

STATEMENT RELATIVE TO STREET RAILWAY LEGISLATION.

December 13, 1919.

The General Court is showing a real desire to furnish a remedy for our street railroad difficulties. The street railroad is the chief means of transportation for the working people of this Commonwealth. It is a public necessity of the first importance. Without it the transaction of business as now conducted would cease. If the cost of operation were met by the car rider transportation would be on a sound basis. That cost has now become prohibitive in many instances. But transportation is none the less a public necessity, like schools, highways and public lighting. If it cannot be paid for by the car rider the expense must be met by the remission of taxes or by a contribution from the public treasury.

The special commission has made a thorough and exhaustive study and proposed not radical but moderate remedies. It is the plain duty of the General Court to adopt such remedies as are proposed to furnish money for the operation of transportation. I have never seen a General Court of Massachusetts that was unable to find a solution for difficult problems, or that lacked the courage to apply a remedy when one has been found. Transportation must be paid for. There is no source from which payment can be made except by the public. There is no use in dodging the issue, and it may as well be honestly stated that providing a reasonable street car system for those who must use that mode of travel means the placing of an additional burden on the public. There is no escape from the duty of those in authority to find where this additional burden can best be borne, and there impose it. There is no other honest solu-

tion of the problem. It seems clear that one of the things that ought to be done is the purchase of the Cambridge subway for the relief of the metropolitan district. There ought to be additional regulations over the use of jitneys. There ought to be relief from the payment of taxes which amount to a charge for the use of the public highways.

For twenty years or more it has been the policy of Massachusetts to have subways publicly owned. I can see no less burdensome method for the public to come to the rescue of the car riders than the purchase of the Cambridge subway. It is altogether time to face these problems squarely. It is for the public to determine whether they desire a continuation of street car service, with a clear understanding that if they have the service they must and ought to pay for it. I believe it is the duty of those in authority to provide transportation, and it was with that in view that I recommended the appointment of a commission, and it is with that in view that I am now urging the adoption of the remedial features of the report of that commission at a special session of the General Court of Massachusetts.