

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

over to the Municipality. This railway has been electrified at a cost of £550,000. The uniform tram fare of 2,000 kronen (1½d.) is less than the fare for the shortest distance in the pre-war period. Children ride for 300 kronen.

Gas.

The gas works have been transformed into a great chemical factory. Owing to the introduction of new methods, it sells coke of a superior quality, has its own benzol factory, and does a good export business. The receipts from the sale of gas comprise only about 60 per cent. of the total revenue. This enables a reduction to be effected in the price of gas. Although the works have to operate with foreign coal, the price of which is 62 per cent. higher than in pre-war time, the gas costs the consumer 22½ per cent. less than before the war. The number of gas consumers was 239,085 on the 30th June, 1919, but at the end of 1924 it had increased to 326,000.

Electricity.

In connection with the electricity works we have also to record a remarkable development. It has not only been possible to keep the plant technically up to date, but it has also been rendered as far as possible independent of foreign coal. A native coal mine, which was formerly deemed of no importance, has been utilised to feed a big distant station, which supplies Vienna with all the electricity needed for industrial purposes. In addition, the Municipality embarked upon the construction of water-power works.

Instead of resorting to loans at a high rate of interest, it financed its operations out of the proceeds of the small water-power tax, which is levied on the consumers of gas and electricity, and which has enabled the work to proceed without interruption, although great technical difficulties had to be surmounted. The first water-power works was able to start operations at the end of 1924, and one of its first results was to enable the charge for electricity for industrial purposes in Vienna to be reduced by 12½ per cent. This abatement represents a saving to industry which is equal to three times the water-power tax. The management of the Vienna water-power works is linked up with that of the Upper Austrian power works, which commenced activities in the beginning of 1925 and supplies part of its current to Vienna. A third water works will be completed at the beginning of 1926. It is being built by the Municipality itself.

Of the 410 millions of kilowatts which the Electricity Works estimate will be the consumption for 1925, it will be possible to win 247 millions from its own coal mine and water works. This saves the annual import of 300,000 tons of coal, and keeps the price of the current (including the tax) at one-half of the pre-war level. Lighting

now costs 520 kronen (just over $\frac{1}{4}$ d.) per hectowatt, and power current costs 245 kronen ($\frac{1}{8}$ d.). The number of consumers has increased from 158,878 in 1918-1919 to 391,000 at the end of 1924. The Socialist administration has brought gas and electricity within reach of the mass of the people.

The lesser enterprises of the Municipality comprise a funeral furnishing business, an advertising agency, warehouses, and a large brewery, which is run at a profit.

CONCLUSION.

We have now shown how the Socialist majority has applied a policy of systematic reform to all branches of administration. The Municipality, which as an administrative authority was often alien and hostile to the masses of the people, has developed under Socialist influence into the real community, which embraces everybody who dwells within its walls and follows the progress of the individual from the cradle to the grave, whenever it is necessary. Capitalism cannot be abolished from the Town Hall. Yet it is within the power of great cities to perform useful instalments of Socialist work in the midst of capitalist society. A Socialist majority in a municipality can show what creative force resides in Socialism. Its fruitful labours not only benefit the inhabitants of the city, but raise the prestige of Socialism elsewhere.

The tens of thousands of persons with no political opinions who live in a great city have inevitably been impressed by the earnest determination which the Socialists displayed in performing their task at a time when the decay of Vienna, its decline to an unimportant town, was prophesied.

The collapse of this administration was predicted with confidence by its opponents, who are now lamenting its great accession of strength. Without the efficient organisation of the Vienna Socialists, the capture of the majority in the Town Hall would have been impossible. On the other hand, the success of the administration has extraordinarily strengthened the Party, not only in Vienna but throughout the Republic. And what importance the strong position of Social Democracy in Austria has had for Socialism in Central Europe during the years of surging reaction is well known. Thus to-day the red Town Hall of Vienna towers as a fortress of the proletarian movement. The enemy has abandoned all hope of ever recapturing the citadel. May the example of Vienna spur to new activity all Labour movements that are discouraged by the progress of reaction.