

Supreme Court toward this most vital question of taxation.

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NEWS NARRATIVE

The figures in brackets at the ends of paragraphs refer to volumes and pages of *The Public* for earlier information on the same subject.

Week ending Tuesday, January 23, 1912.

Progress in the Ohio Constitutional Convention.

Pursuant to the authority conferred upon him by the Convention, its president, Herbert S. Bigelow, promptly appointed a committee on rules and one on employees, he being a member ex-officio of the former and its chairman. The other members are reported as thoroughly representative. They are E. L. Lampson (floor leader of the reactionaries), E. W. Doty (floor leader of the progressives), John W. Winn, Samuel A. Hoskins, Stanley Shaffer and Fred G. Leete. This committee reported a set of rules somewhat modified from a draft prepared by Mr. Doty. One of its features relates to lobbying. It requires an open registration without which no person not a delegate can gain admission to committee rooms or appear before the Convention or any part of it. At the election of vice-president of the Convention on the 17th, E. W. Doty was defeated by S. D. Fess, president of Antioch College and a leader of the "dry" faction as against the "wet," but a progressive. On first ballot Doty had 47, Fess 31 and Anderson 36. Most of Anderson's vote went to Fess on second ballot, making the vote 52 for Doty and 61 for Fess—a majority of 2 for the latter. Constitutional provisions on several burning questions were submitted by members on the 17th. Among them was an Initiative, Referendum and Recall amendment submitted by Robert Crosser, author of the municipal initiative and referendum law now in force in Ohio. It provides for State-wide legislative referendums on a petition of 50,000, State-wide legislative initiatives on a petition of 60,000, and Constitutional amendments on a petition of 80,000. Intending to make a diversion over the Singletax the reactionary leader, Lampson, offered a clause providing that no law shall be enacted taxing land or land values by a different rule from that applied to improvements and personal property. As this would prohibit all classifications of property for purposes of taxation, thereby interfering with the plans of the Ohio State Board of Commerce for exempting bonds, it is reported—we quote from the Cincinnati Enquirer of January 18—that "it can be stated with authority that this proposal will be modified by Mr. Lampson, whose only object was

to strike at the Henry George cultus." On the 18th President Bigelow announced standing committees, the chairmen of some of the principal ones being as follows: Initiative and Referendum, Crosser; liquor traffic, Bowdle; taxation, Doty; municipal government, Harris of Hamilton; educational, Fess; equal suffrage, Kilpatrick; judiciary, Peck; labor, Stilwell. Judge Lindsey of Denver spoke before the convention on the 18th. [See current volume, pages 49, 52, 57.]



Municipal Ownership in Cleveland.

Mayor Baker has begun proceedings for extending the ownership and operation of the electric lighting system in Cleveland which the late Mayor Johnson established. Mayor Johnson secured the nucleus of this system through the annexation of suburbs which owned and operated. Subsequently a \$2,000,000 bonding proposal for extension was adopted by the people of Cleveland on referendum, and on the 11th Mayor Baker opened negotiations with the lighting company which now monopolizes the private system. In his letter, as reported by the Plain Dealer of the 12th, Mayor Baker—

sets forth that the people of Cleveland have ordered the municipalization of the electric current industry and that there are two ways by which this can be done—either by purchase on just terms of the private occupant of the field, or the installation of competing plants. Mr. Baker says the long history of the traction war has shown that the people desire to avoid wasteful competition and to deal justly with the owners of private property. He therefore invites the company to sell its plant to the city, stating, however, that he proposes to continue the rapid development of the municipal plant, feeling certain that if the company feels disposed to negotiate he does not doubt a determination of the amount to be paid could be speedily reached. The price agreed upon would be submitted to the people for their approval.

The letter explicitly states that the city would desire to purchase only such property as would be useful to the city. Other property the city would not desire, and he proposes that the city name an arbitrator, the company one, and that F. H. Goff be selected as the third member of a board to determine what property the city ought to purchase and the price to be paid for it.

The reply from Samuel Scovill in behalf of the company, is regarded by Mayor Baker as closing the door to a peaceful settlement. Its terms are so frankly characteristic of the attitude of public service monopolies that we reproduce it in full as a type which should be of interest in every city. As reported by the Plain Dealer of the 13th, Mr. Scovill's reply to Mayor Baker was as follows:

Your letter of the 11th inst. received. The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. and its predecessors have for more than twenty-five years past been making continuous and large investments in its property