by considerations that ought to have no standing, and placed before a body that will examine the evidence and pass upon it judicially. In other words, it will be felt in many quarters that it is just such a question as The Hague should pass upon.

⚙ ⚙

"Government by the Mob."

Collier's (ind.), July 27.—Gentlemen who talk affrightedly about the hasty judgments of the people lack either honesty or observation. The judgments of the people are not hasty, but deliberate—even slow. The people are naturally conservative. They bear long and patiently; they turn from the old ways and old ideas with reluctance. But there is something tremendous, like the forces of nature, in their accumulated convictions. . . . There are many instances of sudden changes, of whirlwind convictions, of radical moves on the part of men managing great business concerns, of statesmen, of judges even. But the judgments of the people are deliberate, slow, cumulative, and there never was a more groundless fear that a majority of the nation may be played upon at will by demagogues and blown into a flame of rashness that will consume our "sacred instutions"—or any other sort that are worth keeping.

⚙ ⚙

Railroad Carelessness.

The Christian Science Monitor, July 31.—Speaking of his American railroad experience, Arnold Bennett complains of sudden stops and frequent jerks. "I was inclined to go out to the engine driver and say to him," adds Mr. Bennett, "brother, are you aware—you cannot be—that the best European trains start . . . so that it is impossible to distinguish motion from immobility, and come to rest with a softness of doves settling on the shoulders of a young girl." It is really regrettable that Mr. Bennett did not act upon his impulse in this particular. . . . With all of the boasted—and justly boasted—inventions and improvements and conveniences and comforts that have been incorporated with railroad transportation in this country in the last quarter century, jolting and jerking and slamming and banging have increased rather than diminished. It is due to carelessness and inefficiency both in management and execution.

⚙ ⚙

The Carnegie Foundation.

McClure's Magazine, August: Why did this institution, organized, it was supposed, to encourage academic independence, refuse its usual retiring allowance to one of the most distinguished of American educators? Why, after doing this, did it permit the fact to become known in sensational fashion—in other words, why did it place its influence at the disposal of those who sought to injure Mr. Wilson politically? The main fault to be found with our Eastern universities is probably that they distinctly lag behind public sentiment and popular ideals. Unless there is an awakening, the educational leadership will pass to other young and vigorous institutions, such as the University of Wisconsin, which are really making education a part of the life around them.

RELATED THINGS

CONTRIBUTIONS AND REPRINT

THE TITANS.

For The Public.

⚙

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
—Tennyson.

⚙

Mocked, mocked, mocked, mocked!
Mocked are the sowers that thought to reap:
And in arms of Eternity locked,
Many a sleeper that sought to sleep.

Where are the palms they vaunting waved
By right of might, and by boast of power?
For the forces they lightly braved,
Only sport of the passing hour.

Into the eyes of cowering man,
Flashed from the glass of Truth, a ray
For the breadth of a moment's span,
Lightens his midnight into day.

Stout rose the tower from level plains,
Buttressed by buffets, by sweat and groans;
Threat'ning high Heaven, and what remains?
Naught but a jumble of Babel stones.

Stones,—false gods,—and their lying creed,
Every soul for itself, defies
Madly the Source that supplies its need,
And from humanity alien, dies.

God of the ages, hear our prayer!
Riding dangerous seas, her freight
Close, too close to perdition there,
Rescue Thou and preserve our State.

Right her course to the changeless pole,
Equity's meed for great and small:
Clear her way to that glorious goal
Of all for each and of each for all.

GERTRUDE COLLES.

⚙ ⚙ ⚙

A PUBLICLY OWNED NEWSPAPER

An Address Delivered by George H. Dunlop Before the National Newspaper Conference at Madison, Wis., on August 1, 1912.

⚙

Can Commercial Journalism Make Good, or Must We Look for the Public Newspaper?

⚙

De we need the publicly owned newspaper? What would it be like if we had it? What could it be like? What part of the public would own it, and who would run it, and how?

Digitized by Google

I imagine that I have been asked to discuss the question assigned to me today, not that you may hear an abstract argument as to why we should have publicly owned newspapers, but rather that I should describe to you the publicly owned newspaper now being published by the city of Los Angeles. This newspaper is, so far as I know, the first of its kind in the world. Interspersed in this description I shall indulge in a little discussion of the reasons for its existence and characteristics.

The Los Angeles Municipal News, for that is the name of the city newspaper, is published once a week, with an edition of 60,000 copies, which are distributed free throughout the residence sections of the city, by newsboys. One paper is delivered to each house, and no questions are asked as to who lives in any house or whether or not they wish the paper. The subscription price of the paper by mail is one cent per copy. The publication of the newspaper was begun a little over three months ago.

The Los Angeles Municipal News is printed on ordinary white news paper, has the ordinary newspaper appearance in its typographical make up, and carries eight to twelve pages to the issue. It accepts ordinary commercial advertising under a strict set of rules excluding undesirable classes of advertising.

In its news columns the Municipal News confines itself almost exclusively, but not entirely, to news concerning the city government. The news is presented in newspaper story style, and not in the form of departmental reports. No telegraphic news is carried, although, as a matter of legal authority, the paper has the right to carry any kind of news, telegraphic or local, that the management may see fit, and it is quite possible when the paper shall have thoroughly made good in the limited field it is now trying to fill, it may expand into the field of general journalism.

Every effort is made to give the paper a readable appearance, and it is widely read by the citizens.

With this picture of the appearance of the paper before you, we will next discuss the character of the paper. The function of The Los Angeles Municipal News in its relation to municipal affairs is twofold:

1st. To give accurately the news concerning the city's business.

2d. To give fully and fairly the arguments of the contending sides.

On these two points I will quote from the ordinance creating the newspaper:

Sec. 5. Said Municipal Newspaper, published as aforesaid, shall conform to the following specifications:

A. In the publication of all news it shall endeavor to publish the facts with the strictest available accuracy, without bias.

B. It shall give particular attention to municipal news.

C. It shall refrain from any argument, presented as its own, concerning any religious question or any political question pertaining essentially to national or state political issues, or concerning the candidacy of any candidate for any public office, but shall treat the candidacies of all candidates for public office solely as matters of news.

D. Any argument by said paper upon municipal issues shall be in harmony with those principles and measures which have been approved by the voters of Los Angeles City, either by direct vote thereon, or by charter provision, or by public platform or statement of principles approved at an election and not subsequently rejected, or by ordinance or resolution of the Council not suspended in its operation by a referendum petition.

E. Nothing in the above restrictions shall be construed as prohibiting said Municipal Newspaper from publishing the public utterances of individuals or interviews with them, or of special signed articles, concerning any of the questions above referred to, when such utterances, interviews or special articles are published as matters of news and not for the purpose of propaganda by said newspaper; or from publishing the special matter provided for in paragraph F of this section.

Here follows paragraph F, a long and detailed provision, giving to each political party polling three per cent of the vote of the city, the right to use one column in each issue of the paper, free of charge, for the purpose of setting forth the views of that party on public questions. The governing committee of each party selects its own editor to edit its own column, and the matter he hands in for publication is free from any censorship by the management of the paper, except that such matter must be lawful for publication. At the present time five such party columns are in use each week —the Republican, the Democratic, the Socialist, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Good Government. The mayor and any member of the city council may each have the use of half a column in any issue of the paper. Some of these officials occasionally but not frequently have used their space.

Students of municipal affairs regularly tell us that the old New England form of town meeting government was the ideal method of administering the affairs of a small community. This is undoubtedly true. Its excellence lay in the fact that the important features of the town's business were publicly presented, publicly debated, and then voted upon by the body of the voters.

Much of the municipal progress of recent years has resulted from the effort to adapt this old New England method of town meeting government to the conditions of the large modern city. Initiative and Referendum petitions with popular vote on the questions submitted thereunder is such an adaptation, but we have made no adequate pro-

Digitized by Google

vision for the public presentation of the facts and the public discussion thereof. The municipally owned newspaper giving the municipal news without bias and making definite provision for the presentation of the arguments of the contending sides, offers the only solution of this problem that I know of. The privately owned newspapers do not give the facts fairly, and the private citizen's right of free speech, the right to shout forth arguments upon the street corner or in a hired hall, does not put one in touch with any considerable portion of the population of a city of a quarter of a million or more.

It is not necessary to dwell upon the conduct of the average newspapers throughout the country, take them as they run, in misrepresenting the facts of municipal politics and in suppressing all argument antagonistic to their chosen policies. You knew of it before you came to this conference, you have heard it discussed at this meeting. Most newspapers are run for profit, some for honest profit and some for dishonest profit. Of the latter despicable class nothing severe enough can be said, so perhaps nothing further need be said; but the papers that are run for honest profit, using those words in the sense in which they would be employed in ordinary commercial usage and practice, are not in a business where it is advisable at all times to tell all the truth and present all the arguments. The patrons of a newspaper run for profit —its subscribers and its advertisers—must be deferred to as are the patrons of any other commercial enterprise, otherwise the paper quits. Some newspapers, generally small ones, are not run for profit at all, but for purposes of propaganda, in which case their fanaticism may make them quite as unreliable as cupidity ever made any newspaper.

Most successful newspapers are a composite of these two classes, blending the spirit of gain with the spirit of propagandism in a judicious mixture that enables the proprietor to extract money from the public while he promotes as many of his own personal opinions as he dares.

Coming back to The Los Angeles Municipal News, the question arises, How is it officered and managed so as to guarantee its measuring up to the very high ideals which both friends and foes will admit it ought to exemplify, if the city is to have a municipally owned newspaper at all? As a matter of fact, there are, of course, no guarantees that an ideal result will be obtained, just as there is no absolute guarantee that the ideal will be achieved in any branch of government. There are, however, some provisions in the ordinance creating the newspaper intended to assist in holding the newspaper to a high standard, and I will call your attention to them.

The Los Angeles Municipal News is under the control of The Municipal Newspaper Commission, composed of three citizens who serve without pay. The Commissioners are appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the council. The confirmation must be by ordinance subject to the right of the citizens to take a referendum on it, if they are not satisfied with the appointments. This is the first case in history, I believe, where the appointment of appointive officers is made subject to the referendum. It is almost equivalent to making an appointive office optionally elective at the option of the electors, and possibly is worthy of other and wider application.

The Commissioners hold office for four years, but are subject to recall by the voters at any time, and to removal at any time by the mayor and council, which removal must also be by ordinance, subject to the referendum. If, therefore, the mayor and council should seek to remove the commission because the commission refused to make the newspaper a mere administration organ, and insisted on conducting the newspaper impartially as the newspaper of the whole body of the citizens, and if in that case the body of the citizens should wish to uphold the commission in its impartial course, they could do so by taking a referendum on the ordinance of removal and defeating it.

The ordinance creating the newspaper and making the appropriation for its support was passed by a direct vote of the voters of Los Angeles, having been submitted to them by initiative petition. This ordinance cannot be amended or repealed except by a direct vote of the voters themselves, so that the newspaper commission cannot be coerced or financially starved into subserviency by a city administration seeking to control it for partisan purposes, unless the body of the voters themselves approve.

Its independence thus secured, The Municipal Newspaper Commission, under a solemn obligation from the people to be impartial, is very apt to try to measure up to its opportunities and its obligations, the same as do most of the judges in our courts of law or most of our civil service commissions.

As illustrating the statement that a commission appointed to administer impartially has a natural tendency to try to be impartial, I can cite the act of the present Commission, which, without any requirement in the law therefor, has introduced the practice, on municipal questions actively engaging the public attention, of presenting side by side in parallel columns the leading arguments of the contending sides. This takes care of questions that are not party questions, the party questions having their hearing in the columns set aside for the political parties. If the commissioners do not see to it that the newspaper is conducted impartially, and the voters of the city want it so conducted, they may, as previously stated, remove the commission, either by action of the mayor and council

Digitized by Google

acquiesced in by the voters, or by direct use of the recall by the voters themselves.

If a majority of the voters do not want an impartial newspaper, it is quite possible they won't get it, though it is also possible, that if the special interests in the town seeking to control the newspaper are sufficiently numerous and antagonistic to each other so that no one of them can dominate the town, and the minority in favor of keeping the newspaper impartial is sufficiently large and active to constitute a balance of power, the city may be able to have a newspaper far better than the average of its citizenship.

This further remains to be said, if we must have one-sided newspapers it may be just as well to have one that represents the interests and prejudices of the majority of our citizens as one that represents the interests and prejudices of some millionaire who is rich enough to own his own newspaper, or of some restricted class of subscribers and advertisers influential enough to control a newspaper.

The provision of the ordinance giving each political party full control of its own column is an effective factor in helping the newspaper to be truthful, for any misstatements in the body of the paper are likely to be corrected in one or the other of these columns, which are just as free to criticize the management of the paper and denounce it as untruthful as they are to say anything else. The right of individual councilmen, possibly members of the minority in the council, to the use of half a column each whenever they wish, is another factor making for circumspection on the part of the management of the paper. The fact that the municipal newspaper would be the natural target for criticism from the other newspapers of the city if it made any serious mistakes or committed any crimes, is another factor to be considered.

But over and above all these considerations is the fact that the public of no American city would tolerate in its publicly owned newspaper the downright misrepresentation, abuse, and unfairness which so often characterize privately owned newspapers. The municipal newspaper that didn't excel in truthfulness and fairness the average newspaper of today, would be abolished.

I will now briefly describe how The Los Angeles Municipal News is managed, viewed from the professional newspaper standpoint.

None of the three members of The Municipal Newspaper Commission which consists of Mr. H. O. Wheeler, Jr., an attorney, Dr. T. Perceval Gerson, a physician, and myself, is a professional newspaper man. The ordinance creating the newspaper authorizes the Commission to appoint a general manager, and on his recommendation, such assistants as may be necessary and the available funds will permit. Under this provision Mr. Robert E. Rinehart, an experienced newspaper man, has been appointed by the Commission as general manager, and a corps of half a dozen or more trained newspaper men as assistants.

The general manager and his staff take entire charge of the actual work of getting out the paper, the Commission acting only in a supervisory capacity, as a school board or library board supervise their respective departments. The spirit of the entire working force is most excellent. After years of service with newspapers that have required City Hall news to be reported with this or that bias, the men are delighted to have the opportunity to discover news items of interest and then write them as they actually are. The very technique of accuracy and fairness is a matter of professional pride with the whole working force.

The mechanical difficulties involved in printing and distributing 60,000 copies of a newspaper, one day a week, under the pressure of a time schedule almost equal to that of a daily newspaper, are not small. Most of the city's business is transacted on Tuesday. That is the day the council meets, and a number of important city commissions meet Monday or Tuesday.

The Municipal News goes to press Wednesday morning, and is distributed Wednesday afternoon. The printing of the paper has been let by contract to a printing office that owns the idle printing plant of a defunct evening newspaper. The plant is not of an up-to-date character, and it has been necessary for the Newspaper Commission to help out by purchasing a four-deck straight-line Goss press and stereotyping outfit, which the Commission allows the printing contractor to use. The Municipal News hopes to have its own complete printing plant in the near future.

The distribution of the 60,000 copies of the paper is made every Wednesday afternoon by about one hundred and twenty small boys. The proper handling of this distribution is a big problem in itself, and has caused the Commission no little difficulty, but it is being successfully worked out.

The financial support of the Municipal News comes from two sources. The city appropriates $36,000 a year for the support of the paper, equivalent to nearly $700 per weekly issue, and in addition, the paper receives the returns from its advertising columns, averaging, so far, over $400 a week. The number of pages per issue and the number of papers per issue given free distribution, are variable factors, subject to such adjustment as the financial necessities of the department may require.

I have now described the chief features of The Los Angeles Municipal News, not with the idea that all publicly owned newspapers must be just like it, but as affording one illustration of what a

Digitized by Google

publicly owned newspaper can actually be like. Up to date the paper has confined itself almost exclusively to municipal affairs. Within this special field it has a place so necessary and so self-evident, once attention is called to it, that the idea of the municipal newspaper, devoted to municipal affairs, is certain to win its way in the near future in many cities.

We come now, very briefly, to a theoretical consideration of the question: Do we need a municipally owned daily newspaper covering the entire field of journalism—telegraphic news, home and foreign, local news of all kinds, accidents, crimes, sports, etc., etc.? I am free to say that I do not believe the affirmative answer to this question can be given, with the same unhesitating positiveness with which the question of the weekly municipal paper for municipal affairs can be answered; but nevertheless, I still believe that this second question should also be answered in the affirmative.

Not only the political but also the moral and intellectual influence of the average daily newspaper is not what it should be. It is no answer to this statement to say that the people get as good newspapers as they are willing to support, because they can buy what they want and so are free to support better papers if they want them.

Allow me to explain. We all of us have our better moments, when we set up for ourselves ideals that we frequently do not follow. Each of us might be willing to vote a portion of the taxes for the support of a publicly owned daily newspaper of a high grade, even though individually standing upon the street corner with a penny to spend, we might invest it in a pinker or a yellower sheet.

Furthermore, the present thirst for sensational, even depraved reading matter on the part of the reading public, is not wholly natural; its size and its intensity are abnormal. It has been nourished insidiously by evil newspapers themselves. The average newspaper of today, seeking to capitalize into profit the weaknesses and vices of its readers, is simply another case of unrestrained commercial competition carried too far. In every form of competition we must have some rules against hitting below the belt. Just as certain forms of manufacturing competition are restrained and regulated by laws providing for an eight-hour day, prohibiting child labor, and requiring sanitary conditions for the workers, so the competition for profits in the newspaper field should be restrained by rules intended to prevent that competition going to injurious lengths.

We are most of us agreed that a strict official censorship of newspapers, no matter how benevolently intended, is not a desirable thing, so that if we are to have rules regulating newspapers, most of the rules will have to exist in public sentiment rather than in statutory law. The best influence to develop public sentiment is a good example. Give us a high grade, publicly owned, daily newspaper, distributed free to every home in the city, and much that is bad in the other newspapers will cease to be profitable and will disappear.

The publicly owned daily newspaper, covering the entire field of journalism, must be a very high grade paper if it is to be of value. Its news must be accurate, its arguments fair, and its style interesting. It must not present the weaknesses of mankind as worthy, nor the vices of mankind as amusing, nor the virtues of mankind as stupid. It must not rely on scandal and vice, the improprieties of the stage and pictures of perfect women, as the means for interesting its readers. It will not seek to ingratiate itself with the childhood of the community with comic pictures whose humor is in inverse proportion to their general smartaleckness and downright depravity. Above all, it must not preach the gospel of hate and try to make each half of the community believe the other half is the bitter foe of all progress and of their fellowman.

No one can say when we shall see a publicly owned daily newspaper of this kind, but I venture to say that the necessity for such a publicly owned newspaper lies in the very nature of things, and that in the inevitable course of events, it is on its way. The day is coming when it will arrive.

A BALLAD OF ANTHRACITE.

For The Public.

"Tell me, my Lord of Anthracite,
Why boostest thou the price?
Wherefore, when summer days wax bright,
Doth Coal go up like Ice?"

"It is," he said, "the miners' greed;
They struck for higher pay,
So Coal's gone up. My heart doth bleed.
Woe's me! Alackaday!

"Nay, I can't do that sum, I know;
Those figures give me pain;
But if you'll go to Phebe Snow
I doubt not she'll explain."

I found her charming as could be,
Arrayed in spotless white,
And ready to discuss with me
The rise in Anthracite.

"The explanations do appear,"
She said, "to have some flaws,
And yet I think the case is clear—
Coal's gone up just because."

"And still I don't exactly see
Why prices are so high."
In mild surprise she looked at me.
"Why, just because; that's why."

But then as breaks a summer day
There dawned on me a light.
"The poor consumer has to pay
Because he's it?" "That's right."

Digitized by Google