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# LONDON REFORM UNION.

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## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE WORKS DEPARTMENT OF THE London County Council.



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THE TRUTH

WORKS DEPARTMENT

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

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# THE TRUTH

ABOUT THE

## WORKS DEPARTMENT

OF THE

### LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

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“What’s all this about the Works Department?” asks the London elector. “Why are both parties on the Council throwing mud at each other?” “Where,” asks the ratepayer, “do I come in?” The following pages give the plain truth about the whole matter. Every effort has been made to divest the statement of partisanship, and to confine it to bare description. Whether it suits the electioneering interests of the “Progressives” or those of the “Moderates,” or neither of them, the Londoner has a right to know the facts.

### WHAT THE WORKS DEPARTMENT IS.

The Works Department of the County Council is the department charged with executing such building, repairing, or other work as the Council resolves not to put out to contractors. It was started in November, 1892, under a manager at £700 a year, with the regular staff of a contractor’s establishment—assistants, clerks of works, foremen, &c. Like other departments of the municipal service, it is supervised by a Committee of the Council, which is elected annually, and which reports to the Council usually once a fortnight. The proposal to form a Works Department was fiercely resisted in the Council, but the division list showed 82 votes to 28.\* The “Moderates” declined to accept the decision of the Council (emphatic as the voting was), and for two years they refused to serve on the Works Committee at all. After the election of 1895,

\* Minutes of Proceedings of the L. C. C., 22nd November, 1892, pp. 1077-1082.

however, they claimed half the seats, and the Works Committee has accordingly, since March, 1895, consisted of exactly equal numbers of "Progressives" and "Moderates." It has a universally respected civil engineer (Progressive) as chairman, and had, during 1895-6, a gentleman of wide experience in the building trade (Moderate) as vice-chairman.

## HOW IT WORKS.

The Works Department stands to the other Committees of the Council exactly in the same relation as if it were an independent contractor. When a Committee has any work to execute, the Council's Architect and Engineer prepare the plans and submit an estimate, without any reference to the Works Department. Then the Council decides whether or not the work shall be offered to the Works Committee. Sometimes it decides to put the work up to tender, a course which enables it to see whether the estimates of the Architect and Engineer are trustworthy guides. But generally the Works Committee is asked to undertake the work. The Works Committee may say that it is not prepared to do the work, either because it is not satisfied with the specifications and estimates, or because it has no conveniences for doing work at that particular site, or of that particular kind. This has, during the last two years, happened with respect to about one-tenth of the Council's works. In that case the job is put up to tender and done by a contractor.

The accounts of the Works Department are kept distinct from those of other departments of the Council. The Finance Committee sees that it is debited with the interest and sinking fund on the capital it uses; that due allowance is made to cover depreciation and renewals; that a complete stocktaking is carried out once a year by independent officers; and that all outgoings and maintenance charges are properly spread over the various works done. The accounts of the Works Department are elaborately checked by the Council's Controller, who keeps a special staff always employed for the purpose. They are also audited, with the rest, by the Local Government Board's auditor.

## WHY THE WORKS DEPARTMENT WAS ESTABLISHED.

In the "good old times" of the Metropolitan Board of Works, the contractors made huge fortunes out of the London ratepayers. Somehow or another, competition did not keep the tenders down to the lowest possible figure. Occasionally only two or three firms would tender for a piece of work. It is clear that it "pays" contractors to arrange among themselves to take it in turns to get different works, rather than bid against each other for all of them.

The Council, from the first, strongly suspected that something of this sort was going on. But it was led to take the work into its own hands by a series of remarkable instances, which it is important to recall to public memory.

## CLEANING THE BRIDGES.

The first hint came from the service of watering and sweeping the bridges over the Thames. This had always been let out to contractors, and cost £1,928 per annum. The Bridges Committee suspected that the Council was somehow being "done," and got authority to try the experiment of doing the work by its own staff. So thoroughly was the Council convinced, that no division was taken.\* The result was that the service has ever since been, by common consent, more efficiently performed *at a third less cost.* The "lowest tender" of the contractors had always come out at 4s. 7½d. to 4s. 10½d. per square yard of surface per annum, whereas the total cost under the Council's own management, for the three years, 1890-3, was at 3s. 2d. per square yard per annum. No member has even so much as proposed that the Council should go back to the old system.

## THE CROSSNESS SCHOOLHOUSE.

The next warning came from a building job. It became necessary for a small schoolhouse to be erected at the Council's great drainage outfall near Crossness. The architect's estimate was £1,800, and tenders were invited in due course. Only three firms competed, and the lowest tender was no less than £2,300, or £500—28 per cent.—over the architect's estimate. The Main Drainage Committee felt that it was being "done." It asked leave to try the experiment of building the house by its own workmen. *The case was so clear that not a single voice was raised in the Council against this proposal.*† The work was done, with the result that the total cost came out slightly below what the architect had estimated, showing a saving of no less than £536 compared with the "lowest tender."‡

## THE YORK ROAD SEWER.

But the case which finally convinced three out of every four members of the Council of the desirability of executing their own work was an engineering job, the York Road Sewer. The engineer estimated the cost at £7,000, and tenders were invited in the usual manner. Only two were sent in, one for £11,588, and the other

\* *Ibid.*, June 28th, 1892, pp. 591-2. † *Minutes*, July 19th, 1892, p. 685.

‡ *Ibid.*, June 27th, 1893, p. 683.

for £11,608, or no less than 65 per cent. above the estimate. The Council determined to do the work itself, *not a single voice being raised against it*,† with the result that the work cost pretty much what the engineer had calculated, and a net saving of £4,477 was made, as compared with the lowest tender.

This remarkable result naturally created a sensation among the contracting world, and attempts were made to impugn the engineer's figures. In his crushing reply he pointed out that the contractors had reckoned out their tenders at absurdly high prices in nearly every detail, charging, for instance, 60s. and 70s. respectively, per cubic yard of brickwork and cement, whereas the work was done at 39s.† It seems probable that there was a general understanding among leading contractors not to compete with one another for this job, in order, by standing aloof, to induce the Council to abandon its fair wages clause. The Council preferred to abandon the contractor.

What led the Council to take in hand its own work was, therefore, not any vague Socialistic theory, but the plain fact that it was "being cornered" by the contractors. It was actually unable to get its work done by contractors at any price that its own Architect or Engineer thought a fair one. Under these circumstances, when it was compelled, in sheer defence of the interest of the ratepayers, to set up its own workshops, only twenty-eight members out of a Council of 137, were found to vote against it in the only division that was taken.\*

## THE RESULTS OF THE WORKS DEPARTMENT.

An examination of the various accounts shows the Works Department does not make a saving on every job that it undertakes. Sometimes the cost works out above the estimate, and sometimes below it. The Works Committee has to report the exact result in each case, as checked by the Controller acting for the Finance Committee. It is therefore natural that those who approve of the system of direct employment should lay most stress on the jobs on which there has been a saving; and that those who think the contract system preferable should harp upon the jobs which have cost more than the estimate. It seems fairer to take the results as a whole. Looking at it in this way, it is clear that the works executed by the Works Department up to now have been done at less cost than the Architect and Engineer said would be the fair price. These, be it observed, are the figures, not of the Works Committee, but as finally revised, after detailed investigation, by the Controller.

† *Ibid.*, 27th Sept., 1892, p. 788. † *Ibid.*, Oct. 17th, 1893.

\* *Ibid.*, November 22nd, 1892, p. 1080.

TABLE SHOWING THE ESTIMATED COST OF EACH WORK, AS FINALLY FRAMED BY THE ARCHITECT OR ENGINEER, AND THE ACTUAL COST, INCLUDING INTEREST, SINKING FUND, DEPRECIATION, RENEWALS, AND MAINTENANCE EXPENSES.

	Architect's or Engineer's Estimate.		Actual Cost.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Total value of 89 works, completed and certified up to 30th September, 1895.....	298,294	4 2	297,266	5 0
Total value of 19 works, completed and certified since 30th September, 1895.....	85,244	11 5	80,377	9 11
Total.....	383,538	15 7	377,643	14 11
To balance net profit.....	£5,895	0 8*		

Thus, taking all the estimated works together, the Works Department, in spite of the difficulty of setting up new plant and creating a new organisation,—in the face, too, of bitter and, as some say, of malignant opposition—has so far managed, after allowing for everything, to make a substantial net saving to the Council, assuming that contractors could have been found to do the work for no more than the Architect's or Engineer's estimates. This, all things considered, seems a wonderfully successful result. But it must never be forgotten that the object of the Works Department is not to make "profit," but to protect the Council against the contractors. Even if, in any particular year, the cost were to come out a few thousand pounds above the estimate, the Council, as any business man sees, would still be making a large saving by keeping down the contractor's tenders for all its other work.

## JOBGING WORKS.

But the above table only includes the works for which definite specifications and detailed estimates are prepared by the Architect or the Engineer, before the work is ordered. The Works Department also executes a large number of little "jobging works" for the other Committees, connected with the thousand and one odds and ends of repairs and alterations incidental to all great undertakings. Here no specification can be made, and consequently no useful

\* *Ibid.*, 24th November, 1896.

estimate can be made in advance. The Architect or Engineer can only make a rough guess at what work will be involved. This has led to much misunderstanding, and is the origin of many of the misleading statements about the Works Department. If a wall is shaky, and has to be repaired, no one can say in advance how much work will have to be done. The Architect has to make a guess, in order that the necessary vote may be taken in the Council, and he, perhaps, puts it at £50. But when the first brick is touched, the whole wall may crumble, and the Architect himself may order it to be rebuilt at many times the cost originally expected. Then the Works Department has been blamed by outsiders for exceeding the "estimate," when no real "estimate" (in a builder's sense of the word) has been framed.

Finally, a method was found by which the performances of the Works Department in jobbing works could be justly checked. The London School Board, having no Works Department, has to get its jobbing works done by contractors, and puts them up to tender under a comprehensive schedule of prices. The County Council now adopts the prices for jobbing works quoted by the lowest tenderer for the School Board work for the time being. The work actually done on each job is measured up by the Architect, and computed at these competitive prices. Thus, the Works Department is here pitted directly against the contractor. The following table gives the result:—

TABLE SHOWING THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF JOBBING WORK COMPLETED BY THE WORKS DEPARTMENT FOR THE PRINCIPAL COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL DURING THE YEAR 1895-6, WITH THE VALUE AT SCHEDULE PRICES AS CERTIFIED BY THE ARCHITECT, AND THE COST (INCLUDING INTEREST, SINKING FUND, DEPRECIATION, RENEWALS, AND MANAGEMENT) AS CERTIFIED BY THE CONTROLLER.

Committee for which work has been executed.	Value at Schedule Prices.			Actual Cost.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Main Drainage .....	9,246	2	2	8,541	6	2
Bridges .....	4,396	18	11	3,686	13	11
Fire Brigade.....	2,967	6	10	2,857	14	4
Building Act .....	2,510	6	4	2,352	12	4
Highways .....	1,757	3	8	1,673	18	11
Parks and Open Spaces.....	865	7	0	792	5	0
Establishment.....	506	7	4	491	15	5
Other Committees.....	1,278	16	9	1,171	6	9
Total .....	£23,528	9	0	21,567	12	10
Net profit .....	£1,960	16	2			

## “THE SCANDALS.”

What then, it will be asked, means all this talk about the “scandals” of the Works Department? If the Department has, up to now, not cost the ratepayers a single penny, but has, on the contrary, directly saved them some thousands of pounds, and indirectly a great deal more, why is it so denounced?

This is an unfortunate result of party spirit. Most of the “Moderates” on the Council have always been opposed to the creation of a Works Department, whilst most of the Progressives have approved of it. It has therefore become a subject of contention between the two parties, one attacking and the other defending.

Lately, a great handle has been given to those who attack the Works Department owing to certain grave irregularities committed by the manager and some of his subordinates. The Controller, in the course of the elaborate system of checking the accounts of the Works Department, discovered that the officers had been making fictitious transfers from one job to another in order to equalise the results. Where the Department was making a good saving on a particular work, they sought to conceal it; and where a work was likely to show an excess, they tried to cover it up by “transferring,” in their account books, imaginary materials from the one to the other.

The Manager could not affect the total results, because the Controller’s stocktaking checked this. Nor did he claim to have more profit on the current jobs than he had made. The Controller’s investigations proved, on the contrary, that the Works Department profit and loss account up to the 30th June last stood £889 better than the manager had made out. But he so far deceived the Works Committee and the Council as to make it appear that the total saving was spread over nearly all the works in hand, whereas it was really being made on two-thirds of them.

This was a serious offence in a public officer, and the Council, by common consent of both parties, summarily dismissed the manager and five of his subordinates.\*

It was alleged that such “equalising” of profits is common in every joint stock undertaking, lest the shareholders should get to know “too much,” and even in a private contractor’s business. But it is one of the advantages of the public service that the standard of right and wrong is higher than it is in private trade; and there must be no hesitation in insisting that everything should be open and above board.

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\* It is only fair to remark that no suspicion of peculation or pecuniary dishonesty of any kind attaches to them; and that they derived no personal advantage from their fictitious entries.

## “DOWN WITH THE WORKS DEPARTMENT.”

Upon the discovery of these fraudulent transfers—detected, be it observed, not by any Councillor, Moderate or Progressive, nor yet by any newspaper, or outside critic, but by the vigilant Controller—a great howl has been set up for the abolition of the Works Department. Column after column of newspaper abuse, and denunciation, and insinuation, and inuendo has been published against the Works Committee—half of whom are Moderates and half Progressives—just as if they had stolen public money, or pocketed the stores. But there is not even a breath of suspicion that they have done anything of the sort. In the Council itself great and virtuous orations have been delivered on both sides. There are, unhappily, too many people eager to make party capital out of everything, even at the risk of neglecting the public business and throwing a huge burden on the ratepayers. And a whole host of contractors and their friends, who used to make large profits out of the Metropolitan Board of Works, are only too eager to get rid of the Works Department, and so make the County Council absolutely dependent on the contractors once more. But the fact that a few officials have been guilty of fictitious book-keeping, which was in due course detected by the Council's own elaborate system of check, is not in itself any argument for or against direct employment, any more than the default or bankruptcy of one firm is a reason why all contractors should be abandoned.

What the London elector must insist on is that his interests shall not be sacrificed to those of any party whatsoever. Let the operations of the Works Department be most strictly investigated and watched, so that the policy of direct employment may be tried by experience and tested by results. But we must give it time and fair play, and take care that, under the pretence of saving the rates, London is not once more handed over to the contractors' rings and knock-outs.

## THE POLICY OF DIRECT EMPLOYMENT.

Many people imagine that the establishment of a Works Department is a peculiar fad of the London County Council, unknown in other towns.

A little knowledge of the action of local governing bodies elsewhere would prevent this mistake. *Every important city in the Kingdom has its own Works Department under some title or another.* Let us take, for instance, Birmingham, which prides itself on being run strictly on business principles. It is, of course, unnecessary to remind the reader that Birmingham has municipalised its water and its gas, which are in London still left to private enter-

prise. What is not so well known is that the Town Council of Birmingham dispenses with the contractor whenever it can. The Public Works Committee, which looks after the thoroughfares, and the Health Committee, which is responsible for sanitation, have not only entirely eliminated the contractor from the cleaning and the repairing of the streets and the removal of the refuse, but even from the laying down of granite paving and flagging, once a most profitable item of his business. The Gas Committee is not content with employing hundreds of men to make gas, but also keeps its own staff of carpenters, bricklayers, blacksmiths, tinmen, painters, fitters, &c., to execute its numerous works. The Improvements Committee, like the Estates Committee, has its own carpenters and fitters, bricklayers, and paperhangers, plasterers and zinc-workers,\* whilst the Water Committee, besides a regular staff of mechanics of all kinds, is now actually engaged in constructing several huge dams and reservoirs near Rhayader, two tunnels and various water towers and siphons, together with workmen's dwellings to accommodate a thousand people, stables, stores, workshops, a public hall and recreation room, a school, two hospitals, and a public-house—all without the intervention of a contractor. "The construction of all the buildings on the works is being carried out by the workmen of the Corporation, under the superintendence of the resident engineer and his assistant. The timber and other material is being purchased by tender. This method," reports the Water Committee, "of using material supplied by contract, and constructing by the direct employees of the Corporation, the Committee consider, under the circumstances of the case, to be the most economical, as well as calculated to secure the best results."†

Birmingham, in fact, is going far beyond the London County Council; it has become its own builder, its own engineer, and its own manufacturer. The number of workmen of all kinds in the direct employment of the Town Council of Birmingham is actually greater at the present time than the whole number employed by the Works Department of the London County Council.

And if we turn to Liverpool we learn that "almost all the city engineer's work is done by men directly employed by the Corporation. . . . The construction of sewers is now done entirely by the Corporation themselves. . . . They had such a cruel experience of doing the work of sewerage by contractors that they have given it up."§ It appears that in the old days, when the contractors agreed and charged for two courses of brickwork, no amount of inspection sufficed to prevent him putting in one only. "What happened was this, that whenever the Inspector came round, or the Clerk of Works, to watch the contractors, they found the two rings of

\* Return of Hours of Labour, Wages, &c. (Appendix to Birmingham General Purposes Committee's Report, July 25th, 1893).

† Report of the Birmingham Water Committee, presented February 6th, 1894.

§ "Evidence of the Deputy Town Clerk of Liverpool before the Unification of London Commission," p. 328 of c. 7493-I.

brickwork going on very well ; as soon as the Inspector went away . . . . . the second ring of brickwork was left out . . . . . and so the sewer got weak. . . . . You could trace the visits of the Inspector by the double rings" which were found here and there at intervals when the sewers were subsequently uncovered for repairs.||

This evidence from Liverpool is especially interesting in connection with what has just been discovered at Manchester. The City Auditor's report, published in October, 1896, exposes a precisely similar fraud in connection with the thirty-five miles of new sewers now under construction. This work was let to thirty four different contractors, who have already received £637,000 for their work. The new City Surveyor, finding that the work had been scamped, had "street after street taken up at great expense, and such an exposure was made of fraud and deceit as I," writes the Auditor, "have never before seen. The men who built these sewers in a tunnel never dreamed that their rascality would be discovered." The chief method adopted was, as at Liverpool, leaving out one ring of brickwork, except when the Corporation Inspector was signalled as being about to descend the shaft. Then the workmen hastily put on a second row of bricks at that spot. The frequency of the Inspector's visits to each bit of work were found marked by this extra ring of bricks, here and there, instead of along the whole length of the sewer.\*

When this is the result of the contract system, we can scarcely wonder that the hardheaded business men who run the provincial Town Councils are rapidly discarding it in favour of direct employment. When Liverpool had to construct its great waterworks, with a colossal dam at Vyrnwy, and an aqueduct through North Wales, this gigantic work, costing altogether two millions sterling, was deliberately undertaken by the Town Council itself, by a staff acting directly under the Water Engineer.

Nor is it in municipal boroughs alone that we see the change in policy. Nothing was more common a few years ago than for highway authorities to get their roads kept in order by contractors. An interesting return obtained in 1892 by the County Surveyors' Society shows that this practice has been almost entirely abandoned in favour of direct employment of labour by the County Surveyor. Only in one or two counties out of thirty-five furnishing particulars does the old custom linger. The County Surveyor for Gloucestershire indignantly denies the allegation that he favours the contract system. "It does not commend itself to me in any way," he writes, "and encourages a low form of sweating. My own experience of road-contracting is that it does very well for five years; then the roads go to pieces, and you have to spend all your previous savings to put them to rights."§

|| *Ibid.*, p. 328. \* Report of the Auditor of the City of Manchester, for 1895.  
§ "Particulars of Management of Main Roads in England and Wales," a report compiled for the County Surveyors' Society, by Mr. Heslop, County Surveyor for Norfolk. See *Builder*, March 19th and 26th, 1892.

When we thus find even rural districts giving up the contractor, it ceases to be surprising that the City Council of Glasgow constructs its own tramcars and the City Council of Manchester manufactures its own bass-brooms, or even that the ultra-conservative Commissioners of Sewers of the City of London actually set the County Council an example by manufacturing their own waggons, harness, and horse-shoes, all, as they proudly declare, "by their own staff."† The superiority of direct municipal employment, under salaried supervision, to the system of letting out works to contractors has, in fact, been slowly borne in on the best municipal authorities all over the country by their own administrative experience, quite irrespective of social or political theories.‡

## WHAT THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL OUGHT TO DO.

What, then, must we insist on at the present juncture ?

### 1. FULL ENQUIRY.

The London ratepayers have a right, after so many vague insinuations against the Works Committee, that a full and searching enquiry should be made into the whole organisation and working of the Works Department; that the shorthand notes of this enquiry should be published to the world; and that any defects should be promptly made right. There cannot be public confidence in the Works Department until a thorough investigation has been made.\*

### 2. QUALITY, NOT CHEAPNESS.

But the enquiry must not be confined to the pounds, shillings, and pence side of the Works Department. We must consider the quality of the work as well as its cost. The Committee must compare the excellence of the Works Department's painting and plumbing with that done by the contractor. The London School Board, just because it has no Works Department, has had to spend tens of thousands of pounds in repairing the jerry-building of some of its schools. The County Council is still smarting from the bad work of some of the old contractors under the Metropolitan Board of Works.

† Statement of the Commissioners of Sewers, presented to the Royal Commission on London Unification, p. 171 of c. 7493—II.

‡ This change of policy is not confined to public authorities. It has been the most characteristic feature of private industry in the United Kingdom during the last twenty years, especially in the great enterprises of the railway companies, which nowadays do as much as possible of their own work, and avoid the contract system wherever they can do so.

\* The Council decided, on 24th November, 1896, without a dissentient voice, to appoint a strong Committee of Enquiry, presided over by the Chairman of the Council himself, and empowered to call in two experts as assessors. It was also decided, on the motion of the Progressives, that the shorthand notes of that enquiry should be published.

### 3. FAIR PLAY FOR THE WORKS DEPARTMENT.

Meanwhile, the ratepayers' interests must not be sacrificed to party spirit. The Works Department is a going concern, with plant and machinery which have cost £100,000, and large works actually on hand. Unless it is given a proper staff, and reasonable facilities for doing its work, there will be a serious loss every week. London must see to it that no party on the Council plays ducks and drakes with the ratepayers' money, in order to gain an electioneering triumph. *Those who declare that the Works Department is a failure can easily make it a failure between now and the next election, if public opinion does not restrain them. The prolonged dislocation of the Department, the delay in appointing new officers, the refusal to give it enough work—all this necessarily means financial loss to the Works Department. When its next balance-sheet appears, those who have caused the loss will be the first to denounce it.*

### 4. COMMON SENSE.

And both parties must use a little common sense about the matter. On the one hand the Works Department cannot do everything equally well—it evidently succeeds better in sewer work and road making than in rough outdoor painting. On the other hand, the London County Council cannot afford, any more than a provincial Town Council, to put itself absolutely at the contractor's mercy. It is quite clear that we must always have a Works Department: it is equally clear that the Works Department cannot accomplish everything at once. Let the wiser members on both sides see to it, lest London cry, "A plague on both your houses!"

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# London Reform Union.

**T**HE London Reform Union is an association of men and women who seek to improve the municipal government of London, the administration of its public affairs, and the collective organisation of its civic life. London's greatest peril is the apathy of Londoners to London matters. In the government of the parish, the district, and the Metropolis as a whole; in the administration of the Poor Law, the Education Acts, and the Sanitary Code; in the management of the Thames and its docks, the public markets, the hospitals, and the police; in the incidence of taxation and the disposal of charities, endowments, and other public funds, as well as in all other London affairs, the London Reform Union seeks to maintain and raise the level of civic duty, to increase the active participation of Londoners in their own public concerns, and to elevate the standard of life of the whole people.

The size and circumstances of London involve problems of social reform far exceeding in complexity and importance any to be found elsewhere. The chaos and tangle of London's laws and government; the segregation of the rich and the poor within its boundaries; the overcrowded and insanitary condition of the dwellings of so many of the working population; the existence of many thousands of "one-room" homes; the demoralising irregularity of employment, often coupled with excessive hours of labour; the lack of healthful recreation, beauty, or rest in the "cities of the poor"; the ravages of drink, vice, and crime among the ill-fed, badly-housed, and casually employed denizens of the slums; the special difficulties connected with the transformation of the wife and mother into a wage-earner, and of the home into a workshop; above all, the squalor, coarseness, and neglect which are destroying the character and intelligence of so many thousands of London's children—all these call for vigorous action on the part of every right-minded citizen.

The London Reform Union includes among its members adherents of every political party, and belongs itself to none. It proceeds upon no abstract theory, but endeavours to deal with each subject as it arises from the point of view of the improvement of London, and the provision of a wider and better life for London's citizens. It aims at purity, unity, and simplicity of administration; at the management by the people of their own affairs, and a just distribution of the public burdens. In its local branches men and women of every religious denomination, economic creed, or political faith unite in the common work of disseminating a knowledge of local affairs, agitating for the specific reforms most urgently needed in each case, and co-operating with the local governing bodies in promoting efficient administration. By educational lectures, by public meetings, and by the circulation of literature, the Executive Committee of the Union, which is annually elected by its members, endeavours to foster and direct the growing sense of civic duty now stirring throughout the Metropolis.

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