The Public

A National Journal of Fundamental Democracy & A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making

LOUIS F. POST, EDITOR
ALICE THACHER POST, MANAGING EDITOR

Vol. XII. CHICAGO, FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 1909. No. 585

Published by Louis F. Post
Ellsworth Building, 357 Dearborn Street, Chicago

Single Copy, Five Cents Yearly Subscription, One Dollar
Entered as Second-Class Matter April 16, 1898 at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879

CONTENTS.

EDITORIAL

The Cleveland Traction Fight.

Mayor Johnson's opening speech in the referendum on the new 3-cent franchise had the right ring, and the best note in it was his declaration that he is through with liberal treatment for defeated foes.

✣

Mayor Johnson has not made many mistakes in his long traction fight, but the worst of those he has made has been his magnanimity toward the predatory interests in their extremity. They were "frozen stiff" and helpless when he defeated their star candidate at the mayoralty election two years ago; but under cover of "good citizenship," and at the cosy hearthstone of the Chamber of Commerce, they were warmed into life again, and Mayor Johnson permitted it. He is not to be blamed for this, for not only was he in position to be magnanimous, but his magnanimity would have been for the common good if the conquered enemies he dealt with had been men of honor. In fact, however, they had not even the gamblers' honor, which Big Business has adopted into its code of ethics.

✣

They set about baffling the execution of the contract they had made, as soon as they had made it; and when by the barest "squeak"—600 majority in a total vote of 80,000—they succeeded in nullifying it at a referendum and throwing the whole situation into chaos, they repudiated their

"gentlemen's agreement" for the restoration of property interests which had come to them upon the faith of it. The whole story of that dishonored settlement—the plundering of street car receipts, the conspiracies with labor men of the "Skinny" Madden type, the resulting "faked up" strike, the blowing up of street cars with dynamite, the financing of the campaign against the ordinance, the deception of voters by false publications representing that "no" votes were necessary to accomplish what in law required "yes" votes, the throwing of the traction system into a receivership with prospects of restoring it for twenty-five years to the old gang—this whole story is one of Wall street strategy and Union Club perfidy. And now that Mayor Johnson has brought about a situation in which the Big Business conspirators of Cleveland are once more at the mercy of the people of Cleveland, it is in the highest degree encouraging to have him declare that the magnanimity which has been so grossly abused in the past shall not be abused again, because there will be none to abuse.

♣

We say that the people of Cleveland have the traction ring again at their mercy, and this is true. Next January nearly all the franchises of the old ring will have expired, and three years later none will be left alive. This is absolute, for the Supreme Court of the United States has so decided. As for the low fare franchises, which the old traction ring now controls subject to the receivership, they are terminable at will. Realizing, consequently, the financial danger before them, for bonds as well as stock, the traction ring, with all its Big Business backers, came to the front at first with demands, and then with whining pleas for another settlement. Mayor Johnson and the Council were willing to settle on fair terms to the city and the street car riders, so fixed that there would be no necessity for any new "gentlemen's agreements;" but this didn't suit the ring and its satellites. With the aid of the Chamber of Commerce, they hoodwinked Judge Tayler into lending his influence to an ordinance that would have farmed out the street car riders for twenty-five years to come to the old traction ring. But Mayor Johnson and the Council were not to be bamboozled again. After allowing the dilly dally to go on for two months or more in the hope of a fair deal for the city, they held up the Tayler ordinance for detailed consideration in committee, and adopted the long pending Schmidt ordinance, a grant to the highest bidder, for submission to referendum.

The objections to the Tayler ordinance are in general, three. For one thing, Judge Tayler had been led into recommending a higher maximum fare than the traction ring itself had offered to take. Of course the ring was agreeable, but Mayor Johnson and the Council were not. In the second place, Judge Tayler had provided for arbitration on revaluation of the traction system, the franchise to go to referendum without waiting for the arbitration award and Judge Tayler to appoint the controlling arbitrator. Mayor Johnson and the Council, though willing to have Judge Tayler for arbitrator, were not willing to leave the selection, "sight-unseen" to anybody; nor were they willing to have the people adopt a franchise to the traction ring with blanks in it for subsequently inserting values of the existing property as part of the basis for dividends. For the third thing, Mayor Johnson and the Council insisted that the franchise should provide that if the courts nullified its essential provisions for the protection of the city and the street car riders, the whole franchise should fall; but the Tayler ordinance made no such provision, and the traction ring would not assent to one. Consequently, under this ordinance, were the courts to nullify the protective provisions, the traction ring would get the best of the situation again, and very much the best of it—another one-sided franchise. These are evidently among the reasons why Mayor Johnson characterizes the Tayler franchise as one of the worst, from the standpoint of the car riders, that has been presented to the City Council of Cleveland during the entire railway controversy.

♣

Of the Schmidt franchise, now involved in the referendum campaign, it is enough at present to say, what anyone may learn who wishes to, that it is a franchise, on a flat 3-cent fare, for the taking over of all the existing lines as fast as their dying franchises expire. Under it, these lines will be transferred to the city, as soon as it demands it and has legislative authority, for $1.10 on the dollar of actual cost, the maximum dividends meanwhile to be not more than 6 per cent. Since the investors in the old low fare companies, who now hold stock in the company controlled by the old traction ring, might, in the event of the adopting of this franchise, be left with greatly depreciated stock, they would doubtless be protected by the new company in connection with the acquisition of the present 3-cent lines; for Mayor Johnson has frequently announced during the past two or three months, that under no circumstances will he consent to any settlement or other arrange-

ment which does not secure to all the low fare investors their full capital and its guaranteed dividends.

♣

A vital question is now before the people of Cleveland. The issue is clearly drawn. It is between the traction ring on one side, and on the other the public interests for which Mayor Johnson has fought steadily for nine years. It is a vital question, and it involves a fight to the finish. As in the past, so now, Mayor Johnson has all the odds massed against him that Big Business in partnership with corrupt politics and befooled respectability can command. But the City Council has proved its fidelity, and the people of the city are responding with the old enthusiasm. There is no reason to doubt that they will stand behind these men who are standing for them.

♣ ♣

The Chicago School Lands Bill.

The true character of the Commercial Club's bill for reorganizing the public schools of Chicago (p. 555) was crisply exposed by Senator Cruikshank when this bill came before the Senate with a recommendation from the committee on education that it do not pass. We quote from the stenographic report of what occurred in the Illinois Senate on the 28th of May:

Senator Landee—Mr. President, the Committee on Education reports back a bill.

Secretary Paddock.—The Committee on Education reports back House bill No. 588 with a recommendation that it do not pass, but lie on the table.

Senator Jones—Mr. President, I move that the Senate do not concur in the report of the committee.

Senator Cruikshank—Mr. President, I move to lay that motion on the table. Now, Mr. President, if I may be permitted, I ask leave to state what this bill is, that the gentlemen may know what it is about. [Cries of "Leave," "Leave."] I will make the explanation very brief. This is a bill which gives to the School Board of the city of Chicago the right to lease their properties there for ninety-nine years without re-valuation. If that is a fair proposition, if you gentlemen think that that is a fair proposition, if you would do that with your own property, then I will be satisfied to have you vote this bill in.

Senator Dunlap—Was the Senator a member of the committee that reported the bill out?

Senator Cruikshank—I was, and I was opposed to the passage of the bill—I proposed to the lobby that they put an amendment in there, making it twenty-five years, but they declined to do it. They wanted the ninety-nine years, or none,——

Senator Dunlap—If this goes on second reading, will you not have an opportunity to offer such an amendment?

Senator Cruikshank—And furthermore, I do not believe that the position of the committee ought to be questioned. If these were unimproved lands, there might be some justice in it, but the land is all improved with permanent structures, and I say that to tie this property up, which is for the benefit of the children of the city of Chicago, and for the benefit of your children, because your boys are coming to the city of Chicago every day and every hour—I say to tie it up for three generations, because the average life of man is thirty-five years—to tie this property up for three generations in the interest of the rich men is an outrage, and I hope the motion will be laid on the table.

Senator Hamilton—If this bill doesn't become a law, is there any law now that provides that a school board may lease property for so long a time?

Senator Cruikshank—That question is now in the courts, and for that reason this bill is here. It is pending in the courts, and is now being litigated, and the fellows who have these leases are afraid of what the court may decide and so they come down here and try to fix it up with a bill.

The lobby referred to by Senator Cruikshank was composed of Theodore W. Robinson, of the steel trust and a Busse appointee of the Chicago school board; of Otto C. Schneider, of the tobacco trust and a Busse appointee of the Chicago school board of which he is president; of a large number of other Big Business representatives; and of the secretary, the attorney, and the assistant attorney of the Board of Education, who were in the lobby under orders from the inner ring of the school board and at school board expense without school board sanction. The "fellows who have these leases" and of whom Senator Cruikshank said that they were "afraid of what the court may decide and so come down here and try to fix it up with a bill," are the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Evening News, and various other business interests which are preying upon the school fund. The Senator Jones who made the lost motion that "the Senate do not concur" in the report of the committee adversely to the bill, a man of abilities and character, is a Senatorial representative of Governor Deneen, who sometimes allows factional obligations to transcend those that are essentially more important.

♣ ♣

The Core of the Social Question.

As defined by Philip Snowden, one of the Labor members of the British House of Commons and a pronounced socialist, socialism may be much more widely accepted than is commonly believed to be possible. In an article on the British budget, which appears in the London Socialist Review for June, Mr. Snowden says: "The main object of socialism is to obtain social wealth for social use; nationalization of the means of production and distribution is not socialism, but the condition of socialism." It will be observed that in this defini-