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The people of Chicago are to be heartily congratulated on the success of the petition (pp. 404, 410) against the adoption of the pending traction ordinance, which is proposed as a compromise with the owners of the Chicago City Railway company.

When Mayor Harrison recommended that highly objectionable ordinance, and flippantly challenged its adversaries to interpose a referendum petition with 100,000 signatures or be presumed to have approved its provisions, he evidently supposed that this could not be done. The work was indeed gigantic, and there was in fairness no necessity for it.

Only five months previously, the people had voted overwhelmingly against the principle of the ordinance, and the Mayor was pledged to veto any franchise ordinance not approved by referendum. The burden of getting up a petition on this ordinance was therefore upon those who favored, and not upon those who opposed the ordinance. Nevertheless, the Mayor made it so plain that both his pledges and the previous referendum were to be ignored, that it seemed tactically important to accept his challenge.

But for the work of the Hearst papers, the Examiner and the American, success in procuring a petition within the brief time prescribed would have been impossible. Every other English daily in the city was either silent or cynical or obstructive. Thanks to the Examiner and the American,

however, the task has been accomplished. A petition of 110,000 signatures has been rolled up, and the work of soliciting signatures is to go on until the middle of November, when the petition will be filed. The vote upon it will be taken at the April election. All the solicitation of signatures has been made by unpaid volunteers. This alone is significant of the intensity of public sentiment against the compromise ordinance. A corps of unpaid volunteers procuring a daily average of 4,400 signatures in 25 consecutive days cannot be conjured up.

When the Mayor was formally notified that his challenge had been met, he expressed regret that two additional questions (p. 404) had been incorporated in the petition. He thought this might confuse voters. But his remarks on that subject demonstrated the wisdom of the committee in framing three questions instead of one. Their first question, it should be noted, is calculated to afford opportunity for expressing hostility to the proposed ordinance; the other two are calculated to afford opportunity for expressing hostility to the principle of the ordinance, so that the council cannot evade the first question by verbally altering the particular ordinance to which it refers. That this was a real danger is evident from the Mayor's remarks when the petition was presented to him.

Here is a newspaper report of the colloquy between him and one of the committee:

Said the Mayor: "My only objection to the three questions is that I believe they will tend to confuse the public mind. Any material change in the ordinance, or any not in the interest of the people, would so alter it that I would withhold my approval."

"How can we tell what you will consid-

er an amendment in the interest of the people?" was asked.

"I think," said the Mayor, "that what would be in the interest of the people would be lower fares, a shorter time for the franchises to run, or a larger rate of compensation. I would consider an amendment for a longer term, or less compensation, in the interest of the company."

Evidently, then, if the petition had been limited in application to the ordinance as it stands (which is what the Mayor, the Daily News and other friends of the ordinance desired), nothing would have been thought necessary to justify the Mayor's signoring the petition, but a clause for lower fares, for a shorter term, or for higher compensation. If, then, the ordinance had been amended by reducing fares to 21 for a dollar, or the term to 12 years, or by raising the compensation to 6 per cent. on gross receipts, the immense work of getting up this enormous petition would have gone for nothing. The additional questions, which prevent that kind of trifling, were wisely inserted. That they are so constructed as not to admit of an affirmative vote is a palpable quibble.

Now that a referendum on the compromise ordinance is practically assured, the merits of that measure become the primary instead of a secondary consideration. Citizens who have refused to accept the ordinance without a referendum, may with perfect consistency vote for it at the referendum. Whether the ordinance is either good in itself, or the best that can be hoped for under the circumstances, has now become the crucial question. It is therefore incumbent upon the promoters of the ordinance to make its merits manifest — something which they have not yet done. They admit that it is not good in itself. That point may, therefore,

be passed by as already determined against the propriety of voting for the ordinance. But they contend that it is the best that can be hoped for under the circumstances. On this point they are either obtusive or evasive. If a compromise is necessary it must be one that makes two things secure. First, the possibility of a long and vexatious litigation at the end of the compromise term must be removed; and, second, good service meanwhile must be guaranteed. In behalf of this compromise ordinance it is asserted that it complies with both those conditions; but that is only asserted and not explained. Notwithstanding that Judge Tuley and Judge Dunne and several others whose opinions are entitled to respect, have pointed out the inefficiency of the proposed ordinance on both points, none of its advocates have replied with anything more than a naked assertion. Unless it is shown, with some approach to definiteness and lucidity, that the compromise proposed can be depended upon to prevent harassing litigation at the end of the thirteen years, and to secure good service meanwhile, the ordinance should be voted down. For in that case it removes neither of the great objections to the present intolerable situation. Other defects also may be properly regarded as fatal, but these two stand at the threshold.

One of the points in favor of the proposed compromise ordinance is urged with great persistency and striking inconsistency. This is the contention that the city is not financially able to take over the lines under condemnation proceedings. Whether that be true or not, it is evident that the ordinance takes no pains to make it financially able at the end of the thirteen years, and there is no indication to the naked eye that the city would be any more able financially then than now. In this connection the same men who argue that the city is not now financially able to take over the lines, proclaim that if the traction com-

panies do not come to terms the city will take them over. How the city, if financially unable while a settlement is possible, can be financially able if the settlement falls through, is a secret as yet unrevealed.

In very truth, the talk about financial inability is unwarranted. What it means at bottom is nothing more than that the city would be unable to finance municipal lines if the owners of the Chicago City Railway, and the banks that hold its stock as collateral, obstruct the financing. But how serious really would their obstructive tactics be? To aldermen who have various kinds of private fish to fry, these adverse influences might be serious enough; but to the city itself they would not be serious at all. If the council committee were committed to an offer, so that proposals could be made by others than the Chicago City Railway, there would be no difficulty in financing a municipal system. But the committee refuses to do business with anybody but the existing traction companies. Why?

Let the Council committee adopt and the Council approve a resolution substantially as follows, and the question of financing would be speedily put at rest:

Whereas, the City Council of Chicago is in favor of municipal ownership of the local traction service; and

Whereas, it is prevented from realizing its wishes in this respect by legal and financial obstacles; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Local Transportation Committee is hereby authorized and required to invite proposals of plans for establishing municipal ownership, every proposal to be accompanied with an offer of indemnity in such reasonable amount as the Council may prescribe for the performance of such proposal, if the plan proposed be accepted.

Let such a resolution be adopted and promulgated, and neither the legal nor the financial difficulties in the way of municipal ownership could much longer be pleaded against this policy. Proposals that would put the city in full control of all traction service in much

less than thirteen years, with good service meanwhile, would be forthcoming promptly, guaranteed by ample indemnity.

By a close vote the Chicago City Council has refused to allow a mandatory referendum on municipal operation at the coming Fall election. It was well, perhaps, that the vote went that way; for a municipal question of such importance ought not to go before the people at a Presidential election. But this was not the reason given by those who voted against the measure. The reason they gave was that municipal ownership is impracticable. It revealed on the part of the small majority very little solicitude for municipal ownership and very much for the same considerations that are urged by the traction companies. The plain fact about all this matter is that the issue of municipal ownership versus corporation ownership is up, and the time has come when those who are not heartily with the former are constrained to be against it. This is the battle that must be fought out. And it must be fought out before the people of the city. The time for secret negotiations and evasive explanations is past. The time for plain dealing has come.

One of the prominent men who advocate compromise, Mr. Walter L. Fisher, recognizes this situation. In an able and frank discussion of the subject in the Record-Herald of the 5th he enumerates six propositions on which he thinks a substantial agreement among intelligent and disinterested citizens ought to be made. We summarize these propositions:

1. Immediate condemnation is impossible and even if possible would be unwise.
2. Amicable settlement is desirable if (a) it assures good service, (b) terminates the 99 year claims, and (c) reserves the earliest practicable right of municipal purchase.
3. If neither of the companies will make such a settlement, the only alternative is to start an independent street railway system at once, beginning with the expiring lines of the Chicago Pas-

senger railway and extending this system as rapidly as the existing term grants expire and are released from the restraining order of the Federal court."

4. Relates to plans for unification of service in case one company settles and the other does not.

"5. If the City railway is restrained by timidity or contract from entering into Union Traction territory or is to be controlled by Union Traction interests, an independent system should at once be started with the expiring lines of the Chicago Passenger railway, this system to be owned and operated from the beginning by the municipality or by a company obliged to turn it over to the city upon the return of its investment with reasonable interest thereon."

6. Immediate organization of a city department of local transportation.

The last of Mr. Fisher's suggestions is excellent. But some explanation of the others is desirable. As to the second, how can good service be assured—not contracted for, but assured? And how can the 99-year claims be terminated without creating other equally effective grounds for dilatory litigation? As to the third and fifth, this question arises: If an independent municipal system can be organized and financed in case the proposed settlement is refused by the companies, why can it not be organized and financed in case the proposed settlement is refused by the city?

Senator Spooner's reply to Lincoln Steffens's article in McClure's (p. 403) on political corruption, betrays either a great desire to evade and great skill thereat, or else extraordinary innocence. Because Mr. Spooner is unconscious of corruption directly in his own behalf he assumes that he was involved in none. Unless the bribed can be separated from the unbribed legislators who voted for him, he assumes that there could have been no bribery in the matter. It does not occur to him, apparently, that the worst bribery of legislatures is not direct, but by bribery of "bosses." And he seems entirely oblivious to what every intelligent reader of Mr. Steffens's articles knows, the fact that the gravamen of Mr. Steffens's charges is not direct and unskillful bribery of public officials by "business"

men, but control of the System by "business" men through influencing its managers. All that Mr. Steffens says of Senator Spooner may be at once true and consistent with Spooner's denials. Steffens says that certain rich "business" men spent thousands of dollars to elect Spooner to the Senate. Spooner denies all knowledge of these expenditures and asks the public to infer that therefore no money was spent for him. It does not follow. If the rich "business" men had sized up Spooner as the kind of man they needed in the Senate—able, agile, popular, and so constructed morally as readily to see and spontaneously to magnify the mote of justice in their plans and to ignore or minimize their enormous injustices—those "business" men would readily have placed their "campaign contributions" where Spooner could get the benefit of them. All the better if he knew nothing of the "deal." Dooley's alderman is not the only character in history who has been bought without knowing it.

The thing to which Mr. Steffens's exposure of "the enemies of the Republic" constantly refers, and in the luxurious meshes of which Senator Spooner has evidently been caught,—the "System," as Mr. Steffens names it,—is tersely described by Carl Schurz in his letter this week on the Presidential campaign, wherein he says that "the Republican party is more and more becoming a party owned by rich men, who want to become, through it, still richer." This is the System at work. When those rich men to whom Mr. Schurz refers contribute campaign funds lavishly, they expect, as Mr. Schurz implies, to get their lavish gifts back again with lavish profits to boot. How can they expect to do this? Through just such men as Senator Spooner, whom they select for office as best adapted by nature and training for their purposes, and whose election they therefore buy, not of individual legislators of the party in power, but of the System itself,

which controls the legislative caucus.

When Mr. Schurz names the Republican party in this connection his thought is upon national politics. In that field it is true of the Republican party distinctly. But in State politics the System owns the more popular party, whichever it may be. In Wisconsin it is Senator Spooner's party, but in Missouri it is the Democratic party. This non-partisan tendency of the spirit of the System, is recognized by Mr. Schurz; for, while he is strong in opposition to Roosevelt, he holds out little encouragement to those who agree with him in that respect to follow his lead in supporting Parker. All he can say is illustrated by these words: "Do I expect the Democratic party, if successful, promptly to repress the evils of the present protective policy? I see at present no other instrumentality by which that work can be put into practical motion." If there were a single pledge by which the Democratic party might be held, if the leading candidate had not neutralized his platform by his cautious reservations, there might be hope in this direction, of which Mr. Schurz himself speaks with so little confidence. But as matters stand, one could only expect that if the Democratic party came into power nationally the System would at once make love to it, as it has in Missouri, and that in time it also would become "a party owned by rich men, who" would "want to become, through it, still richer."

Grover Cleveland is lending a hand in the Parker campaign, but it is an awkward hand. He says he has "never been so interested in the welfare and success of the Democratic party" as now; that he is "thoroughly satisfied with the ticket," and that he believes "Judge Parker is an ideal candidate." Then he tells why. It is because the Democratic party "has returned to sanity and future progress along the right lines;" its welfare is close to his heart and "it is once more upon