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WHY THE PEOPLE VOTED WISELY.

The proposed commission form of government was beaten in Salem because it deserved to be. The voters were intelligent enough to see that the benefits which might come from some of its provisions would more than likely be off-set by others which were vicious in the extreme. One of the latter was the following section, requiring a two-thirds vote to authorize the commission to purchase or construct any public utility within the city:

"6. To contract for public utility service for the supply and use of the city and its inhabitants; to lease, purchase or construct and to maintain and operate any public utility, either within or without the corporate limits of the city. The power to lease, purchase or construct any public utility shall not be exercised without express authority being conferred by a two-thirds vote of the legal voters who may vote at any general or special election upon the submission to them of the question of leasing, purchasing or constructing a public utility under the power and procedure of the initiative and referendum in force in the city; to issue general obligation bonds to finance any authorized public utility enterprise either for initial lease, purchase, construction, or addition or extension, upon the question being submitted under the powers of the initiative or referendum and authorized by a two-thirds vote of the legal voters voting at either a general or special election."

This section must have been inserted in the proposed charter with the deliberate purpose of blocking any attempt by the people in the future of acquiring their own water, light and power, or gas plants. Always more than one-third of the voting strength of a community may be depended upon to rally to the support of a private corporation, no matter how oppressive its acts may become to those who are dependent upon its service.

We do not accuse the members of the charter committee with a deliberate attempt to deceive the people, because we know there were men and women upon it who stand always for good citizenship, but nevertheless somebody slipped something over on them when they inserted this section. Who its author was we do not know, but we do know that its adoption on Monday would have worked irreparable injury to the community in the future by barring the people from any movement designed to emancipate the city from the monopoly which is always conferred with every franchise granted to a private corporation engaged in public utility service.

Salem ought some time in the future to own its water, light and power plants, and steps in that direction ought to be taken at once. The Capital Journal does not now and never will advocate the confiscation of capital invested in private utilities, and will always favor purchase if the price and terms asked are fair and reasonable. If not, it believes in going ahead with construction, and the private corporation must take its chances for business in competition with the municipal plant.

Water, lights, power and gas, as furnished by private corporations to corporate cities, are necessities of modern life (they are no longer luxuries), and no individual or privately owned corporation should have the right to set the price with a view to excessive profit, or dictate the quality of service of such necessities. That has become a recognized principle of government to the extent that most states have sought to place such corporations under the control of a public utility commission. This safeguard of the individual right has proven quite frequently of doubtful value because of the subserviency of such commissions to the power of corporate influence. The only real remedy is public ownership.

The city of Eugene, in our own state, has made a wonderful success of public utilities. Its water, light and power plants are owned by the people, and the latter has, in the face of strong corporation opposition, reduced the lighting rate from 15 cents to 8 cents per kilowatt in the course of two years of operation. It is taking care of the interest on construction bonds, providing for payment of these bonds through a sinking fund, and each quarter the books show a handsome surplus over and above operating expenses. A further reduction of the rate is in prospect.

San Francisco, Seattle, Tacoma and Pasadena are other coast cities which have successfully tried out the principle of municipal ownership of public utilities. Other cities are starting the movement in that direction, since in municipalities of the class of Los Angeles and Portland the bills of the private corporation for street lighting alone have become a burden under which the taxpayers can scarcely stagger.

A decade since and few cities owned their own water

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plants—now a large majority do, and nearly all are working to that end. In another decade the same will be true of light, power and gas plants, because the principle involved is the same.

Salem voters did well to veto an insidious attempt to induce them to surrender the most valuable rights they possess, and it is safe to say that no charter will ever be submitted to the people again containing a provision framed solely to perpetuate the monopoly by private corporations of those utilities which furnish the necessities of modern municipal life. Should such an attempt be made at any time again, the Capital Journal will promise to turn the spotlight of publicity upon it in such a manner that no voter will be inveigled into supporting it under the specious guise of "commission" government or any other subterfuge employed to catch the unwary.

President Wilson's message strikes the right keynote in declaring opposition to a large standing army. A military government, and that is what large standing armies always mean in the end, is incompatible with our popular institutions and ideals. Our impregnable position between two great oceans, making invasion next to impossible, calls for little in the way of "military preparedness" beyond the fortification of our principal harbors, backed up by a creditable naval establishment. If we must go to war, the citizen soldier, with ninety days training, will quickly establish his superiority over the regular of the European war machines, just as volunteers have always done at all times and in all countries. The intelligent citizen who volunteers to fight for his country because its rights or honor as a nation is assailed, makes the best soldier in the world. The gold lace and decorations of the standing army are distinctly out of place in a republic like ours, and the president's position will be generally endorsed.

Villa and Zapata present the strange spectacle of two Mexican leaders meeting and agreeing, and, stranger still, agreeing to step down and out without asking to be made president or given any other position. It is almost unbelievable, but must be accepted as true, as must their assertions that they have only the good of their country at heart. Should they carry out their program and set their people an example of self-denial, of putting the good of all above the personal aggrandizement of one, they will deserve to go down in Mexican history as the first real patriots Mexico ever produced. If, on top of this, they can inaugurate a reign of peace, and give their magnificent country a chance to take the place in the world it is justly entitled to, they will deserve and have as warm a place in the hearts of their countrymen as has our own immortal Washington in ours. It really looks as though the impossible had happened.

Little Holland has set the world an example of charity. With a territory no larger than Belgium and with her commerce practically ruined and her industries crippled, she bravely assumes the care of more than a million homeless Belgians. Not only this, but she rejects all offers to bear part of the burden. She has no part in the war, but recognizes her duty to mankind, to wretched and homeless fugitives, and cheerfully takes upon herself the task of feeding and caring for this vast number of refugees. Some idea of her task can be gained by pointing out that if America should take on herself the support of as many persons proportionately she would have fifteen million helpless people on her hands. It would mean that every seven Americans should take care of one person.

President Wilson made congress sit up and take notice when, in reading his message yesterday, he announced that laws regulating business were completed, and that all that would be required of business from now on would be an acceptance of and obedience to the laws already passed.

The Tacoma Tribune remarks that in the course of time events get swapped around until they are diametrically different from what they were at the start. It says: "A European stamp tax led to an American war, and now a European war leads to a stamp tax in America."

THE ROUND-UP

Milford's charter commission has finished its labors and turned over to the city council its final draft, with the recommendation to expedite its submission to the vote of the people.

Milton proudly lists among her assets J. R. Ross, winner of a tri-state prize awarded at the Walla Walla corn show for the best corn yield. Mr. Ross raised 100 bushels of the "Mortgage Lifter" variety, the Milton Egan says.

Hint of good things soon to come, in Baker's millinery: "With a loosening of the money market there are a number of large enterprises planned for Baker county that will bring increased population and community prosperity."

Albany is approaching the unemployment problem through a survey to first ascertain the number of persons out of work. It is proposed then to open some public work which will benefit the county and circulate wages at the same time.

The report of the Baker County Forest Fire Protective association will show that Baker's timber loss for 1914 has been no more than 40,000 feet and the financial loss less than \$150.

Too Much War

Oh, for a while let common mud be the topic of conversation, for I am tired of tales of blood and carnage.



Other nations, pity those who wade in gore, who have the henlock for a title, but talking will not heal a sore, or furnish crutches for a cripple. We talk of battles by the hour, for Caesar's fame we all are bidders, but who will send a sack of flour to feed those hungry Belgian widows? We cannot talk about the fray, but that the sad details remind us of those who need our help today—ah! we left our wads behind us! We cannot argue for a year about red fields and soldiers dying, but that we always seem to hear about a million orphans crying. So, then, a safer topic choose, some theme that will not pain or wear us; let's talk of sealing wax or shoes, or anything that will not jar us. No eloquence of yours or mine can help poor Europe's direful pickle; and if we talk along that line, we might get rash and give a nickel!

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Oreck Mamm

OUR SWEDEE SERVANT

(By Wm. F. Kirk.)

"Ef it ban all the same to you, Missus, Ay skol tak tonite off," remarked Steena. "Dar ban a gude play tonite at new opry house, it ban called Sax Feet in the Air, or The Cattle Thief's Doom. Yimmie Regan, police faller, ban going to tak me."

"We had intended going out ourselves this evening, Steena," my wife reminded her. "You know we had an understanding about Friday being your night out."

"Ay know dis, but Friday ban a bad night to get tickets for a theater show," explained Steena. "and Yimmie Regan say ven he get dese har tickets free he don't feel lak saying anything about yeh night he yan tickets far. And he got dese har tickets for tonight so Ay skol go tonight. Some other night Ay skol stay home and let you and yure husband go out."

"I do wish you had said something to me sooner," said my wife, trying hard to conceal her annoyance. "If you knew you were going to a theater tonight you should have told me at least this morning."

"Yes, Ay s'pose so," admitted Steena, "but ef you knew you ban intending to go out, Ay think you should have ban speaking to me, too. Ay think it ban yust so broad as it is long."

"What play did you say you were going to see?" asked my wife.

"Sax Feet in the Air, or The Cattle Thief's Doom," replied our Sweede servant.

"I am afraid your friend Mr. Regan has queer ideas of the drama, hasn't he?" ventured the wife.

"Ay think he ban a gude yudge off places to take me," declared Steena. "Ay don't think you got an right to talk about Mester Regan ven Ay never talk about places yar yure husband ban yure, neyeh vith yu. Last week yar husband ban taking yu to sax day bicycle race and Yimmie Regan he tal me it ban poor place to tak a lady, but Ay yust kept my mouth shut and never ban finding any fault vith yure husband and Ay don't think you ought to finding any fault vith dis har show vich Ay ban going to see tonight. It ban a play about a brave cowboy faller vich ban a gude shot with revolver, and Yimmie Regan he ban a brave faller and a gude shot with a revolver, too, so he and me took it ban a gude show for us to see. Yu can leave the dishes of yu vant to, and ven Ay com home Ay skol do dis up."

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JAPAN INTIMATES IT WILL HOLD ISLANDS

Tokio, Dec. 8.—(Interrogated in parliament today, the foreign minister denied categorically that Japan ever told the United States that the occupation by the United States of Japan islands, a German possession in the Pacific ocean, was only temporary.

The minister of marine also denied the existence of an Anglo-Japanese agreement concerning the Marshall and Caroline islands, German Pacific groups, which the Japanese had likewise seized. Relative to these islands, it was unofficially reported some time ago that the Japanese had professed a willingness to yield possession to Australian forces.

These denials followed Foreign Minister Kato's announcement in parliament Tuesday that Japan had made no promises to any nation concerning Kiau Chiau, the German territory on the Chinese coast which the Japanese recently wrested from theaiser and that it might be returned to China or it might not.

KILLED BY AUTO.

Grand Rapids, Mich., Dec. 8.—George Brand, vice-president of the Grand Rapids Brewing company, and William Velt, secretary of the Velt Manufacturing company, were killed here today when their automobile overturned at a curve on Reed's lake boulevard.

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