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The Houston (Tex.) Post says: "It looks easy at first glance to solve the trust problem by nationalizing the trust. For instance, the government ownership of railroads would cure the evils of railway combination and oppression. But no sooner would this be accomplished than the present owners of the railways would invest their money in some other industry under a trust organization, and the nation would be compelled to buy that also. Already there are scores of trusts—if the truth were known probably there are more than a hundred, covering the principal manufactures and commodities of daily necessity. It is easy to foresee that if a halt is not called the 'captains of industry' will capture everything the people use."

What remedy would the Post suggest? Or are we to understand that, although the Post admits that "if a halt is not called the captains of industry will capture everything the people use," it would have the people tamely submit to continued imposition?



UNCLE SAM--"What a Blamed Chump He Is!"

WHAT GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP MEANS

The Trend of Public Ownership and the Possible Outcome

The subject of public ownership is one that is occupying a larger and larger share of public thought. A few years ago the advocate of the public ownership of municipal franchises was discredited by those who are in the habit of calling themselves "the more intelligent" and "the more practical." "Socialist" was usually applied to one who had the temerity to suggest that cities should do their municipal work directly rather than through franchises given or sold to private corporations. Gradually the discussion brought out a distinction between what are now termed natural monopolies and enterprises in which competition is possible, and there was developed a school of political economists who insist upon public ownership wherever competition can not be made effective. Upon this basis a strong sentiment in favor of municipal ownership of municipal franchises has been built up, and, where the question has been clearly presented to the people and their opinion sought, the answer has usually been in favor of such ownership.

The water plant was the first to be taken over by the city authorities. It was found that private ownership resulted, first, in a contest over rates, and that this contest often resulted in the corruption of the municipal body in which was vested the power to fix the rates. Next, it was found that a private corporation having a monopoly of the water supply was slow to extend its lines to accommodate sparsely settled sections, and still

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more slow to improve the quality of the water where the improvement was likely to temporarily reduce the dividends. The progress in the extension of municipal ownership to water plants has been gradual, but steady, until now it is the rare exception that a city of any size leaves the water supply in the hands of a private corporation.

Next to the municipal water plant has come the municipal lighting plant, whether the light furnished is gas or electricity. At first the city furnished light for the streets; afterwards it began to supply private consumers. While as yet a smaller proportion of the lighting plants than of the water plants has come under municipal ownership, the tendency is an irresistible one and the progress in the municipalization of these plants is likely to be much more rapid than it was in the conversion of the water plants from private to public ownership.

In some cities private heating plants have been chartered, but the same objections found to private water plants and lighting plants will apply to the granting of franchises to heating

plants. Just in proportion as these plants become useful and extensive the objections to private ownership will become apparent. If it were possible to have a dozen private plants running their pipes through the streets and competing for the privilege of furnishing water, light or heat to the inhabitants of a city, competition might protect the patrons, but even then there would be an immense waste in the duplication of plants.

With the telephone system a new field for municipal ownership has been opened, and it is inevitable that, sooner or later, the private telephone exchange will go the way of the private water plant and the private lighting plant. Any one who has lived in a city where an attempt has been made to regulate telephone rates by the establishment of competing companies knows how inconvenient it is to have to patronize two or more telephone systems or to be cut off from communication with a portion of the city. The municipal telephone is one of the certainties of the future.

The municipalization of the traction lines has met with more opposition, because the building and equipping of a car line involves the expenditure of a larger sum of money, and because the operation of it requires the employment of a larger number of men; but, with the growth of the cities, the pressure in favor of municipal ownership is increasing. In Boston a subway has been built which reverts to the city at the end of twenty-five years. The New York subway (the main