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Before the lapse of another week three important municipal elections will have been held. They are important, not locally alone but generally, because they turn upon civic issues of universal concern. One is to come off in Toledo, one in Chicago, and the third in Cleveland.

In the Toledo election no problem in particular is at stake. It involves rather the endorsement of a local administration which for more than five years has identified itself effectively with the policy of honest and truly democratic municipal government. The defeat of Mayor Jones would be a public calamity. It would mean that the high ideals for which he stands are repudiated by his fellow citizens, and that political "bosses" and party spoilsmen are really preferred to a non-partisan administration.

Mayor Jones is a candidate upon petition. Either political party would have been glad to nominate him had he consented to join the party organization. His prestige is not to be despised even by party "bosses." They know that with him as its candidate the lucky party would sail into power with colors flying. But since his first election Mayor Jones has steadfastly refused to be a party candidate. He describes himself as "a man without a party," and simply offers his name to voters who want a non-partisan city government.

Here is an opportunity for those citizens of Toledo, and doubtless there are many, who profess to object

to partisanship in local elections. Not only does Mayor Jones meet the very extreme of their requirements in this particular, but he is also a candidate whose ability and fidelity have been proved by three successive terms at the head of the Toledo government. The people of Toledo are in the balances at this municipal election of theirs, and it remains to be seen whether or not they will be found wanting.

The Cleveland election is doubly important. Not alone does it involve local issues of general concern, but the leaders in the contest are political antagonists of national prominence—Marcus A. Hanna and Tom L. Johnson. To Mr. Hanna the struggle is of supreme importance. His political prestige is at stake, and with it his large investments in the watered stock of Cleveland street car corporations, his "savings bank," as he calls it.

The franchises of Mr. Hanna's corporations are about to expire. Unless renewed the water in their stock, amounting to millions of dollars, will soon be valueless. Mr. Hanna is urgent, therefore, to secure renewals of franchises at the old five cent rate of fare; though Johnson has pressed him so hard that he is now reluctantly willing to concede seven tickets for a quarter, provided cash fares are fixed at five cents. But Mayor Johnson has always been opposed to the ticket subterfuge; and, knowing from experience that 3-cent cash fares would be profitable, he insists upon establishing 3-cent fares throughout the city. Moreover, he demands that reservations be made in favor of municipal ownership, so that the city can adopt this traction policy as soon as the Ohio legislature grants it the power.

In furtherance of these views Mayor Johnson has for two years tried to introduce the 3-cent fare system. He secured the necessary ordinance, and found the capitalists, who actually began constructing a new road under a franchise pledging municipal ownership ultimately and 3-cent fares meanwhile. But Mr. Hanna was able to bring corporation judges and "boss"-ridden legislators to his aid, and with their assistance he has thus far balked Mayor Johnson's efforts, though to do so his judges were driven to the length of "ripping" every city in Ohio, and his legislators to making a new municipal charter system under which established street car corporations are given peculiar protection.

This "ripping" was sought partly to save Mr. Hanna's watered stock from the depressing effects of a competing 3-cent fare street car system, and partly to save it from taxation. For Mayor Johnson had undertaken to tax the local monopolies on the same basis that homes and general business are taxed. The ordinary rate of valuation in Cleveland is 60 per cent of true value, but the public monopolies were taxed at valuations varying from only 15 per cent down. Mayor Johnson caused the latter valuations to be raised, with the effect of vastly reducing the general tax rate. But judges and courts and legislature, bossed by Mr. Hanna, were brought to the rescue, and nearly all the increased taxes upon local monopolies which Mayor Johnson had secured, were remitted.

Mr. Hanna is now at the end of his tether. Unless he can defeat Johnson at the coming municipal election, he will have to submit to three cent fares, he will have to face the probability of early municipal ownership of street car lines, his monopoly in-