

## Lincoln's Municipal Coal Yard

The municipal coal yard, established in the city of Lincoln the latter part of September, is flourishing notwithstanding the difficulty it had in getting under way and notwithstanding the efforts of the private coal dealers to prevent it from selling coal to the people of Lincoln in competition with the twenty-one private coal companies.

During the forepart of last January, Charles W. Bryan made an investigation of the cost and selling prices of coal in Lincoln and recommended to the city council the establishment of a municipal coal yard, which he maintained could reduce the price of coal \$4.00 a ton on first class bituminous coal known as the Franklin County coal from southern Illinois and still sell coal at a reasonable price, or in other words, sell coal at \$4.00 a ton less than the regular coal dealers were selling it and make a reasonable profit.

Although the figures presented by Mr. Bryan to the city council—of which he was not a member—and the figures presented by him through the daily press clearly indicated that the coal dealers of Lincoln, as elsewhere, were engaged in shameless profiteering, the city council refused to embark in the coal business.

In the last spring's city election Mr. Bryan announced a municipal program which provided for a municipal coal yard, a municipal public market and a municipal ice plant, and being unable to induce substantial business men to file for commissioner to fill the ticket, he filed for the position himself with a view to the mayoralship on the platform mentioned above. Mr. Bryan was elected, and although receiving 652 majority more than his opponent and more than 400 more votes than one-half of all the votes cast at the election, the city commission, composed of five men, refused to select Mr. Bryan for the position of mayor, which the preference vote morally obligated them to do, but they gave him the position of superintendent of streets and public improvements, believing that that would retard his efforts on behalf of his municipal ownership program.

As the city commission stood four to one against a municipal coal yard and the other municipal enterprises advocated by Mr. Bryan, it was deemed necessary to organize public sentiment for the purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the council to induce it to give the people what they had declared for in the election. Before introducing the municipal coal yard ordinance in the council, petitions were put in circulation under the initiative and referendum to establish a municipal coal yard by direct vote of the people at a special election, and petitions were also put in circulation to recall two of the city commissioners and replace them with men who were pledged to Mr. Bryan's municipal ownership program. With these petitions in circulation and being rapidly signed throughout the city, the coal yard ordinance was introduced, and after being voted down one week was brought forth again the next week, and the public sentiment that had been aroused by the first defeat of the coal yard ordinance so influenced the council the following week that the municipal coal yard ordinance was passed although four out of the five members of the city commission were known to be opposed to it. The municipal coal yard was placed in Commissioner Bryan's department, and he was given direct charge and made responsible for the success or failure of the municipal coal yard's activities.

The municipal coal yard has now been in operation a little more than two months. The private coal dealers, after failing to shut off the city's coal supply and failing to discredit the coal yard by attempting to make it appear through the press that the quality of coal the city was selling was inferior to that sold by the retail coal dealers and that no money would be saved by buying at the municipal coal yard, fifteen coal dealers joined in an effort to have the municipal coal yard put out of business through a restraining order by the district court on the ground that the city charter—which is a home rule charter—does not specifically authorize the municipality to engage in the buying and selling of coal. The district judge refused to grant a temporary restraining order but set time for the case to be heard. The hearing has since been held and the court has taken the matter under advisement and has not yet handed down an opinion. In the meantime the municipal coal

yard is selling the best quality of high grade bituminous coal.

The effect of the municipal coal yard on the price of coal in Lincoln is very apparent. When the movement was commenced for the municipal coal yard, the quality of coal now handled by the municipal coal yard was selling for \$14.50 by private dealers. The private dealers are now selling the same coal at \$12.50 notwithstanding the fact that this grade of coal costs 50 cents more at the mine than it did when they were charging \$14.50. The municipal coal yard is selling the same grade of coal at \$10.50 delivered.

The amount of coal bought and sold for the first sixty days by the municipal coal yard and the items of expense and profit on the coal handled thus far are as follows:

Total sales during Oct. and Nov. ....	2,777 tons
Amounting in dollars to .....	\$29,027.51
Average selling price per ton delivered to the consumer's bin .....	10.45
Total cost of coal f. o. b. Lincoln .....	\$22,826.94
Cost of delivery .....	2,771.80
Overhead expense .....	954.14
Total net profit to the city .....	2,472.58
Average cost at mine per ton .....	3.85
Freight rate per ton .....	\$4.32 (or \$4.18 1-2)
War tax per ton .....	.13
Average cost per ton f. o. b. Lincoln .....	8.20
Unloading and demurrage expense per-ton .....	14 1-3
Shrinkage and shortage per ton .....	.08 1-2
All other overhead expense per-ton .....	.20 1-3
Delivery expense per ton .....	1.00
Total net profit average per ton to city on 2,777 tons of coal .....	.89

The public is receiving a benefit of \$4.00 a ton for all coal bought from the municipal yard, and are the gainers by about \$2.00 a ton on all grades of coal sold by the retail dealers as a result of the establishment of a municipal coal yard. The direct saving to the public patrons of the municipal coal yard the first sixty days was approximately \$10,000. The total estimated saving for the winter as a result of the municipal coal yard's activities, including both the coal sold by the municipal coal yard direct and that bought from the private dealers, will be about \$125,000.

As a means of reducing the cost of living and curbing the profiteer, the city of Lincoln's experience in the municipal coal yard business has demonstrated that the quickest and most effective way to protect the public against combinations in restraint of trade and against profiteering is to restore competition, and that is what the city of Lincoln has done to meet the unconscionable profiteering that has been going on in the coal business, not only in the city of Lincoln, but throughout the country.

### TEXT OF FOUR POWER TREATY

A Washington dispatch under date of Dec. 10, says: The text of the new quadruple treaty between the United States, Great Britain, France and Japan follows:

With a view to the preservation of the general peace and the maintenance of their rights in relation to their insular possessions and insular dominions in the region of the Pacific ocean.

Have determined to conclude a treaty to this effect and have adopted as their plenipotentiaries:

The president of the United States of America.  
His majesty, the king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British dominions beyond the seas, emperor of India and for the dominion of Canada.

For the commonwealth of Australia.

For the dominion of New Zealand.

For India.

The president of the French republic.

His majesty, the emperor of Japan.

Who having communicated their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed as follows:

1—The high contracting parties agree as between themselves to respect their rights in relation to their insular possessions and insular dominions in the region of the Pacific ocean.

If there should develop between any of the high contracting parties a controversy arising out of any Pacific question and involving said rights which is not satisfactorily settled by diplomacy and is likely to affect the harmonious accord now happily subsisting between them, they shall invite the other high contracting parties to a joint conference to which the whole subject would be referred for consideration and adjustment.

2—If the said rights are threatened by the aggressive action of any other power, the high contracting parties shall communicate with one another fully and frankly in order to arrive at

an understanding as to the most efficient measures to be taken, jointly or separately, to meet the exigencies of the particular situation.

3—This agreement shall remain in force for ten years from the time it shall take effect, and after the expiration of said period it shall continue to be in force subject to the right of any of the high contracting parties to terminate it upon twelve months notice.

4—This agreement shall be ratified as soon as possible in accordance with the constitutional methods of the high contracting parties and shall take effect on the deposit of ratification, which shall take place at Washington, and thereupon the agreement between Great Britain and Japan, which was concluded at London on July 13, 1911, shall terminate.

### THE SEARCH FOR MONEY

After every violent change in price levels, especially the sort of change we have had lately, look out for the money reform. Henry Ford took his friend Edison down to Muscle Shoals the other day to pass judgment on his project of taking over the power plant which the government built there during the war. In the presence of that great torrent of water Mr. Ford outlined his money scheme. Gold has shown, by its violent fluctuations, its unfitness to be the measure of the world's values. For gold he would substitute power. Power, not money, makes the mare go. For a unit of exchange Mr. Ford would have a currency representing power. For his day's pay a laborer should receive 1's pay in energy comparable to the energy which he had expended. A note entitling him to a certain number of kilowatt hours of energy out of the nation's store might answer. Commodities would find a price level in decimals of kilowatt hours approximating the energy which their production entailed.

There are details to fill in, of course. There are cases where men receive income without yielding any energy in return. Such, for instance, as the family of foreigners who collect rent for the use of several thousand acres of unimproved Nebraska land. Perhaps their share would come, just as at present, out of the energies of their tenants. These matters could doubtless be adjusted under Mr. Ford's money regime as well as they are under the reign of gold.

In their gilded dens far to the east the same fellows who laughed at Mr. Bryan are laughing at Mr. Ford. Well, then, let them turn their attention to the more conservative Professor Irving Fisher. Professor Fisher proposes not to abolish the gold dollar, but to stabilize it. He would do this by diminishing its size, thus increasing its number, as prices fell, and by increasing its weight, thus diminishing its numbers, as prices rose. By this sort of thermostatic action he thinks money temperatures can be kept at a predetermined normal. Thus we shall escape these irritating, revolution-making price fluctuations.

If those who stand pat on their sacred 25.8 grains of gold are still dissatisfied, let them contemplate the prospect that Europe, seeing most of its gold in the vaults of the American sub-treasury at New York, may find it necessary to demonetize gold altogether and pin their faith to silver.—Nebraska (Lincoln) State-Journal.

### MR. BRYAN'S CONFERENCE REPORTS

Hon. Frank A. Day, in Fairmont, Minn., Sentinel: Millions of people are daily devouring every word William J. Bryan writes in regard to the disarmament conference. He always had great audiences but in the present case the world is his forum and every word he writes is freighted with wisdom and candor. The commoner stands unchallenged as the greatest moulder of public opinion of this day and age.

Secretary Wallace is of the opinion that it will take at least five years more for the farmers to recover their former economic status, due to the fact that they have been compelled to bear the brunt of the price readjustment so far. By that time cooperative marketing ought to be fairly well established, and with an orderly march of wheat and hogs and cattle to market under a system that bids fair to be well financed the farmer ought not to be again caught in the gamblers' trap.

That man Einstein, who invented the theory of relativity, said that it was so involved that only five other men besides himself understood what it meant. Yet we venture to say that most any farmer who observes the market price of corn and looks over his costs of production could explain what entire absence of relativity means.