

NEWS

Week ending Thursday, Nov. 19.

The Chicago street car strike (p. 503), which began on the 12th, has reached a critical stage—critical not alone to the parties to the controversy, but also to the general public.

This strike is the culmination of long drawn out negotiations between the Chicago City railway, controlling all the lines to the south and east of the Chicago river, and its employes. The employes claim that the corporation has taken advantage of the so-called "open shop" policy to undermine the union of street car men, and to enforce onerous rules which are not only oppressive but operate also to extend hours and depress wages. On the 1st the negotiations were brought to an issue by the positive refusal of the directors of the company to consider specific demands made by the men. Thereupon the union officials decided on the 3d to take a referendum vote on the question of going upon strike, and on the 5th and 6th this vote was taken. The polls closed at 4 o'clock on the morning of the 6th, showing a vote of 1,605 for the strike, 153 against it, and 345 neutral.

Upon ascertaining this result, President Mahon, for the union, employed William Prentiss as counsel, and under his advice the contemplated strike was delayed with a view to securing a further conference with the officers of the company. A meeting with the manager was accordingly arranged for the 9th. At this meeting the union offered arbitration. The manager of the company asked time until the 14th, five days, to consider this offer. Believing that the request for time was to enable the company to import "strike-breakers," the union refused it, demanding a reply on or before the 11th at 6 o'clock in the evening. Compliance with this demand being refused, the strike began at 4 o'clock in the morning of the 12th.

Meanwhile, the State board of arbitration had endeavored to prevent the strike by means of arbitration. The chairman of this

board and another of its members, having first secured the assent of the president of the union, conferred with the manager of the company on the 7th with a view to arranging a conference between the board and the disputants. The reported interview was as follows:

Chairman of the Board—"The State Board of Arbitration has come to you to learn if a meeting cannot be arranged between the board, the officials of your railway and the union men in the interests of peace."

Manager of the Company—"There is no reason for such a conference. I have already arranged a meeting with the men for Monday. I do not understand, however, what business it is of the State board of arbitration to interfere in matters of this kind. You are outside parties and we cannot recognize you."

Chairman—"But you must understand, Mr. McCullough, that we are officials of the State of Illinois, and under the law it is our duty to offer both parties to the controversy our services as conciliators."

Manager—"But you have no business in this matter."

Chairman—"I presume you know that the law provides that in the event of a strike such as this would be that we are empowered to make an investigation."

Manager—"The law does not apply to street railways. It only applies to steam railroads. Furthermore, this controversy is between the Chicago City Railway company and its employes, and no outsider has any right to interfere."

Member of the Board—"But we represent the public. The public has an interest in this matter, and if a strike occurs we will certainly make an investigation. At the present time we can only plead with you to hold a conference with the men to see if the trouble cannot be averted."

Manager—"As I said before, I have already arranged such a meeting."

The subsequent meeting referred to by the manager was that of the 9th, noted above, at which the union proffered arbitration and the manager asked five days' time in which to reply.

When the strike began on the 12th, 2,200 employes quit work, and the attempt of the company to operate its lines completely failed. The people of the south side were consequently without transportation facilities except as they were able to reach the elevated road and the Illinois Central. Some blockading was caused by incompetent motormen and some rioting occurred. It was

then decided by the city authorities to man the cars with policemen. This was done on the 13th. It was irritating to the strikers, because, as they assert, the policemen were used not merely to preserve the peace, but to aid in the operation of the cars. Little advance was made, however, for the cars were run only at irregular intervals and with few or no passengers other than the uniformed policemen, whose presence in such large numbers on the street cars had left the city without police protection elsewhere. This unsatisfactory situation continued through the 13th and 14th. On the 15th, with a large party of "strike-breakers" housed and guarded in barracks, the company undertook to run its cars regularly, but as yet it has not succeeded. The strike is still on in full force.

The question of using police in connection with the street car strike came before the Chicago city council on the 16th. Alderman Johnson offered a resolution calling for an opinion of the corporation counsel as to the legality of placing "a dozen or more" policemen on the street cars and leaving "great stretches of city territory without protection." The resolution was adopted by a vote of 36 to 29. Corporation Counsel Tolman has replied in an opinion in which he says:

There is no statute, nor any principle of the common law, nor any decision of any court, holding that the police may not escort a street car, nor ride thereon for the purpose of preserving the peace or preventing the destruction of property. Street cars operating upon public streets partake of the public character of such streets. Such cars are public places within the meaning of that term as used in the law. If the mayor deems it necessary to put the police force on street cars operating on the public streets the existence of the necessity affords him a power as broad as the need.

At the same session of the city council, November 16th, the following resolutions relative to the strike situation were adopted:

That this council heartily indorses the measures adopted by the Mayor to preserve order and protect property in the city.

That it is the sense of the City Council of Chicago that the public welfare of the whole community will be best pro-

tected by a speedy settlement of the present Chicago City Railway strike.

That His Honor the Mayor use his best endeavors, either in union with influential citizens or with members of this Council, to secure a submission to arbitration of the questions at issue between the Chicago City Railway Company and its striking employes.

That the Mayor is hereby requested to prepare a statement or proclamation setting forth the facts with reference to the amounts of money paid or to be paid by the City of Chicago for claims for destruction of property during strikes or riots in the past years and that the Chicago newspapers be requested to publish the same, with the opinion of the Corporation Counsel as provided for in the Johnson resolution.

Pursuant to the authority conferred by these resolutions Mayor Harrison has appointed a mediation committee of eight aldermen, as follows: Palmer, Finn, Jackson, Maypole, Eidmann, Scully, Bradley and Ruxton. The company was invited by the Mayor on the 17th to send representatives to meet this committee at his office. A meeting was accordingly held, and others have followed it; but no result is yet reported.

Greater impetus has been given by the street car strike to the movement in Chicago for immediate municipal ownership (p. 486) of the street car system. The chairman of the sub-committee on franchises of the transportation committee of the city council, Alderman Bennett, having announced that the sub-committee would report the "tentative" Chicago city railway ordinance (p. 486) to the full committee at the city hall on the 14th, and that all civic organizations would be invited to participate in a public discussion of its provisions, the Chicago Federation of Labor issued the following call:

In compliance with the request duly made by delegates to the Chicago Federation of Labor, there will be a special meeting of the Federation in the corridors of the council chamber of the Chicago city hall at two p. m., Saturday, November 14, for the purpose of conveying to the local transportation committee of the Chicago city council the repeatedly expressed demands of Chicago organized labor that no street railway franchise whatever shall be either granted or renewed by the Chicago city council; that the local transportation committee shall therefore confine its efforts to the devising of means for the bringing about of immediate municipal

ownership and operation; and that, in the meantime, the street railway cars shall be operated under revocable license only. The legislative committee of the Federation will be on the floor to take special charge of the presenting of the above views and demands.

This call was responded to by a large number of people, but no public meeting of the transportation committee was held. The report of the sub-committee was made informally and an adjournment was taken without discussion. Arrangements have since been made by the committee for subjecting the proposed ordinance to public discussion during the coming two weeks. At the meeting of the council on the 16th a resolution of the Chicago Federation of Labor urging the council committee on local transportation to advertise at once for bidders to operate the lines of the Chicago City Railway company, a resolution that no franchise be granted which does not provide for a lower fare between 5 and 7 o'clock morning and evening and for a reduction of fare by tickets, and an ordinance for licensing each street car, were referred to the committee on local transportation.

While the Chicago Street Railway company is thus seeking an extension of franchise and struggling with a labor strike, the Union Traction company, controlling the northern and western lines, is planning for legal advantages under the 99-year franchise (p. 468), under which both the Chicago City Railway and the Union Traction companies claim extraordinary privileges not expiring until 1958. The Union Traction company is in the hands of receivers appointed by Judge Grosscup of the Federal court. The city having refused permits to the company to do work on the streets (p. 248), Judge Grosscup granted an injunction restraining it from interfering with the company, and the hearing on that injunction is set for the 30th. This raises the question of the validity and effect of the 99-year franchise, for the shorter franchise expired July 30th. Further in assertion of their claims under the 99-year franchise, Judge Grosscup's receivers applied to the commissioner of public works, as for a

right, for permits to equip some of their lines with electric power, thus challenging the contention of the city that even if the 99-year franchise is valid it authorizes the use of horse power only. Their application was referred to Corporation Counsel Tolman for an opinion, and on the 16th he transmitted his opinion to the city council. Mr. Tolman holds that the 99-year act did not extend the companies' franchises in the city streets, but at most only extended the life of the companies, and that consequently the application of the receivers cannot be granted except as a favor from the city council. The commissioner of public works accordingly notified Judge Grosscup's receivers on the 17th that he could not grant their application. Following this refusal the receivers asked that the permits be granted pending a legal determination of the legal questions involved, the proposed new construction and equipment to come down if the courts decide against the receivers and their claims under the 99-year act. The corporation counsel repeated, in answer, his previous suggestion that the receivers go to the city council with the matter.

In Cleveland the traction reform which Mayor Johnson has been promoting in the face of many injunctions for nearly three years has been confronted with another injunction. The question there has taken the form of a franchise for a road to be operated for a 3-cent fare, the city having no legislative authority to adopt municipal ownership. When last we reported the progress of this low fare movement (p. 393) Mayor Johnson spoke of the possibility of further injunctions. None were applied for, however, while the election was pending. But within a fortnight afterward the threatened injunction came. More than half of the 3-cent fare road had been completed, and work was still going on, when it was stopped on the 12th of November by a restraining order from Judge Dissette, granted in the suit of a resident of Denison avenue. Hearing was set for the 16th. On that day the parties arranged to postpone the hearing to the 30th. An injunction to issue meanwhile, but with the reservation that 2,000