

age citizen, when given a chance, declares himself in favor of public ownership.

Disregarding the views of machine politicians, be they humble city councilmen or United States senators, it is well to inquire why such a learned man as President Eliot asserts that corporations do the public service work better and cheaper than it would be done by the state or city. Public ownership abroad has proved the contrary to be true.

In his address at Denver recently Mayor Dunne of Chicago said that a few years ago he sent a telegraph message from Interlaken to Lucerne in Switzerland for eight cents. Astounded at the smallness of the charge, he made inquiry and found that Switzerland owned and operated its telegraph system. Upon pursuing his investigation he ascertained that every civilized country except three—Honduras, Costa Rico and the United States—owned and operated its own telegraph system. He further discovered that in many countries the railroads, street car systems, gas and electric light systems and the telephone systems, were being operated by the public. In the following words Mayor Dunne described accurately present conditions in this country under private ownership:

When one seeks to do business with his butcher, his grocer, his dry-goods merchant, his doctor, his lawyer, or his plumber, he stands at arm's length and has the right to make a free and voluntary contract. If the character of the goods that he seeks to purchase is not satisfactory or the price is unreasonable, he may go elsewhere. He is not bound to deal with any one person or corporation in the purchase of such necessities of life. But when he comes to utilize the telegraph, the telephone, the street car, the steam railway car, to purchase gas or electric light, he finds himself deprived of the right of free contract. He must take such service as is offered him and pay the price demanded. If his gas is of deficient quality or the price is too high, he must either pay his bill or have his meter jerked out. If his telephone service is unsatisfactory or the price unreasonable, he must stand and deliver or have his telephone wires cut. If he objects to the service given him upon a street car or to the price charged, he must either pay or be thrown off. In other words, in dealing with public utility companies and in purchasing from them these latter day necessities of life, he is deprived of the right of free contract and must take such service as is offered and pay the price demanded. He is face to face with a monopoly and individual protest or objection as against such a monopoly is absolutely unavailing.

Among the most servile peoples of Europe these indignities are not tolerated. Even Russia owns its railways and parcels post system, and many Russian cities own and operate their public utilities. Here in free America, however, where men boast that every citizen is a sovereign and where the spirit of independence is supposed to be inherent, the city dwellers are robbed, insulted, bulldozed and browbeaten by the private owners of public utilities. In the cities the viciousness of monopoly is brought home to the people with stinging force. When they resent these insults and indignities and suggest that public ownership would remedy the evil, such men as President Eliot coolly inform them that their form of government is so defective and the people themselves are so rottenly corrupt that public ownership is bound to prove worse than private ownership. "The corporations do such work cheaper and better," says the learned educator. The corporations rob and insult their patrons. Could public ownership do worse? The public service corporation is a monopoly in private hands and the charges for service are monopoly charges. Under public ownership the charges would be dictated by the cost of operating the plant, and even the limited experience of American cities has taught that the charges under public ownership decrease from 25 to 50 per cent.

It is true that public ownership would not give the citizen the privilege of free contract, but wherever public ownership has been tried in American cities the people have not been robbed, nor have they been subjected to insult and indignity. The service has invariably been better and cheaper in spite of the misrepresentations of a subsidized press and the academic inexperience of theorizing educators.

RAILWAYS AND REVENUE

It did not take the Burlington's general solicitor long to decide that the tax case should be appealed to the United States supreme court. This means that the case will not be finally determined for several years. Meanwhile, there is abundant time for the railways to strengthen their hold on Nebraska politics, and meanwhile the people will continue to pay their taxes and a portion of the taxes that should be paid by the Burlington and Union Pacific railway companies.

So pleased are some of the Nebraska editors with the state's success in winning a favorable decision from the United States court that they are suggesting Norris Brown for senator, and Treasurer Mortensen for governor. Treasurer Mortensen is a member of the state board that assessed the railways of Nebraska at \$40,000,000

less than their true valuation, and the newspaper reports which appeared while the state board was in session represented Treasurer Mortensen as opposed to a higher assessment of railway property.

A few nights ago Attorney General Brown, in an address delivered before the state historical society, discussed the various methods of determining railway values for taxation purposes. He showed that by the stocks and bonds test "a certain railroad" in Nebraska should be valued at \$103,000 a mile and by the net earnings test at \$92,000 a mile, and yet that "certain road" was valued by the state board at \$55,000 a mile in 1904. Although this certain road—the Union Pacific—was assessed by the state board at only fifty-five or sixty per cent of its real value it went into federal court and secured an injunction restraining the collection of taxes from this road in the various counties of Nebraska.

In 1904 the total assessed value of the state, including railways, was \$294,779,244.65; in 1905, \$304,470,475.35. In 1904 the railroads of Nebraska were assessed at nearly \$47,000,000; in 1905 at \$47,294,976.35. Compare the percentages of increase and then meditate upon how well the state board of assessment did its duty, and do not forget that whereas the levy in 1903 was five mills, it was seven mills in 1905.

The report of Union Pacific earnings for 1905 shows that its net earnings increased \$3,000,000 over 1904. Capitalized at four per cent this would give the road an increased value of \$75,000,000, and at six per cent an increased value of \$50,000,000. If one-third of \$50,000,000 be assigned to Nebraska the increased value of Union Pacific in this state for 1905 was \$16,666,666, according to the net earnings test. The state board, however, made only a comparatively slight increase in the Union Pacific assessment.

These are figures ignored by machine politicians when they congratulate themselves and the state upon the assessment board's valuation of railway property in Nebraska. Governor Mickey, who has always been a staunch defender of the revenue law, was led away by enthusiasm when he heard of Judge Munger's decision against the Burlington and made this statement:

It is certainly the most successful piece of legislation ever attempted in this state. It has resulted in the increase of our grand assessment roll from \$184,000,000 in 1903 to \$305,000,000 in 1905, and has provided the necessary funds with which to meet the expenses of the government and a residue for the gradual extinguishment of the state debt. What more glory could attach to it?

This statement was made by the governor in face of the fact that the state debt has increased \$100,000 during the last year. Is it glory, or is it disgrace, that whereas in 1903 the people were called upon to pay only \$920,000 as taxes and the enormous sum of \$2,131,000 in 1905, the state debt was actually increased in 1905? In spite of the fact that the people were taxed twice as much in 1905 as in 1903 the state debt has been increased because of the extravagance of the last legislature. The legislature of 1902-3 appropriated \$2,875,289.51; the legislature of 1904-5 appropriated \$3,740,280.70.

WAIT

Jacob Riis, the noted author, who is one of President Roosevelt's closest friends, and a devoted admirer, has made a remarkable statement. "If President Roosevelt feels that it is his duty to the people to accept a renomination for the presidency, he will do so," declares Mr. Riis.

It is not to be supposed that this statement is inspired by the president, who, with the utmost sincerity, announced immediately after his election, that he would not accept another term. If the president harbors any ambition to be president for a longer period than any of his predecessors, he has doubtless kept the secret even from his dear friend and chum, Mr. Riis. On the other hand, it is improbable that Mr. Riis would speak as he did unless he felt that he was rightly interpreting the unexpressed desire which sympathetic friendship understands without the telling.

Mr. Riis said in his interview: "Roosevelt is fighting the greatest tyrant of them all. Slavery affected only the south, but the money power means the enslavement of all human beings and all homes." If by electing Roosevelt president in 1908 the people could overthrow the tyrant, or if they could even begin a reconstruction that would lead eventually to the tyrant's dethronement, undoubtedly the president could rely on the people for their support. But is it not rather early to decide what champion shall be invited to lead the people on to victory? The squadrons are gathering for the battle; there is blare of trumpets and flirting of banners and much brave talk and many loud execrations, but the preliminary battle is yet to be fought. The people would do well to await the political Liao Yang or Mukden before deciding who shall lead in this great con-