

# CURRENT TOPICS

## A BUSINESS PROPOSITION

No movement in the history of American politics has done so much to dethrone the old time political "boss" as the elimination of partisanship in municipal elections, and the treatment of municipal questions from a business standpoint. Discussing the arguments for better municipal management, a writer in the Chicago Herald says:

"Various arguments for nonpartisanship in municipal elections—or more accurately for separation of thinking about local issues from thinking about national issues—have been presented. A census bureau bulletin lately issued suggests a new one. The bulletin shows the increase of total debt since 1890, and especially since 1902.

"From 1890 to 1902 these debts increased 76 per cent. From 1902 to 1913 they increased over 113 per cent. In 1913 the stood at the enormous total of \$2,476,000,000 in round figures. The interest bearing debt of the national government at the end of February totaled only \$969,759,090. The debts of our minor political divisions were much greater than those of the nation and states combined.

"Undoubtedly these mortgages upon posterity have been given, as a rule, for useful, necessary and praiseworthy purposes. They represent the efforts of communities to make themselves pleasanter and more comfortable and safer places in which to live and work. They are justified, as a rule, both by increasing wealth and by increased perception of social duty and responsibility. Yet the increasing burden of them not only suggests but requires closer thought of economy in administration—of better municipal business management.

"And that means municipal business managers selected and public servants employed with closer attention to their fitness for the task in hand. It means their selection without regard to their personal opinions on questions of national policy which, however important, have no relevance to efficiency and economy in local administration. In a word, it means nonpartisanship in municipal voting which refuses to be confused by a national party label. This was always desirable. It is now becoming imperative as a plain business proposition."

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## THE GOLD QUESTION

A study into the question of how the present war affects the world's gold supply, as well as how it will affect it in the future, gives ground for much speculation to students of economic problems. A writer in the Christian Science Monitor discusses this subject as follows:

"One of the most interesting problems to the student of finance is the gold question as affected by the war. It is, perhaps, not sufficiently understood by the public generally that gold is a commodity in the same way that beef and cotton goods are, and that its price varies exactly in the same way that theirs does under the influence of supply and demand. The truth is hidden, because, the price of gold being conventionally fixed, its fluctuations are made to appear as fluctuations in the prices of commodities other than itself. Thus, a rise in the price of beef may be owing to a shortage in the supply of beef as compared with the demand; or it may be owing to a too-abundant supply of gold. During the last twenty years or so there has been an enormous increase in the supply of gold from the mines, but fortunately this increase has been absorbed by the national banks of the world, who have mostly been obsessed with the idea of forming gold reserves. Otherwise the upward effect upon prices of commodities must have been tremendous.

"No one can yet foresee what the effect of the war upon the gold question will be, but a quite possible effect, as a writer in the Economical Journal points out, might be that the countries who, for the last twenty years have been absorbing the surplus production of gold, might presently be forced not only to cease to receive further supplies, but even to disperse with what they have got. Germany, Austria, and Russia, for instance, if they can not export goods to pay for their imports, will have to export gold. The re-

sult might be that Great Britain and the United States, who are the only so-called 'great' powers at present doing any exporting of commodities on a large scale, might be paid for their exports in gold instead of in goods. Now it is generally thought that the more you hold of gold, the better and safer your position, but when it is seen that gold is not only a medium of exchange, but also affects the prices of commodities by its own relative scarceness, or abundance, the point emerges quite clearly that a superfluity of gold might injure trade most seriously by abnormally raising prices.

"Should these admittedly theoretical speculations materialize in hard fact, there would probably arise a demand for some arrangement being made whereby gold would be forced to confine its usefulness to being a mere medium of exchange, as it was originally intended to be. A curtailment of such irresponsible and illegitimate activities as those heretofore referred to, viz., its interference with the prices of other commodities, would be of great benefit to mankind in general, and would immensely simplify the whole question of the function of currency."

## BE LOYAL TO THE UNITED STATES

Governor Dunne of Illinois, in a speech in Cincinnati on St. Patrick's day, called upon Irishmen, particularly, to place their loyalty for the United States above their sympathies with any European country. Speaking at a St. Patrick's day celebration of the Irish Fellowship club, he is quoted as saying:

"It is now the supreme duty of the statesmen in Washington to keep this country from being embroiled in the conflict in Europe.

"Day by day the belligerents are trampling on the rights of neutrals and making it almost impossible to keep our country from entanglement.

"In this critical situation, it is the duty of every American citizen to uphold the president in his efforts to preserve peace between this country and the warring nations. Never in recent history was there greater need of moderation, tact and diplomacy of American statesmen and of loyalty by its citizens.

"To allow this nation to become engulfed in the European cataclysm would be a stupendous political blunder, if not a political crime, which the patriotic president and secretary of state will not commit.

"Let not then American citizens of any race embarrass our officials at this time by public expression of any sympathies or by participating in organized efforts to give contraband assistance to any of the belligerents.

"Hands off Europe, hands up for America, should be our watchword. Neutral nations in Europe now stand armed, not knowing what moment they may be swept into the maelstrom. Separated by three thousand miles of ocean, this favored land, under the guidance of President Wilson, will not become involved if he is not embarrassed by acts of misguided sympathizers with the belligerents.

"Let us in this crisis suppress our racial sympathies, place American patriotism above all other considerations and confine our energies to working for the restoration of peace in war smitten Europe."

## MOTHERS' PENSION SCHOOL

Although it will be four years in July since the first mothers' pension law was enacted by Illinois, in that short time twenty-three states have joined to advance this new principle of legislation, and other states will probably fall in line before their legislatures adjourn. A consensus of opinion shows that these laws have proved an unqualified success in the various states that have enacted them. Methods for the administration of these laws are discussed in an article in the Omaha News, as follows:

"Judge Henry Neil, father of the mothers' pension idea, has said, from the first, that the mothers' pension system is no more a charity than the public-school system is a charity. He conceived the first law and has led in the spreading of the new plan in this country. But up to

the present the prevailing idea has been that the mothers' pension system is simply a means of relief for desperate cases. In most of the states the pensions are administered through the courts. This gives the flavor of criminality and the pauperizing of charity.

"Judge Neil's new proposal is that mothers' pensions shall be administered through the public schools. 'This new system must be made entirely constructive. It must be taken away from the machinery of courts and charity and used for the development of children into men and women, ready with strong bodies and loyal spirits to serve their country and the world,' says Judge Neil.

"The public-school machinery can easily and naturally be expanded to manage the mothers' pension system. The pension will amount to more than ten million dollars this year. School teachers are in touch with the children and they could be the aids to the mothers in making the system serve its purpose in a constructive way, with no taint of charity to destroy self-respect.

"This new plan will make pensioned mothers responsible to the state for the health and education of their children, and their efforts will be intelligently and scientifically directed by the teacher. Backed by the instinctive interest of women for children, fine results should follow immediately.

"These ideas and many others in connection with the mothers' pension system will be discussed at a Mothers' Pension-School Teachers congress at the San Francisco Panama-Pacific exposition on July 20th, 21st and 22d."

## A LIVE LOBBY FOR THE PEOPLE

The City club idea, which has become a tremendous influence on the side of better government in many of our large cities, is taking a strong hold in smaller communities all over the country. Women as well as men are members of these clubs in many cities. Allen B. Pond, president of the Chicago City club, in a recent address before the Racine, Wisconsin, City club, thus outlines the duties and functions of a City club, as follows:

"The functions of a City club consist of keeping a live lobby in the interests of the public. A City club is on duty seven days a week and every week of the year. It is not only necessary to be active during an election campaign, but too often after good work has been accomplished in selecting competent officials, the citizens take a furlough. The officials need your help just as much after election as they did before. They need such assistance as can be given by the action of a group of volunteer citizens. A good share of the efficiency in public office comes as the result of helpful advice from citizens.

"In the beginning your work, first of all a careful study of the community situation should be made. A survey which will give an accurate knowledge of the affairs of the city will form the basis of a report which will then be open for discussion. It is the business of a City club to see that public opinion is guided, but first it must know what it needs, and then it can go ahead.

"You will need the publicity that the press can give you because without publicity you can not accomplish some of the most important things that you may undertake. People look to the newspapers to keep them informed about events as they happen, therefore that medium of expression is very desirable.

"The club must include men of means, and it must have people of slender incomes. It must include all that goes to make a pure democracy. No persons should be kept out of the City club.

"In the matter of legislation there is a frightful lack of co-operation by disinterested citizens. Public officials are guided by their constituents and are entitled to a good, live, interested lobby. They want to be backed up, and it is the business of the City club to see such a lobby is organized. Suppose there is an official who does not believe in the proper enforcement of the law. In that case the duty of the City club is perfectly obvious.

"Every citizen must take to heart his obligations as a citizen. He must do his duty. A dem-