

The Public

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

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Vol. XI.

CHICAGO, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1908.

No. 555

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

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EDITORIAL

The Backward Majority.

Wasn't Ibsen nearly right when he maintained that "a fighter in the intellectual vanguard can never collect a majority around him"?

* * *

Traction Questions in Cleveland.

For the information of readers of The Public who for eight years have followed through its columns the efforts of Mayor Johnson of Cleveland to wrest the city highways from stock jobbing corporations and establish them on a basis of public ownership (p. 782), we publish in our News Narrative this week a full report of Judge Tayler's decision, rendered upon his appointing temporary receivers. Being a judicial statement of the situation at the present crisis, it may be turned to with a degree of confidence which the newspaper reports that have gone out from Cleveland do not inspire. It is besides somewhat in the nature of a land mark in the prolonged struggle between common interests and special interests for possession of the streets of Cleveland.

* * *

Judge Tayler's action seems to have been the best that could be taken, and his statement of the circumstances to have been fair upon the whole. It is to be regretted, to be sure, that he makes passing allusions to contested facts of no great moment, in such manner as to imply criticism of

the Municipal. It is to be regretted also that he neglects to modify some of his more important statements, by adding the facts necessary to present them quite impartially. An instance is his implied criticism of the Municipal company for refusing to yield up its lease to the old monopoly interests. The facts are that the Municipal had offered to do this provided the old interests would restore the status quo by yielding up their title to the property of the low fare company. The Municipal held to the lease to defend the city against the attempt of the old traction interests to grab what the city had never intended to give them except under the protection of that lease. One encounters some difficulty in throwing off the feeling that if the judicial mind had been sailing upon an even keel, it would have discussed this phase of the matter in connection with the other. But in the light of Judge Tayler's action, and of his judicial opinion taken as a whole, these subjects of criticism may very well be considered as defects rather than significancies. It is evident at any rate that under his direction property rights will be conserved.

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Whatever may be the final outcome of the Cleveland traction struggle, then, there seems to be not even the slightest reason for doubting the security of all investments. The thing really endangered is municipal ownership. Without intending to do so, it was municipal ownership that a small majority of the voters of Cleveland really voted against at the recent referendum. At present it looks as though they may have done it quite effectually. But Mayor Johnson's resourcefulness, his energy, his patience and long suffering—qualities which have characterized his eight years' fight against stupendous odds—may yet find a way of winning. And in the long run this harassing episode may possibly prove effective in more quickly driving farther home the principle of municipal ownership. At all events the present is an opportune time for those who really sympathize with Mayor Johnson's work, to encourage it, leaving hectoring criticisms to the fair weather sailors of these troublous seas.

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Public Schoolhouses as Neighborhood Centers.

Cleveland has joined in the work of making the public school buildings neighborhood centers for social intercourse and general education. The segregation of school work from the common life is one of the serious evils of the system—or rather, of its administration. Not much headway is

made, to be sure, merely by giving innocuous lectures now and then in school houses, but even this is an advance. When the school house shall come to be the neighborhood center for neighborly intercourse, for lectures on topics of general or neighborhood interest, and for discussions of school district and school board affairs, the public school system will take a very different and a much higher place in the life of the people.

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Industrial Education.

One of the best statements in brief form of what industrial education in the public schools ought to be and what it ought not to be, was made in an address at Chicago last week by John H. Finley, president of the College of the City of New York. After saying that manual training should be given to every pupil, not so much for equipment for a vocation as for equipment for citizenship, and that school teachers should be paid enough to guard them from daily worryment over making ends meet, he distinguished genuine from false industrial training in this brief but pregnant paragraph:

I wish every boy could have some training of his hands, not so specialized as to make his life occupation foreordained at 13 or 14, and not so taught as to make him think that the chief end is producing—to make his country greater because its exports are larger. I'd like to have every boy, rich or poor, whatever his occupation is to be in life, educated in his intellect and in his hands, but I should emphasize in that education that all this was not for a vocation, but for power to live a life.

There is the issue which is now agitating educational, commercial and labor circles wherever the subject has come under discussion. It is the question of whether industrial education of public school children shall be for the sake of industrial knowledge, so as to make them abler and freer in industry and nobler in citizenship, or for the sake of specialized skill, so as to make them the better factory peons at an earlier age.

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Keeping Down Taxes.

One of the local candidates at the recent election in Bayonne, N. J., Mr. Wm. B. DuBois, took a sensible stand against the tax payers' plea for lower taxes. "I am not especially interested," Mr. DuBois proclaimed, "in keeping down taxes." He then went on to explain: "Neither a low tax rate, nor a low tax bill is, per se, any evidence of good government. When the infamous Tweed ring was in power in New York, robbing the city right and left, they lowered the tax rate every year. I am