

TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC QUESTIONS.

The formidable tasks which confronted the Town Hall in the question of housing have in no way reacted to the detriment of other spheres. To keep constantly up to date with technical progress, the Municipality sends its engineers abroad. The technical problems requiring solution were all the greater because Vienna was in many respects a backward municipality before the war, while the subsequent period of neglect rendered great reforms necessary. The paving, cleaning, and lighting of the streets had to be reorganised. New and comparatively untried systems have been adopted, and advantage has been taken of American experience. The Municipality has installed seven sweeping machines, each of which sweeps 48 miles of streets daily, doing the work of 70 men. By tarring the streets, great headway has been made against the dust evil. One-sixth part of the street area has already been tarred. In the winter months a snow-melting machine is put into service. It is to be emphasised that all these technical innovations emanate, not from private enterprise, but from the City Works Department, and that the new machines are manufactured in the municipal workshops.

The old-fashioned removal of dust, which constituted one of Vienna's chief evils, is being abolished, and in the course of 1926 will be replaced by a more hygienic system.

Baths and Parks.

On the health side, the extension of public baths is being proceeded with, and this is especially important for Vienna, owing to the absence of baths from most houses.

Swimming baths have also been extended in every way. A splendid building is at present under construction in a working-class district, which will be the largest public bath in Europe. Its total cost will be £300,000. Admission prices are extremely low and do not even cover running expenses. All over Vienna, open spaces have been renovated and extended. Old cemeteries have been transformed into gardens.

Special attention has been paid to the water supply. The 159 miles of conduits have not only been maintained, but radically extended and transformed, in order to meet the enormously increased consumption of water. Moreover, the ordinary water requirements, in contrast to pre-war practice, are now supplied gratis. As 60 pints are allowed free daily to every person, about two-thirds of Vienna houses have no water account to pay. Additional consumption is paid for at a very low rate, and the charges for industrial consumption are lower still.

The Fire Brigade and Stations have been thoroughly reorganised, and the latest inventions are made use of. It is indeed a model institution.

The victualling of Vienna has been improved through the reorganisation of the municipal markets. While the food supply is not a municipal service, the Municipality has large holdings in many undertakings which supply food and fuel to the City.

Building Materials.

To cover its own requirements, the Municipality owns and manages a number of big concerns: granite works, paving-stone works, which supply the whole requirements of the Municipality; tile works, which supply one-tenth of the immense requirements of the Municipality; two lime works, which are able to supply far more than the municipal needs; large repair workshops, a steam laundry, &c. The Municipality also has large holdings in important works for the manufacture of building materials.

To assure the utmost economy, the supply and purchase of materials are centralised as far as possible. A central office supplied 76,576 waggon loads of building materials in 1924. A central buying office purchases materials for all municipal offices, institutions, schools, &c.

THE MUNICIPALITY IN BUSINESS.

The recent evolution of the municipal enterprises forms a glorious page in the history of the Socialist administration. The fate of the three great monopolistic concerns, the gas works, electricity works, and street trams, may be regarded as decisive for the whole development of the City.

In pre-war times the Christian Social Party administration derived large profits from these enterprises, which, however, they exploited to the point of exhaustion during the war, without providing for replacements. In the initial stages of the currency depreciation, the majority then in power would not adapt the charges to the falling value of money, out of a desire to curry favour with the electors. From the outset, however, the Socialist administration insisted that, while the municipal business concerns need not yield any profits, they should pay their way and provide public lighting free of cost. This attitude was firmly maintained in the teeth of an opposition which did not shrink from the most miserable expedients. Thus the business undertakings were able to keep their heads above water even in the worst days, and were soon in a position to renew and extend their plant. Moreover, the charges are now lower than in pre-war times.

Tramways.

The tramway department was able to repair and extend its depôts and to lengthen the track. The metropolitan railway, which the State had closed down at the end of the war, was handed