

line), will become the property of the city at the end of fifty years, and the extensions will become city property at the end of a shorter period.

Municipal ownership has just won a signal victory in Chicago. The democrats nominated Judge Edward F. Dunne and made the immediate municipalization of the street car lines the leading issue. As Judge Dunne is an admirable man, and as his platform also demanded the extension of public ownership to lighting plants and to the telephone system, his triumphant election means much to the public-ownership movement.

The debt limit fixed in the charters of most cities is sometimes found to be a temporary obstruction to municipalization, but the distinction drawn by Bird S. Coler, formerly comptroller of New York, between debts incurred for improvements which bring no specific return in dollars and debts incurred for improvements which pay an interest on the investment is a just one, and is finding increased recognition. It must be plain to any one who will give the matter a moment's thought that a municipal plant which brings in an income large enough to pay the interest upon the indebtedness incurred and to contribute to a sinking fund for the retirement of the debt is a very different thing from an improvement which brings no tangible return to the city.

The cost of a surface line or a subway ought to be no greater when built by the city than when built under just conditions by a private corporation, and the city can, as a rule, borrow money at a lower rate than a corporation; it can, therefore, charge less than a corporation would be compelled to charge, even if the corporation's capitalization contained no water. As a matter of fact, the street car corporations in the various cities are usually capitalized for a great deal more than the cost of building and equipping their lines, and the public is compelled to pay dividends upon inflated capital.

In the improvement of the service a city line would respond more promptly to the needs of the public and would be more considerate in the treatment of the employes. The difference would be all on the side of public ownership. Experience in England and in Scotland has shown that a city can take possession of a street car system, increase the pay of the men, shorten the hours, improve the conditions, and lower the fare, yet make a profit for the city; and the same results have followed the taking over of lighting and water plants in this country.

Aside from the pecuniary argument, which, of course, does not influence a great many, the most weighty argument advanced against the municipal ownership and operation of street car lines is that raised by the employment of a large number of men. The natural conservatism which is to be found everywhere, and nowhere more than in a republic, leads many to fear that the employes may be used for political purposes. It must be remembered, however, that the intelligence of the people at once sets itself to work to remove or at least to reduce to a minimum the evils connected with any governmental action which the people find it necessary to take, and already the friends of municipal ownership are beginning to consider plans for the elimination of the government employe as a partisan factor. A non-partisan civil service is the remedy usually proposed, but it has been found to have three objections: first, the attempt to conceal the politics of the appointee is not always successful; second, the employe is sometimes coerced into the support of the party in power; and, third, if partisanship does not influence the appointment or act upon the employe, his removal from politics lessens his interest in the problems of government and deprives the public of the service that he might render in the discussion and settlement of public questions. In some places what is called bi-partisanship has been substituted for non-partisanship. That is, the employes are divided between the several parties, the political affiliations of the appointees being recognized at the time of the appointment and respected during the service. I am disposed to believe that a civil service system which recognizes political opinions and protects them is more in keeping with our theory of government than a civil service system which attempts to ignore them. Where the politics of an applicant is concealed there are always a change for fraud and a temptation to unfairness; where the political affiliations of the applicants are known and the appointments divided between the various parties in proportion to their voting strength, the selection being open and above board, there is no chance for favoritism. Where the right of each party to its quota is recognized the employes can perform their political duties without fear, and the activity of those in one party offsets the activity of those in another party, making it impossible to use the employes as a part

of a partisan machine. No government like ours can afford to remove any considerable portion of its people from political activity or penalize participation in the forming of public opinion. With the growth of public ownership the government employes will, of course, increase, not only in actual numbers but also in proportion to the total population, and no civil service system can be permanently satisfactory to the country which does not leave government employes free to perform their civic duties, and a division of the employes between the parties in proportion to voting strength offers the most just basis for appointment that has yet been suggested. Bi-partisanship is entirely consistent with selection on merit through examinations.

While the cities have been considering the question of municipal ownership the subject of state and federal ownership of the natural monopolies within their respective spheres has been forcing itself upon the public mind. Years ago an agitation was commenced for the operation of telegraph lines in connection with the postoffice department, but it has not yet taken tangible shape, the very low rate given to the daily newspapers having made them, to some extent, interested in maintaining private ownership of the telegraph service. Every argument that can be advanced in favor of the distribution of letters and papers by government officials can be made in favor of a postal telegraph system, and with the rapid growth of the telephone monopoly the same question will soon be presented in connection with telephone communication between cities.

The consolidation of railroads, the obstruction of rate legislation, and the constant discrimination practiced by the railroads against persons and communities—all of these are tending to increase the number of those who advocate the public ownership of railroads. Usually those who favor the public ownership of railroads advocate ownership by the national government; in fact, this is the only form of such ownership that has received attention. The arguments in favor of it have been much the same as those made in favor of municipal ownership of street car lines and other municipal works or plants, and the objections to it have been the same urged against those, with the addition that the federal ownership of railroads involves a centralization of power at Washington which might in the end result in the obliteration of state lines. Those who insist upon the preservation of state lines are not attempting to revive the discussion that once raged over state sovereignty versus national supremacy, but they are actuated by the belief that local self-government is the safety of the republic. Believing that the people can govern best where they are best acquainted with the conditions to be met and the things to be done, those who defend state government and state action believe that the republic is strengthened by the preservation of state lines, each state dealing with matters of state importance. The ownership of all of the railroads of the United States by the national government would throw upon it the employment of an immense body of men, and these men could not be employed from Washington without largely increasing the relative importance of the federal government as compared with the state government, and the removal of so large a part of the government work from the states to the nation would weaken the states' power of resistance to federal encroachments. A system of state ownership for the local network of railroads, coupled with the federal ownership of the trunk lines, would give all the advantages that could come from the federal ownership of all the railroad lines, and at the same time avoid the centralizing tendency of undivided federal ownership. The trunk lines, when once owned by the federal government, would not have to be expanded or extended, while the local mileage is being constantly increased. A system of trunk lines established today would answer the purposes of interstate commerce fifty years hence, while the local mileage will probably be doubled, trebled, or quadrupled, during the next half century.

This dual system of public ownership offers several advantages, among which may be enumerated:

First, it can be inaugurated more quickly. Before all the railroads could be taken over by the federal government it would be necessary to secure a president, a senate, and a house of representatives favorable to the plan, whereas state ownership can be attempted whenever any state is ready to make the experiment. For instance, Kansas, having decided to establish an oil refinery, may find it necessary to establish a railroad to carry the oil from the wells to the refinery and from the refinery to the distributing centers. Any state which finds it difficult to regulate railroad rates by legislation can try the efficacy of

regulating by the building or the buying of a state railroad.

Second, a system of federal ownership could not be undertaken until those favoring public ownership could agree upon a basis of purchase or condemnation, whereas state ownership enables each state to deal with the question according to the conditions to be met in the state and according to the opinion of the people of the state.

Third, state ownership enables the movement to avail itself of experience: as each experiment in municipal ownership has strengthened those who have been advocating it in other cities, so the success of one state railroad would encourage the adoption of public ownership in other states.

The great advantage of a system which permits the federal ownership of the trunk lines and the state ownership of the local lines is that it gives to the people the benefits of public ownership without removing the government from the people or endangering the principle of local self-government, and it makes it easier to adjust the compensation and regulations to the varying conditions in different sections of the country.

The main objection made thus far to this dual system of ownership is that interstate traffic might be embarrassed. This, however, is not a valid objection, because the trunk lines would give to every state an outlet for its interstate commerce, and the fact that the trunk lines would furnish this outlet would make it easy for adjoining states to arrange for the transfer of traffic over local lines. It would be as easy for state lines to exchange traffic as it is now for the various railroad systems to exchange traffic, the difference being that under public ownership all would be treated alike and every community would be protected in its rights, whereas now fortunes are built up by favoritism and men and communities are ruined by discrimination.

In Germany nearly all of the lines are state lines, less than one thousand out of twenty-eight thousand miles being owned by the imperial government.

No attempt has been made to present an elaborate discussion of public ownership. The only object of this article is to point out the trend of public sentiment and to indicate what is likely to be the result of the discussion which is now going on. The principle which underlies the propaganda for public ownership is that wherever competition is impossible and a monopoly is necessary the fruits of the monopoly must be enjoyed by the whole public and not by a few. In the case of municipal franchises competition is impossible, and, in the case of railroads, competition has generally been found ineffective. While it is possible for the larger cities to have competing railway systems, a large proportion of the people must of necessity deal with the line nearest to them, and the railroads take advantage of this necessity. Those who favor the public ownership of railroads have long favored a strict regulation and control of railroads and are now heartily in favor of the legislation which is being attempted in state and nation, but they believe that public ownership will be found as much superior to the best system of regulation as regulation is superior to a system under which the railroads are permitted to do as they please.

MR. WINSTON'S EXPERIENCE

The St. Louis Post Dispatch (an abbreviated edition of the New York World) quotes Mr. John C. Winston, chairman of the committee of seventy, as saying that when the committee sought for an able attorney to represent the people of Philadelphia in their fight against the Gas company it found that the most eminent lawyers of Philadelphia were retained in the pay of the Gas company or "were within the corporation's sphere of influence." When Mr. Winston tried to interest the larger business men he found that "their business interests were entwined with the interests of the United Gas company." The Post Dispatch asserts that men who sympathized with the purpose of the committee were unable to take an active part "because the great business interests entrusted to their care were dependent upon the Gas company's favor, or were identified with its piratical fortunes." The Post Dispatch declares that the gas company is an "incorporated cancer whose filaments extend to all the vital organs of Philadelphia city life," and it adds that nearly every city in the Union has its united gas improvement company or something else of the kind. It concludes: "In all the world there is no other single source of social, industrial and political corruption that is one half so sinister as the American public service corporation under its present methods of management." And yet the New York World denounces Mr. Bryan for saying that every city should own and operate