

CONCERNING PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

M. F. Harrington, a well known attorney of O'Neill, Neb., and president of the Nebraska public ownership league, has written for the St. Louis Mirror. The article follows:

The line of division between the advocates of private ownership and the advocates of public ownership of railways may easily be drawn. The defenders of private ownership say that private persons should own all property whether it be of a public or of a private nature. The friends of public ownership contend that private persons should own that property which, in its nature, is private; and that the public should own those properties which are, in their nature, public. Regarding railways as public highways, it is contended that they should be owned by the public, and this brings us face to face with the question whether railways are essentially private or public property. If railways are private property then they could all have been built by private persons without any grant of public power. But were they so built? Manifestly not.

A railroad corporation may take the real estate of the citizen over his protest by paying the damages sustained. It may cross country roads, streets and alleys. Whence comes this power? Solely from the people. The British king possessed this power originally and used it in the establishment of the dirt roads. Hence the term "King's Highway."

Under our government this sovereign power is possessed by the states and by the nation. The state may take the private property of the citizen without his consent for public purposes. But no private person may do this. John D. Rockefeller, with his great wealth, can not take a single foot of land

from any person without his consent. But the railways in which he is interested may do so. Why? Only because the people have granted this power to public corporations. We have also permitted them to cross highways, streets and alleys and take tolls. From the public they get what is termed their franchises. Under these franchises they have built and operated the railed highways. Mr. Rockefeller, as an individual, has not power to operate a railroad through a single county, town or city in the republic. But under the franchises granted by the people, the railways in which he is interested may exercise this power which is denied to him as a private person.

And what use have the railways made of these franchises? They were granted them for the public good, but they have used them to plunder the people. These franchises now constitute the most valuable assets which the railways possess. It is against these franchises that they issue watered bonds and watered stocks. They issue stocks and bonds for two to five times the worth of the physical property. The excess above the actual worth of the property is watered stock and bonds. And there is nothing behind these fraudulent stocks and fraudulent bonds except the franchises granted by the people. Plainly the financiers make us pay freight and passenger rates high enough to pay dividends on billions of watered stocks and bonds issued against these franchises, which we foolishly gave them. No clearer case of abuse of a grant of public power can be found in the annals of history.

But some don't understand how we can acquire the railways—or such part of them as it may be prudent to acquire—without paying for the watered stocks and watered bonds. The problem is not tremendously difficult. We can build one great railway from ocean to ocean and another from north to south, with necessary feeders, and we can get the money to build and equip these roads at two per cent per annum. This is a much lower rate than any private corporation can secure money at. The government will have no dividends to pay on watered stocks or watered bonds. In this way it can reduce freight and passenger rates. The other railroads located in the same territory will be compelled to compete with the government rate. By this means their earning capacity will be reduced. They will not be able to pay any interest on watered stocks or watered bonds. These roads will then drop in the market to what they are really worth, and the government can either buy them outright or condemn them at their honest value. Having acquired some additional roads in that way it can proceed to acquire others gradually until it has acquired all of the roads that it may desire to purchase. By this process the government will gradually acquire the railroads. The roads to be built by the government should be double tracked and should be the best built and best equipped railways in the country. The government should secure the very best talent to manage and operate these properties and make their operation a success. This has been done in other countries and can and will be done here. The public ownership sentiment is growing rapidly and the American people are going to put private men out of the ownership and control of public properties.

SOME CHILD LABOR STATISTICS

It is a somewhat uncomfortable thing to know that, according to the United States census returns there were 1,750,178 child wage earners in 1900 in this country between the ages of 10 and 15 inclusive. Of this number, however, one-third had attained their 15th year, and 54.8 per

cent, or over one-half, were either 14 or 15 years of age. About 60 per cent of the number were employed on farms.

Of the whole number about 200,000 are classed as working at occupations that are wholly or partially objectionable, and the number so engaged between 10 and 13 years of age are as follows:

Bookkeepers, clerks, stenographers, etc., 2,668; boot and shoe makers and repairers, 918; draymen, hackmen, teamsters, etc., 2,240; glass workers, 1,433; laborers (not specified), 49,426; laundresses, 1,365; messengers and errand office boys and girls, 9,826; metal workers, 2,458; miners and quarrymen, 9,000; packers and porters, 1,313; painters, glaziers and varnishers, 343; printers, lithographers and pressmen, 699; salesboys and salesgirls, 2,544; servants and waiters or waitresses, 49,461; textile mill operatives, 26,744; textile workers, 4,700; tobacco and cigar operatives, 2,628, and wood workers, 2,328.

There are three great objections to child labor; it prevents the proper physical and mental development of the child, often subjects him to immoral surroundings, and keeps him from obtaining a proper education.

The children on the farms may be counted out. Their surroundings are seldom such as to hurt them, and they attend school on the whole to a very great extent, varying with the requirements of the several states in this matter.

The greatest evil is found in the cotton mills, sweat shops, and mines. Recent statistics are not available but it is computed that in 1902 the cotton mills of the south employed 50,000 children, and that there were 5,000 under ten years of age. Think of that, babies almost, some of them receiving only 10 cents a day!

It is those of less than ten years of age who constitute the most pitiful part of the whole national shame. No statistics have been compiled of them, but they are believed to number in the thousands.

The passage of anti-child labor laws for which union labor is largely responsible is rapidly lessening the evil, but still much remains to be done, and it is a question how many generations it will take to get rid of the harm already done, for the evils entailed are handed down from generation to generation.—Schenectady Gazette.

BADNESS THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE

"Bad men are the exceptions. It is natural that men and women be good and do good. Love and sympathy are part of the divine plan."

These words are to be found in one of the essays contained in Richard L. Metcalfe's beautiful and uplifting book entitled "Of Such is the Kingdom." Mr. Metcalfe is sub-editor, under W. J. Bryan, of The Commoner.

The thoughtless reader of the daily newspaper might easily get a different idea than that put forth by Mr. Metcalfe in the paragraph quoted. The daily press is constantly parading before the people the bad deeds done by the bad men. They tell of the manipulation, the scheming, the unfair competition, the lawless lives, the divorces and godlessness of those men of wealth and high station whose sole idea of life appears to be to use their power for their personal gratification. They parade also the gross crimes and violence of the lowest class, the vile wickednesses to be found in "the submerged tenth."

One would almost think from reading of the crimes which are reported in the newspapers that bad men were the rule instead of the exception. We are apt to forget that the newspapers simply report what is abnormal, because it is abnormal things which are the most interest-

ing. Goodness is usually tame, and it is so general as to seem commonplace. Badness, on the other hand, is dramatic and exciting because it is as compared with the bulk of human transactions so rare. The fact is that most people are naturally good. Their tendencies are in the right direction. They reflect the stamp of the divine which is upon them. Were this not so, this world would be a pretty poor place to live in. Therefore believe the best you can of people; your judgments then will be more nearly right than if you believed the worst.—Wall Street Journal.

DR. AKED'S COMPLAINT

Dr. Aked, the imported pastor of Rockefeller's church, did not take our hint about his sermon on Sunday. Instead of going into the matter of tainted money, with specific reference to the Rockefeller gifts to religion and education, the Liverpool preacher devoted himself to a criticism of the American press. His objection is that some of our newspapers give too much space to crime and the like. "Crowd in the good," he says, "and the bad will be forced out."

This is a sentiment with which Mr. Rockefeller will agree most heartily. Much space is occupied in the newspapers by reports of government bureaus, proceedings of grand juries, and sentences of judges relating to crimes committed by the Standard Oil agents and the oil monopoly's rebate partners in the railroads. If reports of this kind of crime could be kept out of the newspapers—not to mention editorial criticism of Mr. Rockefeller and the ministers of the gospel whose mouths are stopped by his money—there would be plenty of space to print in full sermons by Dr. Aked and their like. The only objection to this program is that the newspapers would soon be as barren of influence upon the community as the preachers and college presidents who subsist on ill-gotten wealth and who do not dare to tell the truth about their patrons.—New York Press.

A PLEASING GREETING

It is always a pleasure to drop in and have a brief chat with Internal Revenue Commissioner John W. Yerkes, for he usually has a good story to tell. Recently he related one concerning the popular saying that every man who comes from Kentucky should be hailed as "colonel." In fact, I fell into this trap myself and could not resist the impulse to use a military title rather than "Mr." When I called him "colonel" he promptly retaliated by turning around and addressing me as "general," a title to which I never even dreamed of aspiring. He then continued, grimly:

"The city of Washington is prolific in titles. It is seldom you find a man who may be addressed as a plain American citizen. It is general, admiral, colonel, captain, United States secretary, United States commissioner, or what not, until it really seems to me that a time is coming when I shall not dare to pass even the iron doors of an elevator without hailing the man who operators it as 'Mr. Elevator Conductor.'"

He told a story of how, one day, when he was in Washington, in conversation with a crowd of congressmen, Admiral Watson, whom he had known in the old days, entered. Mr. Yerkes was delighted to hear him call out:

"Hello, John, how are you?" "I sprang from my chair," said Mr. Yerkes, "and almost hugged him. 'Admiral,' I cried, 'I can hardly resist the temptation to embrace you. Do it again. I am so tired of hearing myself called colonel that my given name is music in my ears.'"—National Magazine.

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