

interest of public justice, is a dreadful agency of injustice. To the influential, the grand jury is a harmless censor and a convenient tool; to the unfortunate and friendless, it is a crushing mechanism of injustice.

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### **An Impoverishing Prosperity.**

A remarkably suggestive editorial review of our "unprecedented prosperity" appears in Moody's Magazine for December. From such a source the conclusion is startling that the working classes are really not sharing in this prosperity, notwithstanding the higher wages that prevail. Higher wages are attributed to the depreciating value of gold. During the past eight or ten years, says Moody's, the average rise in wages has been about 20 per cent. This means, continues the editor, "that whereas \$1.40 is now required to buy what \$1.00 bought in 1896, the average workman has only \$1.20 with which to purchase what sells for \$1.40." That candid statement is followed out in detail.

As there are about 30,000,000 workers in this country, receiving an average of about \$600 each per year, the total wage bill amounts to about \$18,000,000,000. If this is 120 per cent. of what the same earners would have received in 1896, they would then have received \$15,000,000,000. But to buy what they could then have bought with \$15,000,000,000, wage earners to-day would have to have \$21,000,000,000. Hence the difference between what our wage earners actually get and what they should get, on the 1896 basis, is \$3,000,000,000 a year. This amount represents, approximately, the "rake-off" that must go to somebody. It is the price our workers and consumers are paying for the kind of prosperity that we see on all sides. As to who gets it we will not undertake to say, though we have some suspicions. The main fact is that this vast amount, through a price-and-wage juggle for which nobody in particular is to blame, is yearly extracted from the pockets of our workers and spenders.

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These figures explain what has been a mystery. Of the fact of "prosperity" there has long been no reason for question. Everyone has felt its presence. But there are few who have been conscious of sharing in it. This anomaly has constituted the mystery. Especially among the working classes, as hired men are called for purposes of distinction, has the sense of mystery been acute. Although their wages have risen, their condition has not improved and discontent has spread and deepened among them. Moody's makes the reason plain. Notwithstanding that wages have risen since 1896, prices have risen so much more that the working classes are \$3,000,000,000 worse off

now than they were then, in a comparison of wages and prices. As somebody is getting this difference, it is in order to ask, "Who is the somebody?" Moody's confesses to having "some suspicions." We should be glad to know what its suspicions are.

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### **The Chicago Traction Settlement.**

When Mayor Dunne wrote the Werno letter, and the Chicago traction companies accepted it in principle (p. 703), the Chicago traction controversy came to a virtual end, with victory for Mayor Dunne and his supporters. Nothing but palpable bad faith on the part of the companies could, after that, have defeated a settlement on the basis which will culminate, in a little time, in complete municipal ownership and operation. Apparently the companies are disposed to make good their pledged faith. To the large essentials they profess to agree (p. 874). It may be, of course, that they have inserted "weasel words" in the proposed ordinance, which Mayor Dunne and his advisers have not detected. Against this possibility it is incumbent upon Mayor Dunne to take the utmost precaution, for upon him at the end the responsibility will rest. But if no such trickery be discovered, the ordinance, as now virtually agreed upon, ought to be, and probably will be, acceptable to the people of Chicago. At any rate, it appears to be in shape to justify the Mayor in advising the City Council to submit it to referendum and to advise the people to vote for it. Such a referendum is indispensable, and the sooner the petition for it is put forth the better. The referendum vote ought to take place at the April election.

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If there were any doubt about the indispensability of a referendum, that doubt would be resolved in its favor by the opposition of the newspapers which have always been friendly to the stock-jobbing traction interests. The very fact that these newspapers urge adoption of the ordinance without a referendum is a suspicious circumstance. If the ordinance is really a good one, as we incline to believe it to be, it can stand public scrutiny and discussion. To refuse a referendum on it, is to stamp it as probably fraudulent.

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### **Let Us Watch the New Governor of New York.**

The Governor-elect of New York, Mr. Charles E. Hughes, made a speech last week at Rochester which is well calculated to inspire confidence in

the democracy of his Republicanism. If he could carve out a practical policy with reference to public service corporations in harmony with the principle he seems to have grasped, he would command the confidence that his speech has a tendency to inspire.

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In that speech Mr. Hughes draws very clearly the line between public privilege conferred and private property earned. He points directly at the issue that is dividing political interests and classes, and shows as plainly as could be desired that what is demanded of public service corporations is not confiscation of private property but restoration of public rights. And he seems to place himself squarely on the side of those of the people who are making these demands.

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Of the public service corporations he says: "In public privilege they live, move and have their being." Of public duty regarding them he declares: "What we have to deal with is not interference with private property, but abuse of public rights." Of the attitude of the people towards these corporations he explains that the people are justly indignant at the efforts "to secure a monopolistic grip upon a community, and then capitalize the value of the control as a basis for unreasonable exactions." These are not platitudes. They are obviously carefully framed expressions of intelligent conviction.

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But confidence in the democratic purposes of the man who utters and evidently feels these sentiments is a very different thing from confidence in his ability, with his political and business entanglements, to give them practical application. That he cannot succeed by the means he proposes is demonstrable. No extension of "governmental regulation," no possible "supervision" of public service in private hands, can prevent the capitalization and exploitation of the money-making power which that privilege confers. So long as great aggregations of private capital are arrayed in interest against public rights, just so long will the channels of governmental "regulation" and "supervision" be corrupted. The public service never has been and never can be faithfully managed as a business speculation. The only remedy for the evils to which Mr. Hughes alludes, the only method of regulation of the politico-economic principle to which he so distinctly points, is not public regulation and supervision of private management of public services. It is public owner-

ship and management of all public functions. Public duties must be separated from private speculation. The public service must be divorced from private business.

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But this is a remedy and method to which Mr. Hughes cannot resort. It would end his political career, for it would involve disruption with his party. It would ruin him professionally, for he would be rated as a public ownership "crank," and the great business interests want nothing to do with lawyers who are rated as cranks in public affairs. It would make him a traitor to the "business" class, and treason to that class is the deadliest sin that any man can commit who has ever stood in the ranks of the rich. It is a crime which is now and then though all too seldom committed; but when it is committed, the penalty falls so swiftly, so viciously, so unerringly, so remorselessly, that few who witness its infliction upon others care to challenge it for themselves. Strange enough would it be were Mr. Hughes to commit this treason and defy these penalties.

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## MR. ROOT'S SPEECH ON IMPERIAL POWER.

The speech of Secretary Root last week at the banquet of the Pennsylvania Society of New York, impresses us as one of the most important public utterances of a generation. Whether Mr. Root appreciated its importance at the time may indeed be questioned. Possibly he was actuated by no other motive than the desire to make a statesmanlike speech on an occasion when such speeches are expected of men in his official station. More probably, however, he had in mind a definite purpose with reference to American politics—either the broad politics of far-seeing statesmanship, or the partisan politics of the moment. It was possibly to both. For Mr. Root is a man of great political astuteness, of transcendent ability in statesmanship, and of a cold and calculating indifference to anything but the accomplishment of his purposes.

In political principle a Hamiltonian, honest and honorable in personal motive but aristocratically incredulous and intolerant of Jeffersonian ideals, he may reasonably be supposed to have conceived a definite plan for still further realizing Hamilton's dream of a powerful American empire, and taken advantage of this occasion to put his plan in action.

Or, confronted on the one hand by a clamorous