

**Improved means of locomotion as a first step towards the cure of the housing difficulties of London : being an abstract of the proceedings of two conferences, convened by the warden of Robert Browning Hall, Walworth with a paper on the subject / by Charles Booth.**

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# Improved Means of Locomotion

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## First Step towards the Cure

Of the

## Housing Difficulties of London

Being an

*Abstract of the Proceedings of two Conferences*

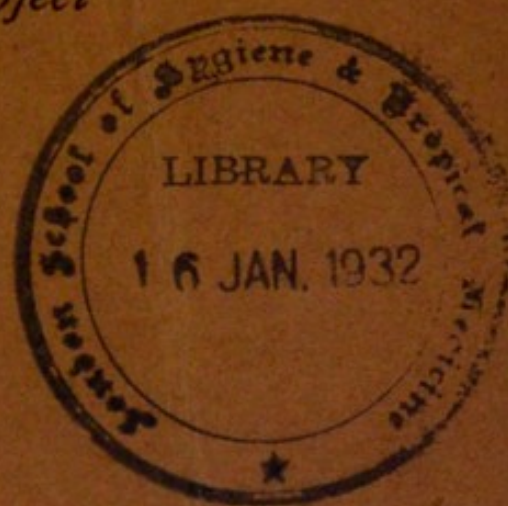
Convened by

The Warden of Robert Browning Hall, Walworth

*With a Paper on the Subject*

By

Charles Booth



London

Macmillan and Co., Limited

1901

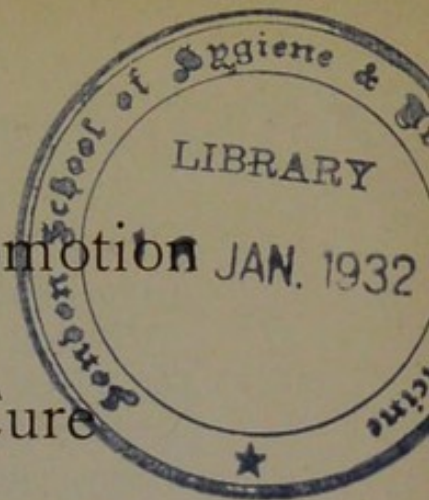
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Improved Means of Locomotion  
As a  
First Step towards the Cure  
Of the  
Housing Difficulties of London



I

THE supreme question of the day in London is that of the Housing of the People.

HIS Majesty KING EDWARD VII., replying to a deputation from the London County Council, said—

“In the discharge of your onerous duties, which  
“closely concern the welfare of millions of My people,  
“I am confident that you will not slacken in the efforts  
“which you have made and are making for dealing  
“satisfactorily with the many different questions  
“which await your consideration, and especially with  
“that of the proper housing of the working classes,  
“which is one in which I have always felt the deepest  
“personal interest.”

LORD SALISBURY, addressing the National Union of Conservative Associations on December 18th, 1900, referring especially to London, said—

“I would recommend . . . the Conservative Party . . . to devote all the power they possess to getting rid of that which is really a scandal to our civilization—the sufferings which many of the working classes have to undergo in the most pitiable accommodation. . . . I would earnestly press upon all over whom my opinion may have any weight that the subject which should occupy their attention more than any other social subject is that of providing adequate and healthy accommodation for the working classes.”



LORD ROSEBERY, speaking upon this question at Shoreditch in 1899, said—

“To deal with the problem in any satisfactory manner. . . . You ought to be able to house a great part of the working population of London more healthfully and more economically in the country near London.”

Mr. BALFOUR, speaking in the House of Commons in May, 1900, recalled the fact that it was on his motion as a private Member in 1884 that the Royal Commission on Housing was appointed. He went on to say—

“I am quite sure that the remedy for the great disease of overcrowding is not to be found in dealings, however drastic, with insanitary areas. The number of overcrowded people in London who live in insanitary areas I believe to be relatively small. The truth is, it is a question simply of time and space, and nothing else. If you can accommodate, by raising the height of your buildings, a larger population on a given area, well and good. But if you cannot do that, then you must go outside the narrow area at the centre of your congested district, and you must trust to modern inventions and modern improvements in locomotion for abolishing time. For my own part it is in that direction that I look to see the solution of the problem. I think it can only be solved in the case of the working classes, as it has been solved in the case of the merchant and the clerk, by a great augmentation in the number, and a great increase in the cheapness of our methods of conveyance from one place to another. Let us give to municipalities all the powers they require to use the inventions of science . . . and turn them to the best account. I believe myself that we are on the eve of an immense reform, of an immense augmentation of the means of communication. I believe that electrical traction and other forms of traction are going to play a far larger part in the solution of this difficulty than any of the strange schemes which I have analysed.”

The problem which has elicited strong utterances like these from foremost leaders in the State and even from the Throne itself, must manifestly have deeply stirred the conscience of the



Nation. There has been a host of suggested remedies. But their number and variety only seemed to perplex the public mind, and to darken the prospect of accomplishing any effective improvement. A working agreement, or common denominator of ameliorative proposals, was wanting. To seek this, the Conferences were held, of which the present pamphlet is a record, and it is this which it is hoped has now been found.

## II

The first Conference was convened by Mr. F. Herbert Stead, and met at Browning Hall, Walworth, and Mr. Chas. Booth undertook to open the discussion.

There were present :

The Bishop of Stepney, in the Chair.

George E. Arkell, of Mr. Charles Booth's Inquiry.

Councillor Harrison Barrow, Birmingham.

Councillor T. Bryan, M.A., Chairman of the Housing Committee of Southwark Borough Council.

S. W. Cranfield, Architect.

The Mayor of Southwark.

W. H. Lever, of Port Sunlight.

Lord Monkswell, L.C.C.

Lady Monkswell.

The Hon. W. Pember Reeves, Agent General for New Zealand, and Member of the Senate of London University.

Frederick Rogers, Secretary to National Committee of Organized Labour.

Lord Rosebery.

Ernest Evan Spicer, formerly Chairman of the L.C.C. Finance Committee.

Mrs. Herbert Stead, Poor Law Guardian, Southwark Union.

Councillor W. Thompson, Richmond Town Council.

Robert Waite, Hon. Sec. National Committee of Organized Labour.

Alderman P. A. White, Poplar Borough Council, and

F. Herbert Stead, Convener.

A letter was read from Lord Hugh Cecil expressing a sense of the great value which must attach to Mr. Booth's conclusions,



and hoping that they would be given to the public before the meeting of Parliament.

Mr. Charles Booth then read a paper, occupying about a quarter of an hour in delivery, in which he showed by a process of deductive reasoning, that for abating and permanently curing excessive congestion of population, improved means of locomotion, owned by the central municipal authority, was the only adequate solution. Questions were asked and discussion ensued. A marked divergence of opinion prevailed as to the claims of the community to the increment of site values which would follow on the proposed extension of transit-facilities. Taxation of land, purchase of land, &c., had their advocates. But the conviction gained ground, and found expression, that the urgent needs of the people demanded first the provision of improved means of locomotion. The adjustment of equitable conditions of land tenure and rates was generally felt to be less pressing, as well as less easy of solution, and therefore best left over for future settlement. Mr. Booth pointed out that while a comprehensive scheme of transport, extending to the entire area around London, would raise site-values, it would not do so to the same degree as at present, when a single line made one favoured district easily accessible, and not to so serious a pitch as to necessitate immediate legislation to rectify it. The rateable value of the whole of London would be increased and the whole community benefited, as well as the congestion relieved. There was general agreement that there were no insuperable financial difficulties in the way of the proposed system, gigantic though it was. It was expected by those best qualified to speak on finance to "pay and pay well."

Eventually the feeling of the meeting was crystallized in the following resolution, which was moved by Mr. Pember Reeves, seconded by Lord Monkswell, and carried with entire unanimity :—

"That a complete system of transportation radiating from urban centres, and which shall be cheap, rapid, and under municipal ownership, is a primary step towards dealing with the housing problem."

The hearty concurrence in this resolution of everyone present revealed the possibility of that unity of purpose and of effort



which had previously been lacking. Those who held widely different opinions on other aspects of this most complex problem, could, it was shown, and did, unite in supporting a large and practicable measure as a first step.

It was decided to convene, at an early date, a larger Conference on the subject as defined by the foregoing resolution, in its special application to the needs of London, and it was resolved to invite the Chairmen of the Housing Committees of the Corporation of the City of London, of the London County Council, and of all the Metropolitan Borough Councils; the Lord Mayors, Mayors, or Chairmen of these authorities, together with other persons from provincial centres and elsewhere.

The second Conference met at the Westminster Palace Hotel, on February 11th. The chair was occupied by Mr. Pember Reeves. There were present most of the members of the first Conference, including Lord Rosebery who, however, did not speak. The roll of attendance was signed in addition by

Jesse Argyle, Mr. Charles Booth's Inquiry.

Councillor F. Baily, Chairman of Housing Committee, Camberwell, Camberwell Borough Council.

J. Allen Baker, L.C.C.

Councillor Baldock, Hackney Borough Council.

G. N. Barnes, Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

A. L. Baxter.

Councillor E. C. Brown, Hackney Borough Council.

Wallace Bruce, L.C.C.

John Burns, M.P.

Councillor J. T. Clark, Chairman of the Housing Committee, Shoreditch Borough Council.

William Cope, Birmingham.

George Cote, Workmen's Housing Council.

The Mayor of Croydon.

Councillors Judson, J. Thrift, T. R. Dorking, E. Fletcher, Thos. Betteridge, George M. Erico, S. Stranks, and J. Peck—all of Croydon County Council.

Alderman Cufflin, Islington Borough Council.

T. Llewellyn Davies.

Alderman Dew, L.C.C.

George H. Duckworth.



Miss Emma Finey, Birmingham.

Wm. Haydon, L.C.C.

Fredk. Maddison.

H. C. Mady, Workmen's Housing Council.

Councillor McCarthy, Bermondsey Borough Council.

Alderman A. Mills, Chairman Housing Committee, Islington Borough Council.

Hugh Morrison, L.C.C. Candidate.

H. M. Ross.

Fredk. Ryall, Town Clerk of Bermondsey.

Councillor Shearring, Bermondsey Borough Council.

Ernest Evan Spicer.

Wm. Stead, junr.

W. C. Steadman, L.C.C.

Councillor Stevens, Birmingham.

Councillor Stevenson, Workmen's Housing Council.

B. S. Strauss, L.C.C.

H. R. Taylor, L.C.C.

Charles Trevelyan, M.P.

Mrs. Sidney Webb.

Alderman Fleming Williams, L.C.C.

Out of a quantity of letters received by the Convener, four were read.

The Bishop of Rochester wrote : " I fully believe that you are concentrating your attention on the most important element in the complex question of Housing. Such a move is very encouraging ; I wish it all success and I will do anything I can to support it."

Mr. Sidney Webb wrote : " I am in full sympathy with your Resolution."

Lord Hugh Cecil wrote : " I am quite inclined to agree with the Resolution, subject, however, to this reservation that I am not yet quite certain whether private enterprise will not create the necessary transport."

The Lord Provost of Glasgow wrote : " I recognise that ' the complete system of transportation ' you desiderate is only a *primary* step towards dealing with the Housing problem. If you take out the people in thousands you will find ground-rents rise at once and the whole state of matters practically repeated out in the country. The *Land* is the key ! "



Mr. Booth then read the subjoined paper, in which he developed the argument advanced at the first Conference, with greater fulness and definiteness.

The paper was vigorously discussed. The different remedies suggested at the first Conference were again advocated, and many other points were raised. Municipal building, municipal purchase of land for building, municipal claim on enhanced site-values were warmly advocated, but in the end unity prevailed and the following specialized Resolution was moved by Councillor Baily, seconded by Mr. Frederick Maddison, and carried with absolute unanimity:

"That a complete system of transportation radiating from congested centres, which shall be cheap, rapid, and owned by the London County Council, is a primary step towards dealing with the Housing problem in London."

An executive committee, with power to add to its number, was appointed to continue the movement and to summon another Conference to consider the steps which are immediately practicable in the direction indicated by the Resolution.

The names of the Committee, so far as it is at present constituted, are given on the next page.



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

*President:* CHARLES BOOTH, D.Sc., F.R.S.

*Vice-Presidents:* THE BISHOP OF ROCHESTER.

REV. CANON GORE.

*Chairman of Executive:* THE BISHOP OF STEPNEY.

THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK (Roman Catholic).

JESSE ARGYLE, Mr. Charles Booth's Inquiry.

Councillor F. BAILY, Chairman of Housing Committee, Camberwell Borough Council.

Councillor BALDOCK, Hackney Borough Council.

J. ALLEN BAKER, L.C.C.

GEORGE N. BARNES, Sec. Amalgamated Society of Engineers.

Alderman BISHOP, Chairman of Housing Committee, Woolwich Borough Council.

Councillor BRYAN, M.A., Chairman of Housing Committee, Southwark Borough Council.

Councillor T. CLARK, Chairman of Housing Committee, Shore-ditch Borough Council.

SYDNEY W. CRANFIELD, Architect.

W. M. CROOK.

FREDERICK MADDISON, Labour Co-partnership.

Lord MONKSWELL, L.C.C.

FREDERICK ROGERS, Secretary National Council of Organised Labour.

Rev. BERNARD J. SNELL, M.A., B.Sc.

Councillor THOMPSON, Richmond Borough Council.

CHARLES TREVELYAN, M.P.

ROBERT WAITE, Secretary National Council of Organized Labour.

Alderman WHITE, Poplar Borough Council.

*Convener:* F. HERBERT STEAD,

29, Grosvenor Park, S.E.



# Improved Means of Locomotion as a Cure

FOR THE

## Housing Difficulties of London

---

IN connection with the concluding volumes of my book I have just completed a new survey of London, which, when compared with a previous survey made ten years ago, shows very clearly the outward flow of population. It demonstrates a close inter-connection between the movement of the people and the means of communication provided or anticipated; and between the class of people who move to new homes, and the localities to which they proceed. London is spreading out her population, beyond as well as within her authorized boundaries, wherever accessibility to centres of employment can be secured.

These facts are indications of a great natural impulse made up of many small ones; all tending the same way; all being based on a desire for improved conditions of life. And they indicate also that it is a force which may be guided as well as stimulated. It gathers part of its strength from over-crowding at the centre, aggravated by demolitions, but it is not merely explo-

The outward  
flow of  
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cumstances  
in life.



sive in its nature; and thus even if the worst evils so caused no longer pressed, the outward movement would continue; for it depends upon motives which are common to all classes, whatever may be the circumstances of their lives, in the pursuit of happiness, comfort and health.

Advantage to  
be taken of  
this impulse.

The foregoing reflections introduce the question I wish to raise, namely: Whether this permanently useful and healthy force cannot be successfully taken advantage of for the solution of the housing difficulties now experienced in London.

Acceptance  
of an extreme  
view of the  
evils of  
present con-  
ditions.

In stating my case I am ready to accept any view, however extreme, of the insufficiency, badness and dearness of the accommodation available for the people in many parts of London. It would be difficult to exaggerate the facts; and if I advocate improved means of communication as a cure for these evils, it is because I believe that any direct attack on them is likely to fail.

The pressure  
on housing in  
London: its  
causes

The pressure on housing in London springs from three or four causes. The first two are the natural increase of population, coupled with influx from other places; a third is the need of space for buildings other than dwelling houses, and for the widening of railway lines or of streets; while the fourth follows the requirements of a higher standard of life and health, which forbids over-crowding or the occupation of cellars as dwellings.

which are all  
the outcome  
of prosperity.

It is to be noted that increase of population in urban centres, and the need of space for industrial or civic purposes are



results of, and factors in, general prosperity; while the pressure that results from a higher standard of life is what we may reasonably demand from prosperity.\*

I therefore contend that as all the causes of pressure are resultants of prosperity, there can, at bottom, be no economic difficulty in dealing with the evils of over-crowding. The difficulty is one of administration only. Nor is there, I think, any doubt that some intervention is necessary. The question is solely in what way or ways the Public Authorities should interfere; how far they should go in any direction; and how the cost of what they undertake should be borne.

Consequently there is no insuperable economic difficulty in necessary intervention.

The methods at present adopted are five in number:

- (1) Regulations against over-crowding and cellar dwellings and as to the closing of insanitary property.
- (2) The compelling of those who seek Par-

Methods at present adopted.

\* It may be observed that the absorption of town space for buildings to be used industrially, is by no means an invariably increasing factor in town life; and still less of centralized town life. The lower rents and larger ground space to be had in the suburbs or in the country, affect manufactures as well as private citizens. Industry adapts itself to circumstances, and will become more moveable as the labour it employs becomes more moveable.

Rates of wages are also elastic, and like industrial enterprise adjust themselves to circumstances. If a trade is irremovable the wages paid in it will be such as are necessitated by local conditions.

There are no hard and fast limits to the conditions of either life or labour. At any one moment they imply a balance, but if that balance is upset another will soon be found; from day to day the balance is continually changing, though perhaps imperceptibly.



liamentary powers for acquiring sites for industrial or municipal purposes, to "re-house" those whose homes are disturbed (or an equal number of persons) in the same neighbourhood.

- (3) The acquisition by the Authorities of "areas" for demolition and reconstruction.
- (4) The acquisition of vacant land for the construction of houses.
- (5) The promotion of cheap locomotion.

These methods are put into action half-heartedly, owing to lack of confidence in their success.

Failure of regulations against over crowding; and

ill-success of attempts to compel re-housing.

Difficulties thrown in the way of railway extension.

Objectionable high blocks of dwellings the general result.

It is not too much to say that the action taken so far in London, in any of these directions, has been very half-hearted. Confidence is lacking; public opinion unconvinced. It is felt to be impossible to press regulations against over-crowding or insanitary property when the people who would be ejected have no other houses to go to; and thus it is just where things are worst that it is most difficult to amend them. Nor is the attempt to compel "re-housing" of much avail. With the best intentions it has proved in its operation to be of doubtful benefit; for it is found that the people actually displaced never do occupy the houses built for them; and as it only touches those who require Parliamentary powers of purchase, it presses principally upon the railways, whose projects and extensions, as facilitating the spread of population over a larger area, rather deserve encouragement. Moreover, so far as the re-housing schemes are efficacious in providing dwellings convenient for one class if not for another, it is almost necessarily by the building of high blocks of



dwellings, to which, at best, there are grave disadvantages.

Many of the objections to the re-housing regulation apply also to public schemes of demolition and reconstruction in insanitary areas. The cost has proved great compared to the results attained. A nuisance is removed, but no solution of the housing question is found, since there is little, if any, increase in the accommodation provided.

Schemes of demolition and reconstruction are costly, and do not solve the difficulty.

Two methods then remain: either the acquisition of vacant land for the construction of houses such as are needed; or the promotion of cheap and speedy means of access to districts where land is available for building; or some combination of these two.

Two methods remain. They are—

The acquisition of land for building need not necessarily involve the building of houses by the authorities themselves. They might stop at the laying out of the new streets, selling the sites—possibly at a loss—for the construction of dwelling-houses, with such restrictions as public policy might dictate. But the plan more generally favoured is to build and retain the property, letting the houses to suitable tenants. But whether land be bought to be built upon or to be resold, it might be found desirable, as part of the scheme, to improve the means of communication, with special regard to the parcels of land purchased.

Acquisition of land for house-building,

The alternative would be to improve the facilities of locomotion generally, or where likely to be most useful, without

and Improved facilities of locomotion this the better remedy.



entering upon any public speculations in land or houses.

This is the proposal that I advocate.

A remedy  
necessary.

There are those who would adopt none of these methods, but would limit the interference of the community to the enforcing of a certain standard of life as to crowding and sanitation, leaving both building and locomotion to private enterprise, regulated and controlled by municipal by-laws, or by the restrictions imposed by Parliament if special powers are required. I do not myself think that the evils of a congested city population would ever be cured on these lines, but to those who hold the opposite opinion, or who think that by interference we may cause greater evils than we cure, I would point out that the proposal I make interferes with private enterprise only in a direction in which even now no step can be taken without powers granted by Parliament.

Proposed  
interference  
with private  
enterprise  
not serious.

Question  
confined to  
two points.

To-night, in laying the question before this gathering of Authorities, I shall confine myself to the alternatives I have named; and mainly to establishing two points, (1) that with improved means of communication the evils become capable of cure, and (2) that without them all other proposals would be impracticable or ineffective; and consequently (3) that improved locomotion is the first, even if not the only, thing needful.

It is said that the poorer classes must



live near their work; that they can afford neither the time nor the money for daily journeys; and there is some truth in the statement, though perhaps not so much as is commonly supposed. But, however immoveable the very poor may be, the same rule does not apply to men of settled employment rather better paid: those whose new homes are now being rapidly built on all sides of London, as fast as the means of communication are extended.

The need for the poor to live near their work exaggerated and inapplicable to better paid men with settled employment

We have seen how, with the best intentions, and with the greatest care to provide suitable houses (as by the L.C.C. in Bethnal Green), those who occupy the new buildings are not those who have been displaced. They may be supposed to vacate a house elsewhere which becomes available and so room is made, and after perhaps a series of changes, extending far beyond the original area dealt with, things settle down. Such shiftings involve very little hardship to a population almost always on the move; and if the impulse comes from the top, improvement must result; a better home than his own becoming available for the man whose bad home needs to be destroyed. This kind of adjustment would happen very quickly in London if there were widespread improved means of communication from the centre to the outskirts, and from ring to ring.

Adjustments of population following the supply of new dwellings.

I should wish to make it clear how very much I mean by these words. I have in view a large and really complete scheme of railways underground and overhead, as

Largeness of the scheme suggested.



well as a net-work of tram lines on the surface ; providing adequately for short as well as long journeys. A system extending beyond the present metropolitan boundaries into the outskirts of London, wherever the population has gone or may go.

No serious engineering difficulties.

I am not an engineer, and cannot treat the subject from that side, but I believe there are no serious engineering difficulties in the way ; and I know that London is to-day far behind the great American cities, and even some of our own provincial towns, in this matter. Yet London offers many natural advantages for the application of such a system, there is here a need for it which I am persuaded exceeds that of any other city. Instead of being far behind in this matter, London ought to be in front.

London should lead—not lag behind.

Financial risks may be accepted.

The financial difficulties of so large a scheme may be considerable, but would not, I think, be insuperable. Something, doubtless, must be risked in constructing lines in advance of the anticipated traffic, and in putting the prices charged on a popular footing ; but it is a risk that the community might afford to take in the interest of improvement. They would acquire a property increasing every year in value with the increase of the traffic, and beyond the money earned by the carriage of passengers, the whole rateable value of London would be increased.

Administrative difficulties not insuperable.

The administrative difficulties would also be great, but could be overcome. Not only have they been conquered in other places, but a great public authority has



many advantages over any private company, special corporation, or trust, in an undertaking of this kind.

In my view the London County Council is the proper authority to undertake this work, and if need be its range of action should be increased. The separate London Municipalities which we have lately welcomed as satisfying local needs, point the way to an ultimate extension of the powers of the Central Authority to the whole area of Greater London.

The L. C. C.  
as the proper  
authority.

If my proposal can be carried out, London will spread in all directions. In the finding of suitable sites, and the building of suitable houses, there would be free and, I think, eager competition.

An extension  
of London on  
all sides  
would result,

The movement of population might sometimes be from centre to extremity, but would far more often pass from belt to belt; some in each belt finding it convenient and natural to move one stage further on in finding a new home.

The change would be gradual and continuous, but the relief of pressure would be immediate. The action would be something like that of land drainage on stagnant waterlogged land; whereas the attempt to meet the evils of crowding by piling up great blocks of model dwellings, is like the attempt to obviate a marshy foundation by putting in concrete, digging a hole, and pumping out the water.

It may be thought that the effect of better and more rapid communication would

and the  
breaking up  
of London



into suburban  
centres be  
facilitated.

be to increase centralization; but in many ways it would have the opposite effect. Wherever a man may go to find his work, he will look for his pleasure, and his wife will look for her shopping, near home; and thus a local centre is formed. Such centres are to be found now on all sides of London, with brilliant shops, perhaps a Town Hall, and probably a theatre; streets full of people; and always the jingle of a tramway line. The growth of such local life in London during the past decade is very noticeable.

Provision of  
houses as  
well as  
locomotion  
by public  
authority a  
mistake.

Without providing improved means of communication, it would be useless to buy land or build houses; but it may be asked—Why not do both? The one, it may be held, would play into the other; and if there are financial limits, it may be thought, that to do a little of each would be wiser than to do all of one. My answer to this is, that by confining the corporate efforts of the community to the providing of means of communication and thus encouraging the forces of private enterprise to attack the other half of this tremendous task, it can be accomplished, as perhaps in no other way it could be.

Better to  
divide the  
task between  
public and  
private effort.

Futility of  
coupling  
special  
schemes of  
building with  
partial pro-  
vision of  
locomotion.

To couple special building schemes with improvements in locomotion, also special and partial, would be futile. It is not in this or that direction, but in all directions, that expansion is required. It is not from special districts, or to special districts, that the population must be able to move freely; but from and to all districts. It is not this



piece of vacant ground, or that, but every piece, large or small, which can be rightly used for building, that should be made available, or more available than it now is, for the new homes of the people. The competition to provide these homes must be as wide and as free as possible.

The objections to and arguments against building houses for the people out of public money, rest upon different and stronger ground than those against providing in this way for better locomotion. It is only necessary to push the extreme to show this. It is quite possible to imagine all organized methods of locomotion (like all roads) as State or municipal monopolies, without any serious shock to the individualist basis of life; but, short of the wildest scheme of socialism, quite impossible to conceive of arranging the entire housing of the Nation on that plan. The main economic objection to State or Municipal enterprise is that it discourages private enterprise, and so leads to monopoly; but scientific systems of locomotion are almost of necessity monopolies. The choice lies, in effect, between working a monopoly or granting one for some one else to work, who is, in the present case, likely to be less enterprising than a public authority; less capable of looking at the whole service in a broad spirit; and is therefore less fitted for our purpose. But with regard to building, there is no possibility of monopoly; and the competition of the State or municipality might be positively harmful, if it should tend to check

Objections to building out of public money greater than those which apply to the provision of locomotion.

Means of locomotion best provided by a public authority.

But its action as to building would be best limited to experiments.



the enterprise of others. I do not suggest any curtailment of municipal powers. The wider the field opened to such enterprise, the less the danger on this score; and if municipal action in the direction of building were limited to experiments, it might be useful and could do no harm. The harm is done by the unsettling influence of vague possibilities as regards rate-aided building on a large scale.

Widespread increase in rateable values would result.

The increase in rateable value, which I have referred to as justifying the assumption of some risk of loss at first in the working of the new lines of communication, would be widespread, and would extend beyond the present Metropolitan boundaries. I do not believe that any district would ultimately suffer; all would in the end benefit more or less; but the degree of benefit would vary greatly. I fully appreciate the desire of securing these plums of advantage, which lies at the bottom of all schemes of public land purchase. But the buying of the land appears to me to be a very crude and imperfect way of attaining the end in view. I do not wish now to open the great questions of incidence of rating and betterment. I will only say that I do not despair of their equitable solution, even within the period that must elapse before the scheme of improved locomotion (which I put first) could come into operation. Are we to allow a disgraceful state of things, injurious to millions and showing no signs of improvement; but which is capable of cure, to the general advantage as well as that of these poor people; to continue, and perhaps grow

Buying land a crude way of securing the value of improvements.

Meanwhile the present state of things must not be allowed to continue.



worse, because of a dispute as to the apportionment of the profit that will ensue from its abatement?

I have said that in my opinion the improved means of communication required, should be owned by the community, and that the London County Council, with probably an enlarged sphere of action, is the best authority for the purpose; but on this several questions of policy arise. As regards the ordinary railways having termini in London and a local service, and even including the underground system of the Metropolitan and District Railways, I assume there would be no need to interfere; but their extensions should be encouraged and not penalised, low fares secured rather by competition than by enactment, and the many uncomfortable results of special "workmen's trains" got rid of. Nor would it be necessary (though it might be desirable) for the public to acquire the two existing electric tube lines. They could probably be brought in to a general scheme. But to grant further Parliamentary powers to individual schemes might be a grave mistake, whether for underground or surface lines; and of such schemes a large number will come before Parliament this session. The bringing forward of all these schemes shows how ripe this solution of the question is.

Questions of policy connected with new schemes for which powers are now asked.

The reasons in favour of a unified scheme are obvious, and show in the clearest way the advantage of public over private enter-

Advantages of a unified scheme.



Surface  
lines the most  
important.

prise, in this matter, for the attainment of the end we have in view. Private enterprise will seize on the most profitable routes and reject all others. Public enterprise will look to the profit on one part of the system to help those not less necessary parts (from a public point of view) of which the working is less, or perhaps not at all, profitable. To allow private companies to acquire all the main routes would be apt to block the way to all further action, and endanger the indirect results at which we aim. The complete control of the necessary net-work of surface lines is even more essential than that of the underground system. This last might be accepted, and supplemented where requisite; and competed with if necessary by an overhead line. The fares will regulate themselves on a twopenny basis. But it is to the surface lines that I look mainly for the easy and gradual expansion of the population, and the adjustments of life that will accompany it. To be efficacious, not only must the lines be numerous and interconnected, so as to make every inch of London accessible, but the service must be more frequent, and more prolonged—early and late—than the immediate earnings would justify. The speed must be good, and the fares on all lines very low, so that to save time by using them, even for quite short distances, may become habitual.

The need of a  
new measure  
of time and  
space in city  
life.

A new measure has to be applied to time and space in city life. Perhaps it is because city life is singularly behindhand in this respect that it suffers such congestion to-



day. In all other departments of life the methods of communication have been quickened nearly tenfold, and increased a hundredfold, in the nineteenth century. But in city life the past hangs round us, and has made progress very slow. Let anyone now design a city of four or five million inhabitants, and how greatly it would differ in plan and structure from London!

The possibilities of improvement in plan and structure to-day, rest entirely with improved means of communication; whatever may come later, they come first. This is the conclusion to which I desire to lead.

Many other wants would follow, many problems would remain: the utilizing of existing open spaces for public benefit, and the provision of others in the vicinity of growing populations; the widening of thoroughfares, and the opening up of courts. The war with dirt, disease, and premature death; the closing of houses not fit to live in; the supervision of new buildings; the clearing away of old slums and the checking of new ones. All would be made more easy of accomplishment. Easier, too, would be the adoption of a wide policy of construction and reconstruction, not alone in the crowded parts, but throughout London, so that the best may be made of city life; and above all, so that evils eradicated in one part may not reappear in another.

Possibilities of improved plan and structure dependent on increased means of communication.

Other problems would be made easier of solution by the scheme here proposed.



A copy of Mr. Booth's paper having been sent to Mr. A. J. BALFOUR, the right honourable gentleman wrote under date February 12th, to express his pleasure that "the discussions on the all-important question of Housing are shewing a tendency to leave the relatively barren regions of rhetorical description and to apply themselves to the more difficult but more profitable, problems raised by a search for a practical remedy." He further said—

"I am certain that the improvement of means of communication, about which I said something last year, and which Mr. Charles Booth discusses in his pamphlet, is the most important element in the problem.

"What I am anxious people should bear in mind is that trams, railways, and 'tubes' by no means exhaust the catalogue of possible improvements in transit."







