

ting an end to franchise monopoly. They thought that, once improved sufficiently to make carrying of many passengers in one vehicle possible, automobiles having free use of the streets, would enter into competition with street railways and render worthless the exclusive franchises which should never have been granted. But it seems that these enthusiasts reckoned without their host. They seem to have underestimated the effrontery of franchise monopolists, and imperviousness to new ideas of many public officials. This probably explains why in Chicago a business concern actually had to apply for permission to the State Public Utilities Commission for a franchise to operate an auto-bus line, when, according to all considerations of equity and common sense, no such special permission should have been required. It probably explains also why in Los Angeles, where the competition of auto-buses is being severely felt by the local street railway corporation, an ordinance has actually been introduced into the city council to put these auto-buses under the same regulations as apply to street railways and to make them pay the same special taxes. Presumably they are already subject to the same regulations as other unmonopolized vehicles. That is as far as regulation can properly go.



There is a fundamental difference between street railways and auto-buses. The street railway operates on a franchise which gives its holders a privilege denied to all others to operate cars along certain highways. Such franchises are given because the prevailing idea has been that no other method is practicable for securing public transportation facilities. Having secured such special permission the street railway corporation is properly subject to special regulation and special taxation. But the auto-bus owner enjoys no privilege. The route on which he operates is open to all others who may see fit to enter into competition with him. There is not the same excuse, as in the case of the street railway, for special licenses and special taxes. The fact that the auto-bus can, if left alone, compete successfully with the street railway, shows that any need of a monopoly in transportation, if it ever existed, has ceased to exist. The street railway company should be told in answer to its complaints concerning competition, that it must either accommodate itself to changed conditions or surrender its franchise.

S. D.



Edmonton's Delinquent Taxes.

The fact that in Edmonton, Alberta, \$1,000,000 of local taxes is delinquent, is reported by United

States Consul Reat at Calgary, who considers that this puts to a crucial test the system of local Singletax prevailing there. In this Consul Reat is mistaken. It may put to a test the competency of the city officials, but not the system of taxation. The trouble may be due to a faulty assessment, in which case the remedy is to make a proper one and collect taxes on that basis. But the assessment has presumably been properly made, for Consul Reat says nothing to the contrary. That being the case, the land against which these delinquent taxes are assessed, can be made to produce the amount, and much more if put to its best use. By properly proceeding against these delinquent tax payers, Edmonton officials can either force them to put this land to use or to dispose of it to others who will. In either case the city will not only get its delinquent taxes, but will cause an increased demand for labor, which will tend to some extent to relieve the industrial depression. All that is necessary is that the public officials do their work properly.

S. D.



An Unenforcible Law.

State's Attorney Hoyne of Chicago is threatening to bring all personal property tax dodgers in the city into the Criminal Court. There are no less than 16,000 of them, he says. It is safe to say that after Mr. Hoyne's crusade shall have been completed—if he ever begins it—the personal property tax law will be as far from enforcement as ever. Mr. Hoyne could not enforce it, if he had at his command all the power of the Czar of Russia, and was prepared to use against suspected tax dodgers all the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition. It is furthermore a good thing that the law can not be enforced. The comparatively slight extent to which it is now enforced is a heavy enough load on industry and enterprise. To strictly enforce it would paralyze business. This is one case, where the saying is untrue, that the way to secure repeal of a bad law is to strictly enforce it. In spite of all the evil results that would follow strict enforcement of the personal property tax law in Chicago, its repeal would not be materially hastened thereby, for the legislature lacks constitutional power to exempt personal property. Under the most favorable circumstances amendment of the Illinois Constitution is a long and difficult process, and existing circumstances are certainly not favorable. Besides, to enforce the law in Chicago will have little effect on public sentiment down the State, where help must be secured to amend the Constitution. Pending a far-off con-