

### The Strike of the Forty Thousand Won.

The strike of the 40,000 shirtwaist makers in New York (p. 132) is coming to an end. After a five months' struggle the Triangle company, the head and forefront of the manufacturers' group, capitulated on the 7th, and now only about 400 girls are still out—about one per cent of the original army. With the aid of women from far different environments, the two related strikes in this one industry in New York and Philadelphia (p. 132)—the greatest strikes of women in the history of American industrialism—have been won. The pressing need for united action on the part of the women in the clothing trades, was expressed in what a little Philadelphia worker told Mrs. Raymond Robins, president of the National Women's Trade Union League, during the strike. "Mrs. Robins," she said, "my Boss he say, 'You gotta work; you gotta live.' I say, 'I not live much on forty-nine cents a day.'"

\* \*

### Personal Property Taxation in New York City.

Mayor Wm. J. Gaynor of New York on the 8th addressed a letter to Lawson Purdy, President of the Board of Taxes and Assessments, asking information in regard to the possibility of abolishing taxation on personal property. The letter ran as follows:

I am receiving daily complaints of persons whose names are put on the assessment rolls this year for personal taxation although they have no personal property liable to taxation. This great annoyance has been going on for years. Many have been driven to establish their legal residence outside of the city by it, and in that way their votes are lost in our city elections.

I am aware that you have lessened this evil, for we have worked in accord to that end in past years. But it is impossible to do away with it under the present crude and unscientific statute providing for the taxation of personal property in this State, including money in terms, which is a medium for the exchange of property.

The teeth of this statute have been constantly filed down by assessing officials all over the State. No law can be enforced effectually against the will of the community. The assessing of personal property in this city is necessarily a matter of guesswork, worked out through the city directory except in the case of estates which fall into the Surrogate's Court by death and are thus fully exposed. These latter are taxed in full, while the personal property of others is not reached or assessed at all, or else in the most unequal manner.

Such injustice calls for correction. It is really grotesque. I have before me notices of personal assessments of \$10,000 and upward against persons who have no property and never had, while others, rich in personal property, are not even listed for personal taxation. I am not stating this in censure. The statute prescribes no test or procedure to enable the assessors to ascertain the amount of personal prop-

erty owned by individuals. It leaves them to guess at it as best they can.

In addition to general injustice and annoyance and the opportunity for extortion and bribery which it presents, this loose method leads to constant disorder in our finances. Only about 50 per cent of the taxes thus levied are collected. The result is an ever recurring annual deficit, which has to be funded and added to our permanent debt or else relieved year after year in the annual budgets. There is such a deficit of about \$30,000,000 now in process of being funded.

You are of course aware that a growing number of people here, and perhaps the majority, desire to have the personal taxation of individuals done away with in this city. Others have long desired local option in respect of such taxation and petitioned the Legislature to give it.

So as to open up the subject for intelligent public discussion will you be so good as to write to me the following data:

First, if such personal taxation were done away with altogether, what decimal would thereby be added to our tax rate on real estate? I understand it would be very small.

Second, whether those who pay taxes on real estate do not now pay the substantial part of the personal taxes collected?

If such decimal would be insignificant, and substantially the same persons who pay the personal taxes which are collected would pay it, a case for intelligent consideration would be presented. Many might say that it showed that the trouble, annoyance and opportunity for favoritism and dishonesty in such taxation of personality should be done away with.

I am not speaking in this letter of the other kinds of taxation of personal property which we have under exact and enforceable statutes. I do not expect that it will be timely to propose any legislation on the subject this year, but only after a full discussion and consideration of the matter by the community. If public opinion then calls for a change a bill can be drawn to conform thereto.

\*

Mr. Purdy replied as follows two days later:

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,  
DEPARTMENT OF TAXES AND ASSESSMENTS,  
HALL OF RECORDS.

February 10, 1910.

Hon. William J. Gaynor, Mayor, City Hall, New York.

Sir: I have received your letter of the 8th asking two questions:

First: If the general property tax on personal property were done away with altogether what decimal thereby would be added to the tax rate on real estate?

Second: Do those who pay taxes on real estate pay the substantial part of the personal taxes collected?

It is impossible to answer the second question accurately, because real estate assessment-rolls are made up geographically and not alphabetically. I believe that it is probably true, however, that the persons who pay most of the personal taxes also pay taxes on real estate.

To answer your first question most intelligently I have obtained the amount of personal taxes collected for three years. It averages \$4,500,000 a year. To raise this sum by a tax on real estate would increase the tax rate by six or seven cents on each \$100 of assessed valuation. In making this estimate I have not taken into account the fact that there would be a considerable saving of expense if the assessment and the collection of taxes upon it were abandoned.

As you have pointed out in your letter, the question presented is not that of the effect of abandoning the taxation of personal property, but only that of abandoning the small relic of personal property tax now left. The tax on banks and trust companies alone exceeds the tax collected from personal property under the personal property tax. The tax on banks and trust companies is enforced with mathematical accuracy. Other classes of personal property have from time to time been withdrawn from the operation of the general property tax, and additional taxes have been imposed upon various classes of personal property, and these taxes yield a much greater amount than the general property tax.

There are very few places in the State of New York where any attempt is made to enforce the law for the taxation of personal property. In many places it is absolutely nullified. The entire assessment of personal property, outside of the City of New York, was only \$113,000,000 in 1908. In one city, with a real estate assessment of \$29,000,000, the entire assessment of personal property is \$175,000. Not a single corporation is assessed. There are a large number of towns where there is no personal property assessment at all. I am informed and believe that there is not a single non-resident person or corporation assessed in the whole State of New York outside of this city.

While the actual collections in this city are trifling the law is a menace to our prosperity. Its enforcement drives from us property and business, the presence of which would enhance the value of real estate by much more than the sum from which personal taxes are collected. The increase in the assessed value of real estate has several times been twice as great in one year as the personal assessments on which taxes have been paid.

Respectfully,

LAWSON PURDY,

President.

\* \*

#### The Cleveland Traction Referendum.

Mr. Tom L. Johnson is back in Cleveland from New York, where he went to take a rest and recuperate at the close of his long service in the mayor's office (pp. 13, 34). The Cleveland Press reports him as being in greatly improved health, and with "about as much fight in him as ever." The street railway ordinance comes to a referendum vote of the people of Cleveland at a special election on Thursday of this week, the 17th (p. 110). In regard to it the Cleveland Press published on the 12th the following signed statement from Mr. Johnson:

It is said that the people of Cleveland are tired. I can understand it, if they are. They have fought a

long fight, and I myself am tired and sick. But I am not sick and tired of the fight, and I doubt that the people are. They have shown a courage that would do credit to an individual; they have "stayed" with an endurance that has encouraged the people wherever our story is known. I believe they will finish the fight. They may be tired of me and, thinking that might be, I have hesitated to say anything at this time. But I have decided. I am going to point out the dangers of the pending ordinance.

As a representative of the people I have been guided by the belief that the people should rule their own affairs, and now that I am a private citizen I am going to say just how the thing looks to me and how I am going to vote at the referendum of February 17.

There are four vital defects in the street railway settlement:

The first is, the maximum fare is too high.

The second is, the valuation is too high.

The third is, the city's control by arbitration is too weak.

The fourth is, a friendly council can relieve the company of all the people's safeguards without a referendum vote.

The grant is for 25 years or longer.

It is a grant of a monopoly with no provisions in it to require extensions and betterments to keep pace with the growth of the town.

It is a grant to a company with neither interest nor inducement to operate at either a low fare or in the interest of the car riders.

It is a grant to a company that has said publicly that even the maximum fare is too low.

It is to a company which is one unit in the national street railway business which, fearful of reduced dividends in other cities, would like to see the "low fare enterprise of Cleveland" fail. There is nothing easier in the world than to fail, when you want to, even in the street railway business in a growing city.

This company will make low fare in Cleveland fail. It will find that it "has to" ask a friendly commissioner, administration and council to raise the maximum rate of fare now fixed at 4 cents cash, 7 tickets for a quarter and 1 cent for transfer without rebate, and a friendly administration can do this, so far as has been legally determined, without a referendum. And after that the company will find that it "has to" yield more and more to the temptation left in this settlement, not to get out of politics, but to go deeper into it and corrupt our city government.

Already the company proposes to buy power from the Illuminating company.

When Columbus was to get eight tickets for a quarter by reason of the fact that the company's gross earnings were about to reach the figure named in the ordinance the street car company consolidated with the electric light monopoly and other public service companies, and for the last five years the Columbus car riders have been denied eight tickets for a quarter, because through its consolidations the company has been able to conceal its true gross earnings.

In Cleveland substantially the same proposition is contemplated. The street car company proposes to buy power from the Illuminating company.