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EDITORIAL

Mayor Dunne Wins Again.

The true significance of the vote this week in Chicago on municipal ownership of the traction service may be inferred from the fact that on election day, in expectation of its defeat, traction stock jumped upward several points on the New

York stock exchange. "The rise was due," reported the Chicago Daily News of the 3d, "to large orders telegraphed from Chicago, where LaSalle street had been watching the progress of the election carefully and had reached the conclusion that the 'little ballot' propositions of the Mayor were snowed under."

An expenditure of money so lavish has never been witnessed before at a local election in Chicago. It is positively asserted that a corruption fund of a million dollars was thrown into the campaign. This is disputed and may be doubted; but there is no room for denying that there was a marvelous expenditure of money against the "little ballot," and by persons and organizations with no visible sources of pecuniary supply commensurate with such expenditures. The real source of supply may be inferred from the interests involved and the favorable effect upon traction stock of a reported defeat of the public ownership movement.

Not only was Mayor Dunne confronted by the corrupting methods of the traction ring, but all manner of herring trails were drawn across the path assiduously by pretentious representatives of "law and order." An anti-crime crusade was started to confuse voters; a saloon license issue was manufactured to distract attention; the pulpits were appealed to, and not in vain, to declare against the movement; both the Republican and the Democratic party machines worked against it; ex-Mayor Harrison rallied all his supporters as well as he could by issuing a proclamation against it on the eve of election; everything possible was done—bad and good, positive and negative—to defeat Mayor Dunne at this critical juncture. Even the Record-Herald, which, upon raising technical objections, the only kind it could raise, and being so conclusively answered in its own columns by Mayor Dunne that it expressed satisfaction and therefore could no longer oppose (vol. viii., pp. 854, 869), dropped into a position of neutrality, the strongest form of opposition it could interpose without self-stultification. Absolutely the only daily newspaper support the "little ballot" received was from Hearst's papers—the Examiner and the American. Even they, for several days at a critical time, went treacherously off after herring trails, although at the end and in the main they gave fairly vigorous support.

Yet a moral victory has been won on all three questions, and a legal victory on the only one of the three that is of present legal importance. On the advisory question of public policy, the city

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authorities are forbidden by a majority vote to grant any franchises. On the question of municipal operation, a majority in the affirmative has been cast, and it fails only for the technical reason that the law requires three-fifths. But this question can await another election without the slightest embarrassment to the legal progress of the movement. The one important present question has been carried by the majority requisite to give vitality to the ordinance to which it related. Nothing now stands in the way of municipal ownership but mere administrative details, unless a hostile Council sees fit further to obstruct and baffle by an opposition which hereafter would be manifestly inane unless it were corrupt. With municipal ownership fairly under way and the issue clarified, there will be no difficulty in securing at an early election the necessary three-fifths vote for operation. Meanwhile Mayor Dunne, supported by more than a third of the Council, will prevent the granting of any franchise, and operation will proceed only under revocable licenses, in accordance with the Mayor's recent interview in the Record-Herald.

The Coal Strike.

It was good tactics on the part of the coal miners when they decided upon a strike, to authorize settlements with operators willing to break away from the stubborn operators who have forced this strike upon the miners and the country. We speak of these advisedly as stubborn and as aggressors. The demands of the miners are reasonable. They assented to a reduction of wages in 1903, when the operators pleaded inability to continue the old rate, and they now demand a return to the old rate. In other words, they are not striking even for an increase of wages, but only for restoration. So much they concede to the plea of the operators that our "phenomenal prosperity" has not affected the mining industry. But it has affected the cost of living among the miners; and these men, the real producers from the ground of the coal the operators claim to own in the ground, are most modestly demanding only a return to the wages of the time when "our phenomenal prosperity" was less phenomenal. Some of the operators favored accepting this adjustment. But the others, intent on creating scarcity prices for an un-scarce commodity which they have stored up abundantly, insist upon forcing the strike. They are, therefore, very much incensed, as may well be believed, and very much disturbed, it may be added, by the unexpected decision of the miners to make no strike against the seceding operators. This decision discloses a good spirit on the part of the miners; and it puts them in a position to earn wages from some operators while striking against others, and at the same time to weaken their adversaries by providing a continuous supply of coal

for competition in the market with the stored-up coal of the conspiring coal operators and coal roads.

A Socialistic Trend.

If those socialists who are playing at politics in a side-party segregated from the common thought were half as alert to the progress of their principles as they are loyal to their toy organization, they would turn their attention from their play to the serious work of promoting and conserving the really great tendencies now flowing in their direction. Here, for instance, is a report from Washington on good newspaper authority (Raymond, of the Chicago Tribune), that the most conservative men, even high officials almost within the walls of the White House itself, are demanding that if industrial operations are paralyzed by the coal strike, the government of the United States, "constitution or no constitution," must "take possession of the mines, operate them for the benefit of the people, and turn over the money to its proper owners, leaving the operators and miners to agree among themselves if they can." Such a sentiment is worth more to socialism than a socialist side party with two million votes would be worth to it. This sentiment draws no line between what is rightfully private property and what is not. It assumes that a coal deposit is as rightfully private property as anything else, and then proposes to divest its owners of authority over it, thereby denying, as the socialists also do, all proprietary rights with reference not alone to the natural materials and forces but also to the artificial implements of production. This would not be complete socialism, to be sure; but it would be revolution in the direction of socialism.

Personal Property Taxation.

Discussions of personal property taxation are becoming unusually common. Within the week one is reported in Chicago and another from St. Louis. And it is gratifying to notice that the numerical strength in these discussions, as well as the weight of the argument, is in favor of abolishing that kind of tax. The objection offered to it is what is called practical, namely, that the tax cannot be fairly collected; an objection to which the other side retorts that it could be collected if taxing officials were honest and efficient. But this implies that taxing officials everywhere have always been dishonest and inefficient; for personal property taxes have never anywhere been fairly collected. The impossibility argument, however, is good only as it indicates injustice. Nothing that is just should be abandoned, though it seem impossible. But the impossibility of fairly collecting personal property taxes does indicate the injustice of such taxation. It is in reality a confiscation of private property. Government gives