
EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

**MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP CARRIES
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.**

Springfield, Ill., January 28.

The voters of Springfield* endorsed by 735 majority at yesterday's initiative election the proposition of Commissioner Willis J. Spaulding to consolidate the local municipally owned electric light and water plants. The proposition was fought by the local private electric corporation. The total vote was about 11,000, of which 3,000 were cast by women. The majority independent of the women's vote was 48. Mr. Spaulding issued the following public statement in comment:

This was peculiarly a people's victory. The large vote polled for the consolidation is an expression of the determination of the individual voter to analyze for himself local municipal questions and to cast his ballot in accordance with his own judgment regardless of the amount of pressure that may be brought to cloud the issue or corrupt civic morals. When people do their own thinking all danger to popular self-government is swept aside and this election has clearly demonstrated that the citizens of Springfield are capable of forming and expressing their own opinions. The result in this instance is particularly gratifying because we have the promise of both Commissioners Hamilton and Davidson to abide by the decision at the polls and not to hamper the program by any obstacles whatsoever.

The supporters of the consolidation were without any organization whatever and did not have a single paid worker nor a hired vehicle for hauling voters to the polls. At many polling places we had no workers at all and frequently our friends who wished to vote by affidavit could find no one convenient to swear in their votes and did not vote at all. We placed complete reliance in the merits of our proposition, and to get our facts before the voters we depended almost entirely upon the Illinois State Register, which, with splendid courage and untiring vigor, did not hesitate to take a stand on the side of the city against Special Privilege. Not many citizens realize what this means. As a penalty for such a stand newspapers have been crushed financially by the power of corporations and their allied interests. It is much easier for a newspaper to be on the side of monopoly than against it.

Opposing us was a private corporation which availed itself of all the advantages that money could buy. Their first move to fool the people in a brazen campaign of signed newspaper advertisements, not only miscarried to such an extent that they soon abandoned them; but they also disproved their later equally brazen assertions of indifference to the outcome. The fact is they left no stone unturned—their influence was seen on every hand. Their Mr. Mackie was expected to defeat this measure at any cost, for they recognized that this plan of developing our municipal plant means REAL competition of a nature that will compel fair rates not only for Springfield but for other cities as well. While it was inclined to

treat the movement lightly at the start, for the past ten days it has realized it was really in a fight for its life.

It attempted to befog the voters with all kinds of misinformation. They were made to believe that a large bond issue was about to be made and that taxes would be higher, while as a matter of fact the city is bonded to the limit already and the city tax rate has been \$1.20 for the past twenty years or more, and we could not increase it because that is the legal limit, except to the extent of the street and bridge tax which was levied last year and which had nothing whatever to do with the generator proposition. Nevertheless, many honest people were deliberately made to believe that there was to be a great increase in taxes. Anonymous circulars were sent to the saloon keepers advising them that a vote "Yes" was a vote for local option, and at several polling places workers were appealing to prejudice with that argument. Attempts were made to destroy the votes of women who favored the combination by advising them to write their names upon the ballots. Anonymous circulars signed "A School Teacher" were sent to the teachers of the city suggesting that if our proposition carried money for improving the schools would not be available and that teachers' salaries might be cut. The Corporations had paid workers at every polling place, and frequently one or more of their employes. They had plenty of conveyances and diligently rounded up the voters and swore them in. Money not only seemed to be plentiful, but seemed to be freely used. The Evening News of course carried on a campaign of slander, but it has become so thoroughly known as a corporation mouthpiece that I do not think its influence counted for much. Dick Sullivan took a prominent part as an active worker at the polls, and the statement concerning taxes sent out by Edmands proved a powerful aid to the Utilities Company.

When the overwhelming odds against the proposition are considered, it can fairly be claimed to be a splendid victory. The sentiment which is strongly in evidence in favor of the general principle of municipal ownership has been growing for years, not only here but everywhere. The corporation and their supporters may delay the movement temporarily, but they can no more prevent it than they can prevent the tides of the ocean. A good many have complained that our project is too small, but anyhow, we are making a very substantial beginning along the right lines, and when we get started we can grow as rapidly as the people are willing.



The fact that the proposition had a majority independent of women's vote shuts off any danger of interference by the Supreme Court. FRANK H. BODE.



EDWIN GINN.

Boston, January 30.

At a stated meeting of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Imperialist League held this day it was voted:

That the Executive Committee of the Anti-Imperialist League loses Edwin Ginn* from a long mem-

*See Public of January 16 at page 62.

*See this Public, page 134.