

Chicago Charter Convention.

For the second time the charter convention of Chicago (vol. xi, p. 895) has formulated legislation for the city.

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This convention is an outcome of the constitutional amendment of 1904 (vol. vii, pp. 450, 521) empowering the legislature to legislate specially for Chicago, subject to mandatory, as opposed to optional, local referendum. An effort was made (vol. viii, pp. 89, 90) soon after the adoption of that amendment to authorize an elective convention in Chicago for the purpose of formulating a complete charter, and the McGoorty bill for that purpose was passed in the lower House. But it was pigeon-holed in the Senate. The Foreman resolution in the City Council came next. This provided for the appointment of an extra-legal convention, by the Governor (15 appointments), the Legislature (15 appointments), the Mayor (15 appointments), the City Council (15 appointments), and all the city and county Boards (2 appointments each). When those appointments had been made the convention assembled with an overwhelming Republican majority. A large proportion of the Democratic membership were of Republican affiliations in many respects (vol. viii, p. 596).

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After months of work and numerous compromises, a fairly good charter of the antiquated type was adopted by the convention and sent to the Legislature. The legislative representatives in the convention, although they had influenced the compromises as each was made, refused to vote on final adoption. In the Legislature afterwards they participated in so amending the charter as recommended, that it was unrecognizable. As it came out of the Legislature, it was as distinctly as possible a political "bosses'" charter. So evident was its bad character, that at the referendum in 1907 (vol. x, pp. 577, 585, 601) it was defeated by 121,523, to 59,555, in a total of over 50 per cent of the registered vote.

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Once more the charter convention was called together and the work of drafting a charter renewed. A motion to recommend to the legislature the calling of an elective convention in place of the appointive one was almost unanimously voted down, as was also a motion to dissolve and abandon charter making until a new Constitution of the State could be secured. After several weeks of work by a drafting committee, a complete charter was brought into the convention. It was briefly discussed in some respects, when a motion to abandon a complete charter and submit to the legislature separate bills was adopted. The matter was thereupon referred back to the drafting commit-

tee, which at the next meeting of the convention reported 11 separate bills for submission to the legislature in lieu of a new charter. These bills were adopted by the convention seriatim at its recent sessions, the last of which was held on the 15th.

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Following is a resumé of the important features of the bills as proposed by the convention:

1. Consolidation act, providing for consolidation of all local authorities into city departments, and for enlarging municipal powers. It withholds from the Mayor the right to remove members of the Board of Education, and authorizes an increase of the borrowing power of the city from 5 per cent to 20 per cent of tax valuations.

2. Organization act, providing for city council and regulating its powers. It increases the term of aldermen from two years to four years and establishes the "recall" for them and all other elective officers upon a 25 per cent petition.

3. Public utilities, inclusive of traction, lighting and electric service, docks and wharves, limiting franchises to twenty years, and authorizing referendum on all leases and franchises for more than five years upon a 10 per cent petition.

4. Municipal elections. Abolishes the party circle, and requires the voter to vote with reference to each individual candidate, whether by ballot or voting machine. It also requires that Municipal Court judges be nominated by petition and not by party action.

5. Regulating the submission of propositions to popular vote when required or permitted by any law.

6. Corrupt practices act, regulating campaign contributions and expenditures.

7. Civil service regulations, authorizing removals by heads of department, subject to a hearing by or through a civil service commission if the person removed demands it.

8. Department of Education, reducing the number of trustees from 21 to 15, but otherwise making no important change in the present law.

9. Entitling women to vote at all municipal elections in so far as permitted by the Constitution.

10. Municipal Court, requiring election of judges at judicial elections in June.

11. Sunday observance, authorizing the city council to regulate observance of Sunday, especially with regard to "places of business, accommodation or entertainment,"—meaning bar rooms and saloons.

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Single Tax Movement in British Columbia.

A recent number of the Vancouver (B. C.) Daily Province, indicates that single tax sentiment in Vancouver has not only grown to the point of making the subject a practical issue in municipal affairs, but that considerable progress has actually been made in the exemption of improvements. In the issue of that paper of February 26 it is stated in a report of city council proceedings that—

when Alderman Morton yesterday afternoon submitted his "hardy annual" resolution before the

Court of Revision on the assessment roll providing for the abolition of taxation on all improvements and placing the entire burden of the rates on land valuations, he met with a degree of support which astonished himself. Just whether his resolution would have carried had it been possible to arrange for the necessary revenue from land values in accordance with the charter limits regarding the rate is uncertain. But the sentiments expressed by a number of the aldermen showed that the single-tax idea has gained ground in the Council, and as the matter was finally left it was understood that the subject would be discussed later in the year with a view to making such arrangements next year as would permit of the idea being carried out if the authorities thought the course advisable.

Alderman Morton supported his single-tax resolution by the argument that it was the man who improved his property who built up the city, and it was unfair to tax him on the capital and industry which he put in a residence or business block, while this improvement benefited the entire neighborhood, though the parties in the vicinity holding their lots vacant paid only the same amount of taxes on their land as the man improving his property, and thus advancing the market values of the neighborhood.

Alderman Macmillan supported Alderman Morton, presenting ideas in a forcible manner. He claimed that the land would have no value whatever if it was not for the making of improvements. Yet the city's course in the past had been to tax the very item which was really making the city. As matters stood, men were far more apt to enter the field of speculation than of improvement, as the former line paid better.

Mayor Douglas said that the principle of Alderman Morton was undoubtedly correct in theory, but he feared it could not be carried out this year. Before such a change of policy was entered upon, the Assessment Commissioner should have full notice of the Council's intention, so that the assessment roll could be prepared in accordance with the new system of levying the rates. . . . Other aldermen expressed the view that Alderman Morton's plan was worthy of support, though coupling with the sentiment the opinion that it could not be worked out this year.

Comptroller Baldwin, however, shattered Alderman Morton's scheme in a word by stating that the charter limited the rate which the city might levy to a cent and a third for general purposes. This limit had been reached last year, and with the assessment on land values handed down by the Commissioner this year it would be impossible to raise the necessary amount of revenue from land values, and keep within the charter limit as to the rate.

Alderman McSpadden then moved that the exemptions on improvements this year be 75 per cent, the same rule as followed last year. His resolution was, however, worded so as to include all improvements, and he specifically stated that he intended it should cover church buildings as well as other structures. This brought up the fight on the total exemption of church buildings. . . . Alderman McBride moved for the exemption of church property, but the amendment was voted down, and the question of exemp-

tion on improvements settled by the passage of Alderman McSpadden's resolution.

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Economic Politics in France.

The beginning of a discriminating income tax regime in France was made on the 9th, when the Chamber of Deputies (p. 39) by a vote of 407 to 166 passed a general bill, with a provision postponing its operation until a supplementary bill for Departments and Communes shall have been enacted, which divides tax-payers into seven classes. Workmen and salaried employes would pay the lowest rates, and rich business men and landlords the highest. An additional graduated tax is levied on incomes in excess of \$1,200. In principle the bill aims to discriminate in favor of incomes from work and against incomes from investment. It has yet to be considered in the Senate.

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Cable dispatches describe the commercial, moneyed and property classes, whose interests are voiced by such journals as the Figaro, the Temps and the Journal des Debats in Paris, and defines the bill as a piece of criminal folly, voted by a "cowardly majority solicitous only of re-election next Spring." On the other hand, the socialists and other radicals joyfully hail its passage as the entering wedge for money to realize old-age pensions, and nationalization of railroads and other public utilities. The same dispatches explain that many persons are jumping to the conclusion that the bill is virtually dead because the chairman of the Senate committee to which it will go is irreconcilably opposed to it; but they add that "shrewd political observers understand that the ultimate fate of the bill rests not with the Senate now, but with the people at the elections in the Spring of 1910. If the socialists can then secure an increased majority no one who knows the logic of the French character doubts that the Senate will yield, and that an income tax, barring a revolution, is certain within three years."

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Proportional Voting in South Africa.

The South African constitution, now before the people there for adoption, subject to Imperial approval (p. 252), embodies the principle of proportional representation, with the single transferable vote for all elections, national and State.

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Under this system the voter places the figure 1 opposite the name of the candidate of his first choice on the ballot, the figure 2 opposite his second choice, and so on. In the canvass, the ballots are counted and the "quota" necessary for election ascertained by dividing the total of bal-