

STATE AND MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP
IN SWEDEN.

V. RAILROADS.

The opposers of public ownership of the means of communication and transportation in this country altogether too often base their claims for private ownership on the supposition that public ownership of public utilities in general in Europe has proven a failure. In particular they endeavor to enlighten the public with the statement that the government-owned railroads have either proven to be a financial fiasco or, at best, an experiment, the many shortcomings of which will soon turn popular opinion in the countries where it has been tried. These statements must be made either out of ignorance or malice. The ignorance amongst some editorial writers in many of our leading papers, when treating European subjects, is surprising. The extent of the malicious element amongst the same class of writers is more deplorable than surprising, when taking in consideration the powers behind the pen. The facts stated in previous articles in relation to government ownership of public utilities do not carry with them the conclusion that state ownership has either proven a failure or been a recent, uncertain experiment in Sweden. Nor are the state owned railroads in that country an exception from the general rule that governmental functions will always be best controlled and cared for by the government itself.

The first state owned railroad in Sweden was opened for traffic in 1856 and ample time has thus been provided for the people to form a sound judgment regarding the manifold disadvantages of state railroads. The most peculiar fact in this connection is that after a fifty years' "experiment," the people have not refrained from continuing "experimenting," and are constantly demanding more government owned railroads. The private roads, many of which are well equipped and well managed, have only in a very few instances been able to achieve as high an estimation in the popular opinion as have the state railroads, and the very fact that a certain railroad line is operated by the government is considered as a certain indication of good service. However, it must be admitted that the example set by the government in conducting its roads has greatly influenced the way in which the private roads are managed, and most of them compare favorably with the railroads of any other country.

It must also be understood that all the roads spoken of as private are not as strictly private as are the railroads in the United States. For there is hardly a railroad in Sweden in which the municipalities through which the road is carried are not greatly financially interested. This, however, is properly spoken of as municipal ownership, and should not be confused with the state ownership pure and simple.

The government owns practically all the great main lines of the country, branching out in all directions to the largest centers of industry and trade from the capital, Stockholm. The smaller connecting lines are as rule private. They are greater in number and length, but do not equal the importance of the government's lines. All the railroads in the country have a combined length of about 8,000 miles, which is nearly the same as the combined

The Public

is a weekly review which prints in concise and plain terms, with lucid explanations and without editorial bias, all the news of the world of historical value. It is also an editorial paper. Though it abstains from mingling editorial opinions with its news accounts, it has opinions of a pronounced character, based upon the principles of radical democracy, which, in the columns reserved for editorial comment, it expresses fully and freely, without favor or prejudice, without fear of consequences, and without hope of discreditable reward. Yet it makes no pretensions to infallibility, either in opinions or in statements of fact; it simply aspires to a deserved reputation for intelligence and honesty in both. Besides its editorial and news features, the paper contains a department of original and selected matter, in which appear articles and extracts upon various subjects, verse as well as prose, chosen alike for their literary merit and their wholesome human interest.

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length of the railroads in the State of New York. Of these roads the government owns nearly 3,000 miles, and owing to the greater traffic on the state roads, the amount of business done on this portion of the railroads of the country practically equals the combined business done by all the private roads.

In proportion to population Sweden has more railroads than any other country in Europe, and more than New England or the State of New York. This gives us so much the greater opportunity for a fair judgment as to the possibilities of government ownership, inasmuch as we here deal with a country with a comparatively sparse population, having only a limited amount of trade and business activity if compared with this country, and not endowed with any extraordinary natural resources. Here, if anywhere, the "experiment" would be subject to failure; here, if anywhere, the financial outcome would be at best uncertain.

However, during the past fifty years the net income of the Swedish state railroads has been on an average more than 25 per cent. of the gross income. In relation to the cost of construction the percentage has varied relatively to the business prosperity of the country, having been on an average between 3 and 4 per cent.; but in 1897 the net income amounted to 4.74, and in 1898 to 4.40 per cent. of the cost of construction and equipment. It is true that the private roads in the country show a higher percentage of net income, but this is not due to the superior or more economical management alone, but to poorer service and less well paid employes as well.

If we now, after having realized that the government's undertaking has proven more of a success than a failure financially, enter upon an examination of the rates charged for various accommodations, it is only fair to admit that a direct comparison with the United States is not very easy on account of many varying conditions. In the first place wages are lower in Sweden, which of course lessens the operation cost. General trainmen do not receive more than about one-half the pay usually paid in this country. Clerks and officials, however, are in many instances equally well paid in Sweden. As to the cost of construction and equipment there are no reasons why this cost should be very much higher in this country. The rails are imported from England, Germany, or Belgium, and in one instance a number of locomotives were imported from America, which proves that equipment can be had no cheaper in Sweden than here. In fact, the reason for the import of these locomotives was chiefly that they could be had at lower cost than the locomotives turned out in Sweden, a peculiar fact after all that our tariff friends have told us about the "pauper labor" of Europe. Of course, labor for railroad construction is higher in this country, but this item is most assuredly outweighed by the incomparably much greater traffic on the railroads in a country with the business activity and the natural resources of the United States. All this taken into consideration, it may be open to question whether even a direct comparison of rates would be very unfair to this country, although wages are higher. However, such a comparison might or might not be fair. The important fact is that the rates charged by the railroads in Sweden

The Growth of An Influence

A subscriber said to us recently: "In those parts of my town where a number of new subscriptions to **THE PUBLIC** were obtained some months ago, we made a much better showing for municipal ownership, at the last election, than we expected to." Others in other localities have often spoken or written to the same effect. It is a recognition of the success of **THE PUBLIC** in teaching and spreading democratic principles.

There is a helpful hint in this for all who wish to obtain success for a campaign based on democratic principles—whether for public ownership of public utilities, direct legislation, suffrage for women, home rule for cities, equal assessments, or whatever the cause may be. **THE PUBLIC** will impart the democratic mind and view-point, which cannot fail to bring support and enthusiasm to democratic causes.

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Everywhere, on the street, in cars, homes, offices, and in public meetings, reading circles, political conventions, etc., etc., subscriptions to **THE PUBLIC** can readily be obtained by those who will ask for them. In conventions or large gatherings three-months or six-months subscriptions can be obtained in numbers. Subscription blanks will be sent to all who wish to use them.

THE PUBLIC has been reduced in price from \$2.00 to \$1.00 yearly, in order to place it easily within the reach of all. Moreover, it has been enlarged in size and improved in form. In making these changes the publishers relied upon securing promptly a much larger circulation. The circulation is increasing steadily, but it is essential to our purpose this year that it increase much more rapidly. The time is especially favorable for the extension of our influence.

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in many instances are so very much lower than the rates charged for the same accommodations in this country that no reference whatever to the lower wages paid in the former country can give a satisfactory explanation.

In Sweden, as in all European countries, the trains carry coaches for three classes of passengers—first, second; and third. The third class is not as comfortable as the coaches on the American roads, but are cleaner and more hygienic, the seats being of polished wood. The difference between the second and first class is one merely in name and price, both being equal in comfort to a Pullman car. The third class, however, is the one most frequented, being used by about 90 per cent of all passengers.

The system now used for determining ticket rates is recently adopted in Sweden, but has been in use in some other European countries for a number of years. It is a zone tariff system, which makes the rates comparatively lower for long distance traveling. The prices for third class travel are \$1.95 for 200 miles, and gradually becoming lower, so as to amount to \$6.85 for 1,000 miles. For admission to through express trains an extra charge of 27 cents is made. The object of this is to prevent the local traffic in the vicinity of the larger cities from patronizing the express trains, that long distance travelers may be better served. This was at first a regulation not very much appreciated, but the beneficent results—as well the comfort of the passengers as the improvement of the service—are apparent.

For travel in second class, fully comparing with travel in Pullman cars in America, the rates are \$2.95 for 200 miles, and \$10.30 for 1,000 miles. For admission to through express trains an extra charge of 39 cents is made. Sleeping car accommodations in second class are uniform in price, being \$1.35 per night extra. The third class has no sleeping car accommodations.

All freight service is handled directly by the railroads. The freight is divided in two classes, express freight and regular freight. The former is conveyed by the fastest and shortest route by express trains, and constitutes in fact the same class of goods as is handled by the express companies in this country.

The government roads are all working in cooperation with the private roads and uniform rates are fixed for all through traffic. In all local traffic the private roads manage their own affairs almost without interference by the government, except that the government fixes maximum rates permissible to be charged.

It may be of interest to note the safety offered travelers on the Swedish state railroads. At present these roads carry more than 11,000,000 passengers a year. The total number of passengers killed by accidents not caused by personal carelessness is eight for a period of forty years. The number of passengers injured during the same period not caused by their own carelessness is fifteen. These latter figures are well worth the consideration of all those who approve of the way the private railroad corporations here conduct their business. We have here grown so used to having hundreds of people killed yearly by railroad "accidents" that we have commenced to look upon it as a natural re-

A Card to Friends of Real Democracy

All about us are men and women who really want our message of fundamental democracy. They may already believe in it, in which case they gladly entertain it and wish to carry it to others. Or, if they do not yet believe in it, they are ready to consider it. To all these our announcement, printed below, should be promptly carried. It is printed in the form of a white card, size 3 in. by 5¼ in., convenient for envelope or the pocket. It can be used as a mailing card by writing address and affixing one-cent stamp on the blank side; if anything is written on the printed side, the words Post Card must be stamped at the top on the blank side. These cards are gladly supplied to those who will distribute them.

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WE are in a turmoil of political and social discussion. The questions under consideration are of vital importance to us and to our children, who will inherit the conditions we help to create. Where can reliable publications (books and pamphlets) be obtained, dealing honestly and fairly with such questions, from the view-point of popular rights and fundamental democracy?

There is now a conscientious publishing house entirely devoted to bringing out and supplying such publications, to meet the public's great and growing need. It is The Public Publishing Company, First National Bank Building, Chicago. Its many stockholders are all real and progressive democrats, men and women.

Their catalogue of books may be had for the asking. They supply at fairest price any book published—as well as those on their list—even searching for books rare or not well known, without extra charge for such service. Whenever you send them an order for anything, it encourages the production of new and timely books of fundamental democracy.

They also publish in Chicago a thirty-two page weekly journal of fundamental democracy called THE PUBLIC, of which Louis F. Post is Editor. The subscription price is only \$1.00 yearly or 50c. half-yearly. Sample copies free.

sult of railroads. If, however, we would study the painstaking efforts made by government owned railroads in Europe for the safety of the public we would realize that the necessity of railroad accidents would be less imperative if the lives of the citizens were valued more than private franchises and an all powerful monopoly.

There can be no good reason why state or government ownership in this country should prove a failure, when it has proven a success in so many other countries, most of which do not possess the natural possibilities possessed by the United States. Indeed, it is a poor objection to offer to intimate that such a system of governmental departments as it would be necessary to create could not be carried on without corruption. The American, if true to the ideals of his country and his ancestors, ought to be too proud to confess that he fears that there could not be enough honesty found amongst Americans to conduct public property in an honest way. It may look difficult. But let us remember that we are not obliged to elect only corporation lawyers to our public offices. Let us remember that the office will find the honest man if the people look for him—something which has been too often forgotten in the past.

ERIK OBERG.

* * *

THE PLUTOCRAT'S CHANT.

Tell me not in mournful numbers
Trusts are but an empty dream,
And the merger dead that slumbers
And things are not what they seem.

Trusts are real, trusts are earnest,
Wealth unbounded is their goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of King Coal.

—B. Prieth, in The Whim.

* * *

"Why do bears sleep through the winter?" asked the boy who is studying natural history.

"Because," answered his father, "the President does not go hunting then. They've got to sleep sometime."—Washington Times.

* * *

"What will become of their children?"

"They will be taken from the servants of the father and brought up by the servants of the mother."—New York Sun.

BOOKS

OPTIMISTIC DEMOCRACY.

The Soul of the People. A New Year's Sermon. By William M. Ivins. Published by The Century Co., New York. Sold by The Public Publishing Co., Chicago. Price, 60 cents, net.

The speeches of William M. Ivins as Republican candidate for mayor of New York last Fall, were at times startling in the ideas of fundamental democracy to which they gave expression. That a man of his high standing in the business world, and the candidate of the most conservative political party of the country for mayor of its richest city, should

Announcements

MEETINGS, LECTURES, DEBATES, ETC.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—The Sixth Annual Conference of the Woman's National Single Tax League will be held in Brooklyn, New York, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, May 29th, 30th and 31st, 1906. Tuesday, 2 p. m., business meeting with short addresses by visiting delegates; Tuesday, 8 p. m., public meeting with music, and addresses by well known Single Taxers; Wednesday morning, Memorial Day, a visit will be paid to the grave of Henry George in Greenwood Cemetery; Wednesday evening, 6:30 p. m., banquet; Thursday, 10 a. m., business meeting, followed by a luncheon to the delegates, tendered by the local club. The Brooklyn Woman's Single Tax Club sends greetings, and an invitation to attend the conference. All meetings, including the banquet and luncheon, will be held at "Edgett's," Fulton street, near Flatbush avenue. Tickets for the banquet (\$1.00) must be ordered before May 29th, and may be obtained from Mrs. John S. Crosby, 110 West 84th street, New York City, or Mrs. Minnie R. Ryan, 485 Hancock street, Brooklyn, New York.

Chicago.—Corinthian Hall, Masonic Temple, May 20, 8 p. m., Spencer-Whitman Center. "What is Morality?" Speakers: Rev. R. A. White, Prof. Henderson of the University of Chicago, and J. J. McNamara of the Juvenile Court.

New York.—Tariff Reform dinner under the auspices of the Tariff Reform Committee of the Reform Club. Hotel Astor, 44th street and Broadway, June 2, at 7 p. m. Speakers: Ex-Gov. Wm. L. Douglas of Massachusetts and Congressman John Sharp Williams of Mississippi. Seats \$2.50. Send checks to Louis Windmuller, treasurer, 37 W. 34th street, New York.

SPECIAL NOTICE TO SINGLE TAXERS OF CHICAGO

The Single Taxers of Chicago and vicinity, and their friends, will dine at the **Washington Restuarant, N. W. Corner Wabash Avenue and Adams Street, Chicago**, on the first Friday evening of each month, at 6 p. m. The dinner on **June 1st** will be table d'hote. For further particulars communicate with the committee at 1202 Ashland Block, Chicago. (Telephone, Central 925)

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