

the intervention of contractors. In several cases large contracts had been let and the contractors have failed. In the case of the Gunnison tunnel, for instance, the contractor accomplished little except to involve himself in bankruptcy and to furnish an illustration of how the work should not be done. The government is now pushing that work by the direct employment of labor. And in this way it is performing the work with speed and efficiency, making what is believed to be the world's record in rapidity of driving a large tunnel.

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That explains the superiority of the Interior department's construction work over the work of the Treasury department. The work of the former, done by the government's own employes, is economically and efficiently done; that of the latter, done by contract, is so uneconomically and inefficiently done that Mr. Shaw parades it as evidence of the "inherent incapacity" of government to perform its own functions. The whole question raises the issue, not of public or private management of public work, but of performance directly by government employes or indirectly by contractors.

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That public work by contract, as compared with public work by public employes, is uneconomical and inefficient, is proved not only by contrasting Secretary Shaw's illustration of the construction of the Chicago postoffice, which was done by contract, with the reclamation work of the Interior department, which is done direct, but also by work in various other kinds of public service.

In Chicago, for instance, the department of public works is equipped with a mechanical bureau for doing city work, which has now grown to considerable dimensions. This bureau does its work not only more economically, more promptly and better than city work let out by contract is done, but better than the same kind of work is done in private establishments.

A similar experience has been had by the Chicago school board, which also has a mechanical department where work is done directly by city employes. As the school board also lets out much of its work by contract, a comparison with the work done directly is possible, and this comparison is altogether to the disadvantage of contract work.

That the general, as well as local governments, can accomplish results with speed and efficiency, is proved by the Post Office department, and that it can do this without the intervention of contractors is proved by the Interior department.

If the railways were owned and operated under a department where the controlling head felt himself responsible for efficient and economical service, and believed that by proper administration this was to be accomplished, it undoubtedly would be; but if it were placed under a department head who believes that the "inherent nature of public service" absolutely prevents efficiency, the results would probably be comparable with the Chicago public building.

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Secretary Shaw says there are over 20,000 employes in the Treasury department, but that if this were a private enterprise "every whit as much work could be accomplished with a reduction of one third in number and one fourth in salary of those remaining." If that is the case, no one but the head of that department is responsible. Other departments have shown that such inefficiency as this in public business is unnecessary, and it may be of interest in this connection to observe that as a violator of the civil service rules in their letter and spirit the Treasury department has the worst reputation of any department in Washington.

It may be admitted that the postal service is not as efficient or economical as it should be, but this is due mainly to the lobbies of the railroad, telegraph and express companies, who by their influence secure exorbitant rentals for mail cars, prevent the extension of the parcels post, and secure a rate upon third class matter double that on fourth class matter and eight times that on second class matter, in order to prevent competition in parcels' carrying with the express companies. They also prevent the postal use of the telegraph, which is to-day the quickest and one of the most important means of transmitting intelligence.

It may further be admitted, in fact it should be contended, that no government function can be as economically or efficiently administered as it should be, until the railroads and other powerful corporations are eliminated from politics. But no method of doing this is known except public ownership of railways and other natural monopolies.

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## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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### PUBLIC UTILITIES IN SEATTLE.

Seattle, September 30.—Defeated, but not discouraged, in their efforts to carry Seattle in a special election on September 12 for a proposal to construct and operate a municipal street railway system to compete with the system of the Seattle Electric Company, the Seattle advocates of municipal ownership have merely fallen back, taken a new position,

formed a new line of battle, and started another campaign for the municipalization of the street railway transportation of the city. The new position demands only the construction of city street railway tracks on two important new down town business thoroughfares, the tracks to be open for the use of all applicants for running rights over them.

A scheme has been outlined involving the construction of about two miles of city tracks on strategic streets recently open to street railway traffic by virtue of being regraded and opened, and the municipal ownership advocates have been reorganized and placed on a permanent basis for the purpose of promoting this plan.

The reorganization of the Municipal Ownership League was perfected at a meeting held at the Labor Temple, Thursday night, September 27, with Oliver T. Erickson, president, George F. Cotterill, vice-president, Frank Cotterill, secretary, and T. Josebhans, treasurer. The executive committee was instructed to present the new plan to the city council, and ask that body to submit it to a vote of the people at the special election to be held November 6 for the authorization of an issue of bonds for the extension of the sewer system. The proposal has been so presented, and the council has shown indications of an inclination to refuse to submit it to a vote. Should they so refuse the league is pledged to undertake to recall every member of the council joining in the refusal, under the new Recall Amendment to the city council adopted at the last municipal election held last March.

The new Recall Amendment provides that if 25 per cent. of the voters of the city or any ward, petition for the recall of a councilman at large or a ward councilman, the council must call a special election within thirty days for his recall. The plan of the municipal ownership organization is to employ canvassers to stand at all polling places on the day of the general election in November, to ask all voters coming to vote to sign the recall petitions. In view of the increasing disaffection felt towards the city council for various reasons, especially its apparent determination to continue the granting of long time franchises, the advocates of the new municipal ownership undertaking feel confident of their ability to perfect the necessary recall petitions in a single day in this manner.

Under the circumstances there is a very noticeable disinclination on the part of members of the council to be placed on record as opposed to the submission of the new proposal to a vote. As the new plan will involve an expenditure of only about \$200,000, and as running rights over the proposed tracks can in all probability be let in advance of its submission, insuring more than enough revenue to carry the investment, the plan has proven very popular, and many prominent citizens who opposed the general municipal ownership and operation scheme recently submitted have expressed themselves as heartily in favor of the new undertaking.

JOE SMITH.

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What we need from day to day  
Life's riddle to unravel,  
Is light enough to see the way  
And strength enough to travel.

—Unknown.

## NEWS NARRATIVE

To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

Week ending Wednesday, October 10.

### The New York Campaign.

In his speech of acceptance at New York on the 3d, Mr. Charles E. Hughes, Republican candidate for governor (p. 608), described what he characterized as "the supreme issue of this campaign" in these words: "It is not an issue of the Republican record. It is not an issue of Republican principles or of Democratic principles. It is not a partisan issue at all. It is the vital issue of decent government. The question is whether the unholy alliance that succeeded at Buffalo shall capture the State of New York."

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On the same day William R. Hearst, the candidate of the Independent League and the Democratic party (p. 631), in his letter of acceptance to the League named two things as "of special importance as issues in this campaign—liberty and property"; it being the object of the Independence League "to resist the attacks upon human liberty, upon government of the people, menaced by corporation rule, and to resist the attacks upon general prosperity by those same corporations and by dishonest financial agencies."

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In response to a demand from Patrick McCarren, the Democratic leader of Brooklyn, that the Independence League unite with the Democrats on local nominations, under penalty for refusal of being regarded as no Democrat and losing the county to the Republican candidate for governor by 50,000 majority, Mr. Hearst issued a statement on the 5th in which he said: "I am a Democrat, but a Jefferson Democrat, not a 'corporation Democrat,' and I cannot allow a hired agent of corporations like McCarren to define my Democracy or dictate unworthy candidates for me to support. Mr. McCarren, by calling himself a Democrat, does not make himself a Democrat. If he should call himself honest, it would not make him honest. If he should call his ticket a good ticket, it would not make it a good ticket. As a matter of actual fact, the McCarren ticket is notoriously unfit and should not command the support of honest Democrats or honest independents." The only Democratic candidate that the Independence League in Brooklyn has nominated is Robert Baker for Congress (p. 632).

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### The Independence League in Massachusetts.

The Democratic convention of Massachusetts on the 4th, had a somewhat similar experience to that of the New York convention; for it was dominated by