a profit or loss to the town. Then another £33,000 (\$165,000) in Preston is due to the public ownership of the docks, which may be a good investment on the whole.

But taking from the profits a full deduction for all losses, the total net profits, after deducting all the losses, stand at the enormous sum of £2,528,014 (\$12,640,070).

And yet there are people who state that municipal ownership never pays!

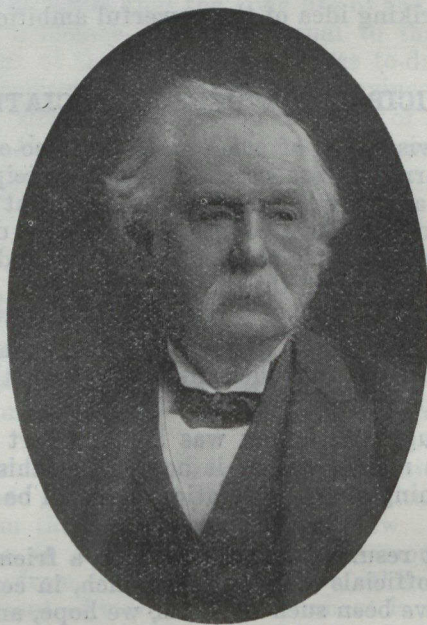
The variation in the taxes or rates is very marked, running all the way from 11s 3d (\$2.81) in Norwich, to 4s $7\frac{1}{2}$ d (\$1.15) in Oxford.

Wide variations are also seen in the charges for Gas, Water and Electricity (the figures are for domestic use only).

The rate for water, charged on the £, varies from $6\frac{3}{4}$ d (13 $\frac{1}{2}$ cents) in Liverpool to 2s 4d (58 cents) in Lincoln, and 2s (50 cents) in Bacup, Bury, Harrogate, Heywood, Huddersfield, Leigh, Rawtenstall, Rochdale and Rotherham.

The net charge for gas per 1,000 cubic feet for domestic lighting, varies from 1s (25 cents) in Widnes to 3s 7d (89 cents) in Lowestoft. But even the highest price of gas makes charges in Canada look far too high.

Electricity per b. o. t. unit for domestic lighting varies from $2\frac{1}{2}$ d (5 cents) in Halifax and Southampton to 7d (14 cents) in Stoke-on-Trent. — H. B.



THE LATE MR. T. E. C. KEEFER, C. E.

By the death of the late Mr. T. E. C. Keefer, C.E., C.M.G., Canada not only lost one of the greatest of her engineers, but municipal development one of its best friends. Right up to the time of his death, which was long after he gave up active work, he followed with keen interest and advice many municipal engineering works that have been erected in different parts of the country.

As an engineer he reached the summit of his profession, and scientific and engineering societies vied with one another in doing him honor. He was president of the Royal Society of Canada and had the distinction of being the only foreigner who was elected president of the American Society of Civil Engineers. He helped to organize and was the first president of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers.

As a writer, he first distinguished himself by winning Lord Elgin's prize for the best essay on "The Influence of the Canals of Canada on her Agriculture." About the same time he wrote a book on "The Philosophy of Railways" and later he put into writing a strong advocacy of the construction of a railway across the continent.