

NEWS NARRATIVE

Week ending Thursday, Sept. 14.

Bryan and the Presidential nomination.

On the eve of his departure for a year's journey with his family around the world, William J. Bryan was given a complimentary dinner by the Jefferson Club (p. 359) at Chicago on the 12th. About 400 guests were in attendance. William Prentiss presided as toastmaster, and the speakers, besides Mr. Bryan, were Congressman Henry T. Rainey of Illinois, Mayor Dunne of Chicago, Congressman Ollie M. James of Kentucky, Alexander Troup of Connecticut and ex-Judge James R. Tarvin of Kentucky. Letters were read from Gov. Folk of Missouri, Gov. Johnson of Minnesota, ex-Gov. Garvin of Rhode Island, and Norman Mack and Bird S. Coler, of New York.

Mr. Bryan's toast was "Democracy versus Centralization," and his response was an eloquent analysis and application to present conditions of the only two principles of government—that in which power resides in and is readily executed by the people governed, which is democracy, and that in which the exercise of power is removed as far as possible from the people governed, which is centralization. Mr. Bryan explained that no existing government is either wholly democratic or wholly centralized, and that the practical question with reference to every political movement in any country is whether it is in the direction of less democracy and more centralization, or of less centralization and more democracy. As the dinner in question was widely reported to be intended to launch a Presidential boom for Bryan, and as some of the speakers named him as the Democratic candidate for 1908, his exact words on that matter are of general political interest and importance. He said:

All references to the possibility of my ever being a candidate again are premature, and the kindly expressions of my friends as to such possibility do not make the impression on me that they might a few years ago. I have heard so many prophets declare that some day I should be President of the

United States that I was led to look up the facts concerning the prophets of old, and I found that unless they had been anointed they had not the power to foretell the future. I am going to look up the modern prophets and see if they are anointed. I said just after the election in 1900 that I would not be a candidate in 1904, and to the best of my recollection I kept my word. I told a newspaper man that while I said I would not be a candidate in 1904, I would not give bonds that I never would be a candidate again. A few days later I read a squib in a newspaper stating that if I changed my mind and wanted to give a bond I should find plenty of persons willing to go my security. That struck me as one of the wittiest paragraphs I ever came across. I say now that I do not know that I ever shall be a candidate for any office again, and my happiness does not depend on holding any office within the gift of the people. My place in history, I have made up my mind will depend not on what the people may be able to do for me, but upon what I may be able to do for the people. I believe none of us is wise enough to look ahead and say who should be the candidate of the Democratic party three years from now. I should not deserve your good will if I said I was a candidate unless at the time I could best represent the principles to which my life has been consecrated. While I appreciate your kind words and your good will, I shall insist that the Democratic party shall choose its candidate for 1908 when the circumstances of the party at that time have thrown their light on its pathway. You should put above everything the triumph of your principles. I want to be fully understood. I am not only not announcing my candidacy, but I am not permitting it to be announced. I insist that the Democratic party reserve that right for the proper time, and I pray that God will raise up some man who will do the Democratic party more good than I can possibly do.

The Chicago traction question.

In responding to his toast at the Jefferson Club dinner to Bryan on the 12th, Mayor Dunne concisely described the progress since his election, and the present condition, of the traction question (p. 359) in Chicago. After explaining that he had been hampered by a long and vexatious labor strike, which had just begun as he came into office, and telling of the discovery by his legal representatives of the fact that 270 miles of traction rights, serving a population of 1,100,000, would be at an end in two years and at the disposal of the city, whereas at the time

of his election only 30 or 40 miles were supposed to be available, and after reporting that he had submitted to the City Council his plan for immediately utilizing these rights by and for the city, and the action of the Council thereon, Mayor Dunne said:

They ask why, during the months my administration has been in office, more has not been accomplished. I will tell you. The Executive of the city of Chicago is only one arm of the municipal government. The other arm is the City Council. When one arm is reaching out for municipal ownership little can be accomplished if the other arm is lying paralyzed at the body's side, or a traction company has got hold of the other arm and is pulling it back. There will be municipal ownership quick enough when the Mayor and Council together work in harmony with the expressed sentiment of the people. The committee on local transportation has put aside for the present the contract plan suggested as a practical means of arriving at municipal ownership in the shortest order, and asks the traction companies again to come and negotiate with the city. I do not wish to criticize the committee. It is a very important transaction and the very importance of the matter may have occasioned deliberation or caution in their minds. But if it comes to a question of granting any further franchises or giving attention to the so-called tentative ordinance, the people, who already have spoken on the little ballot, may send representatives to the Council who will carry out their will. Let the City Council pass the contract system which the city Administration has offered, and in 30 days there will be no traction problem.

The action of the local transportation committee referred to in Mayor Dunne's speech, had occurred on the 11th. After several meetings in secret session (p. 359) without considering the Mayor's contract except in a loose and general way, the committee, according to the Tribune of the 12th, "shelved" it, and made overtures to the traction companies whose best franchises have expired and are expiring, to renew them. Aldermen Bennett and Foreman were the leaders in this policy. Alderman Bennett took the first step by offering the following resolution:

Resolved. That the further consideration of this ordinance [the one for the Mayor's contract plan] be deferred until after the existing companies shall be heard and until such proposals as they submit shall be considered fully,

and that this committee adjourn to Friday at two p. m.

Before this question was put Alderman Dever proposed the following amendment:

It is hereby intended that such companies shall make no propositions other than those looking to an immediate sale of their rights and properties to the city.

The amendment was lost, by the following vote:

Nays—Aldermen Carey and Maypole, [Harrison Democrats] and Bennett, Raymer, McCormick, Hunter and Young [all Republicans].

Ayes—Aldermen Dever, Zimmer, Finn, Bradley [Democrats]. The chairman, Alderman Werno, who did not vote, stands with the minority.

The Bennett resolution was then carried by the same vote:

Ayes—Carey, Maypole, Bennett, Foreman, Raymer, McConnell, Hunter and Young.

Nays—Dever, Zimmer, Finn and Bradley (with Chairman Werno, whose vote, as before, was not recorded).

Another incident of the Chicago municipal ownership movement took place on the 8th, at a meeting of the executive committee of the Municipal Ownership League. To settle a dispute in the committee as to Mayor Dunne's "contract plan," Mr. John A. Watson, of the committee, offered the following resolution:

Whereas, We believe that Mayor Dunne is earnestly striving to secure for the people of Chicago a complete system of municipally owned and operated street railways; and

Whereas, The traction interests are using every influence at their command, whether it be in the City Council or through the columns of a venal press or the law's delay in our courts, to postpone, hinder and defeat every effort taken by Mayor Dunne to give the people that which they directed him to do by his election; and

Whereas, The Mayor in his contract plan has devised a project which clearly thwarts the plots and plans of the traction schemers, while at the same time providing a street railway system manifestly in the interest of the people only; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the executive committee of the Municipal Ownership League deems it a duty to assist the Mayor in every way in its power to carry forward to a successful conclusion his contract plan, and that the League stands ready to aid him in every step he may take to test the provisions and validity of the Mueller law in his efforts to establish immediate municipal ownership.

On this resolution the commit-

tee members in attendance voted as follows, as reported by the local press:

Ayes—Abram E. Adelman, W. H. Gantz, H. H. Hardinge, Thomas Rhodus, William Rossell, John Suess, W. H. Walker, John A. Watson and C. A. Windle.

Nays—Daniel L. Cruice, William Gleeson, Frank Heppelman, Jacob C. LeBosky, T. P. Quinn and Addison Blakely. Mr. Blakely explained that he voted with the opposition, not because he is opposed to the Mayor's policy, but because he thought action should be delayed until the Councilmanic committee on transportation acts.

The Watson resolution having been adopted, it was thereupon voted, on motion of Mr. T. P. Quinn, who had opposed the Watson resolution and who gave notice of reservation of the right to oppose it when reported to the general body, that—

this executive committee' recommend approval of the Mayor's policy by the Municipal Ownership League, and that the officers of this body be instructed to call a meeting of the League as promptly as possible for a referendum vote upon the question.

The traction question in Toledo.

A traction complication is reported from Toledo (vol. vii, p. 490) in which just half the City Council and its president, Clarence H. Willard, appear to be related to the Toledo traction question in a manner somewhat similar to the manner in which the majority of the local transportation committee of Chicago seem to be related to the Chicago traction question. The Toledo Railway and Light Company, whose main traction lines do not expire until 1910, own a short line to Ottawa Park, on which the franchise has expired. The people have indicated their willingness that this franchise should be renewed for five years,—that is, until 1910— their evident purpose being to have all the traction franchises expire at the same time. But the company has insisted upon a franchise for 10 years, its evident purpose being to own the unexpired short line franchise when the main system franchises expire, in order that it may claim an extension by implication of all its lines, as a leverage for negotiation for further extensions in 1910. When the proposed 5-year grant came up in the City Council on the 11th, Councilman Cooper moved to

amend by making the term ten years as the company demanded, instead of five. This amendment was adopted, but on the ordinance as so amended the Council were tied, 8 to 8, and the president, Willard, voted for the 10-year ordinance, thereby securing its adoption by 9 to 8. Mayor Finch intimated that he would interpose a veto.

Investigating insurance companies.

An investigation of the New York insurance companies (p. 280) by a committee of the legislature began at New York city on the 6th. The chairman of the committee is Senator Armstrong, who, in stating the purposes of the investigation, said:

Our object will not be to punish anybody for wrongdoing in the past, but to get all of the salient features of the modern insurance business, so as to suggest to the next legislature an adequate law that will not only protect the policy-holders in all life insurance companies, but likewise will protect the managements of insurance companies from abuse at the hands of designing persons. As most insurance companies are mutual in theory, we shall endeavor to pass a law that will compel them to be mutual in fact. Then the officers of the company will always be working for the interest of the policy-holders, instead of working for themselves by the formation of subsidiary companies to divide the profits of the main company. A large number of the present insurance laws are good. It will be our aim to make them better.

Charles E. Hughes conducted the examination as chief counsel for the committee. He was assisted by James McKeen, who opened the proceedings by reading a statement of previous legislative examinations of insurance companies—1877, 1882 and 1885. In the course of this statement Mr. McKeen explained with reference to the Equitable, whose former president, the late Henry B. Hyde, had testified in 1877, that it was the purpose of the committee to inquire further into the subject then discussed. Mr. Hyde, he said, had testified positively in 1877 that the great surplus of the Equitable Society was not being accumulated for the benefit of the stockholders, but was for the policy-holders, and that the stock was worth only what was represented by the payment of semi-annual dividends at