

Structural Iron Workers' Strike in Chicago.

After an interval of some five years, the building trades in Chicago were again disturbed by a strike on the 2nd—one of the largest of the May-day strikes. The immediate cause of this strike is a wages dispute, the men demanding \$5 for an 8-hour day, and the contractors offering \$4.60 for four months and \$4.80 for the remainder of the year. The men voted for the strike 3 to 1. In behalf of the strikers' demand it is said that the average of life in the trade is only ten years.

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Municipal Ownership in Omaha.

The election of James C. Dahlman, a Democrat, as mayor of Omaha on the 1st, is of national interest because Omaha is a Republican city and Mr. Dahlman was elected, along with a Democratic council, after a strenuous campaign for municipal ownership. The platform, in one of its planks, pointed to—

the fact that the Democrats under the leadership of Mayor Dunne in Chicago and under the leadership of William Randolph Hearst in New York represent to the fullest extent the principle of public ownership of public utilities, and so they are hereby pledged to do in Omaha.

In other planks, Mr. Dahlman and his party were pledged to municipal ownership of water works, electric lights, gas, street cars, telephones and all other public utilities. Whereas, at the previous election a Republican was elected mayor by 1,000 and the council had but one Democrat in it, Mr. Dahlman is elected by 2,790 and the council has but one Republican in it.

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Municipal Ownership in Chicago.

An attempt is being made by the Chicago traction interests to secure a rehearing in the United States Supreme Court on the 99-year question recently decided against them (vol. viii, p. 837), and an application for that purpose was made at Washington on the 26th. No decision on the application is yet reported.

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At the request of Alderman Werno, the chairman of the reorganization committee on local transportation of the Chicago council, Mayor Dunne outlined a policy on the 28th regarding the traction question (pp. 32, 52), in the prosecution of which he invited the co-operation of the committee and the council, stating that the work of the committee—

naturally divides itself into two great parts:

1. The accomplishment of municipal ownership of the street railway system; and
2. The improvement of our street railway service while municipal ownership is being established.

Referring then to the fact that "the people of Chicago have repeatedly expressed their opinion in favor of municipal ownership of the street railway system, and at the last election definitely voted in favor of the ordinance which has been passed by the city council for the purpose of providing the financial means by which municipal ownership may be accomplished," Mayor Dunne assumed in his letter that the committee would "fully accept the result of this election in good faith and co-operate in all proper and reasonable ways to carry into effect the

will of the people." Upon this assumption he outlined the present situation, and proposed and explained at length his plan for securing complete municipal ownership immediately upon the payment by the city of the cost of the plant with improvements, and good service meanwhile. His proposals may be briefly summarized as follows:

I. As the first practical step the existing companies should be given a reasonable opportunity to save the remnant of their property by making a fair adjustment. Accordingly, if they will promptly agree to enter into negotiations upon a broad principle of adjustment, such negotiations should be had. The principle of adjustment should be: (1) reconstruction by the companies; (2) unified service; (3) universal transfers, and (4) operation under revocable license. If this principle of adjustment be promptly accepted by the companies, the details of negotiation should require: (a) a fair valuation of the present value of the present lawful property of the companies, and an agreement by the companies to sell therefor to the city; (b) an agreement by the city to allow a fair investment return to the companies upon such value, and also upon such investment in reconstruction as the city requires or authorizes; (c) an agreement by the city to give a fair share of the net operating profits to the companies, in addition to the investment return, so long as they are allowed to operate; (d) an agreement by the companies allowing the city to take over the system at any time upon paying the present agreed value of the present property, plus the actual authorized investment in reconstruction; (e) meanwhile, a fair share of net operating profits to go into a sinking fund for aiding in the payment for the property upon taking over the same.

II. If the present companies refuse or neglect to negotiate promptly upon the foregoing basis, then a construction company should be organized to proceed at once to reconstruct the system upon a fair construction profit, with right to operate until the investment and profit are repaid, the profits of operation to be applied (1) to paying interest on the investment, and (2) to repayment of the principal sum.

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This is in substance the same plan that Mayor Dunne submitted nearly a year ago, known as the "contract plan," differing from that only in minor details and in the fact that he now makes overtures to the present companies. Should these proposals be seconded in good faith by the aldermen and accepted by the present companies, complete municipal ownership would depend only upon payment for the plant. The present value of the companies' property would be at once appraised. The character and cost of reconstruction would be at once decided upon and reconstruction would begin. The work would be done by the present companies, and they would continue operation under circumstances making good service more profitable than poor service. Meanwhile, the constitutionality of the Mueller law would be carried to the highest court, along with the validity of the city ordinance drawn under its provisions, and the legal value of Mueller certificates would be thereby established. Should the court's decision be adverse, changes in the law or the ordinance, or both, could be made without disturbing the process of establishing municipal ownership or interfering with the improvement of the service. If the decision should be favorable (and even if unfavorable, then after any adjudicated defects in the law or the ordinance had been cured), the financial value of the Mueller certificates would be established, and out of the proceeds of their sale the property could be paid for and at once taken over, thereby establishing complete municipal ownership. As the sinking fund would have accumulated progressively

meanwhile, the amount of Mueller certificates requisite would be diminished in proportion to the delay. In addition to it all, as the people would in the interval have had ample opportunity to vote, with the requisite majority, for municipal operation, the completion of the process of securing ownership by the city would be supplemented by the establishment of operation also by the city.

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Political Events.

The Chicago Protective Alliance (p. 32) held its first nominating convention on the 29th, the nominations being for candidates at the Democratic primaries. Each candidate is required to sign a pledge that he will make the contest in good faith and keep himself free from entangling alliances with any of the old party leaders. He is also pledged to resign if a majority of his constituents demand it. The speakers in the convention were emphatic in their declarations that the movement is not an independent one. The intention is to turn out the labor vote in such numbers at the Democratic primaries as to capture the party machinery and let the labor candidates stand as the nominees of the Democratic party.

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The Kansas convention of the Democratic party at Topeka on the 25th nominated ex-Senator William A. Harris for Governor, and David Overmeyer for Attorney General. The platform declares against railroad passes, and for a 2-cent per mile passenger fare. A sensational feature of the convention, as reported, was the speech of the State chairman, Mr. Sapp, who scored Governor Hoch for enforcing the prohibition law in Kansas City, Kan., where there is a Democratic mayor, Mr. Rose, and ignoring violations in cities with Republican mayors.

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The Republicans of Kansas on the 2nd nominated Gov. Hoch for re-election.

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In Indiana Democrats who oppose Thomas Taggart's management of the party met at Indianapolis on the 30th and organized a wing of the party by the name of the "Democratic League for the Recovery of Majority Rule." The leader in the movement is John W. Holtzman, formerly mayor of Indianapolis. The resolutions demanded the reorganization of the State committee and a revision of the party rules, and provided for issuing a manifesto based upon the broad principles of Jeffersonian democracy.

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An Important Church Controversy.

At Batavia on the 28th, the heresy trial of the Rev. Dr. Algernon S. Crapsey (p. 61), rector of St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal Church at Rochester, came to an end. Dr. Crapsey's legal counsel was Edward M. Shepard, of New York. The accusations were based upon Dr. Crapsey's famous book, "Religion and Politics," and sermons he had preached, the alleged heresy consisting principally in denials of the miraculous birth of the Founder of Christianity,

contrary to the creed of the church. In his defense it was contended that belief in the creed does not foreclose individual interpretations of it. No decision has yet been reported from the ecclesiastical court before which Dr. Crapsey was tried.

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A Marvelous Invention.

The press dispatches of the 28th told of a marvelous invention by Tom L. Johnson, the mayor of Cleveland—an invention so marvelous that its probability was evidently not credited by the newspapers that published the report, and only a little space was given to what would fill pages if the report were taken seriously. Yet the report itself shows that in all reasonable probability the invention as described has been really made and that its marvelous possibilities may soon be realized. It consists of a car running on an overhead track with sliding shoes instead of wheels, and capable of a speed that would carry passengers from New York to Chicago in less than three hours. Friction is minimized and speed obtained by means of electrical contrivances. In recent actual tests, as reported, a theoretical speed of 400 miles an hour was demonstrated. It is not improbable that a higher rate of speed will in fact be developed.

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The San Francisco Disaster.

As communication with San Francisco becomes more regular, reports indicate that most of the damage was done by the fires and not by the earthquake. The earthquake did great damage to poorly constructed buildings, and to all buildings on "made" or filled-in ground. In the region of the filled-in Mission Creek, the ground settled some 12 feet, zig-zagging along the old line of the creek, and toppling buildings over on every side. But on the solid ground, on the hills and in the business district, where good foundations had been laid, but little damage was done until the fire came. The fire-proof steel structures in the business district were unharmed by the shock; and even buildings 50 years old, if well constructed, are reported to have been without a crack—not so much as flower pots on window sills being disturbed. The great damage is traceable to the economies of the private water company. Its inferior cast iron pipes were broken by the earthquake and when the fires broke out there was no water to stop their spread. Dynamite was used without avail; the debris of the dynamited buildings making better fuel than the buildings intact. Over 200,000 people are believed to be homeless. No credit can be had; transactions are in cash. Among the businesses destroyed was that of the San Francisco Star, of which James H. Barry was owner and editor. His entire property was swept away. The new postoffice building stands almost unharmed, notwithstanding the earthquake and the fire that surrounded it. Its machinery has remained in operation (the only instance), since the morning of the catastrophe. Proposals to ask the Federal government to endorse mortgage bonds for rebuilding in order to borrow at low interest, are being agitated; and Congress is considering the suspension of the tariff on steel for reconstruction purposes.