PORTLAND'S NEW CHARTER.

CONCLUSION.

The several sections of article 4, chapter 3, of our proposed charter contain elaborate provisions reserving to the people of the city the right of acquisition to "the ownership, construction and maintenance of water works, gas works, electric light works, steam, water and electric power works, heating works, telephone lines, street railways, bridges, ferries and such other public utilities" as may be designated, the question of such acquisition to be determined, however, by a vote of the electors of the city—the taking of such vote to be arranged for by the City Council on its own motion, should it so desire, or in response to a petition therefor signed by 15 per cent of the voters of the city.

Guided by the light of past experience, there is in the modern thought of the world a growing tendency toward the municipal ownership and operation of such public utilities as those above enumerated.

This tendency is evidenced in the first place by what has been and still is going on in our own country.

In 1899 there were in the United States 965 gas works, of which 951 were private and 14 municipal; 2572 electric light plants, of which 2112 were private and 460 municipal; 3326 water works, of which 1539 were private and 1787 municipal.

In 1800 we had 16 water works in the whole country, of which one only, or 6 per cent, were public, while in 1899 our public water works were 53 per cent of the whole number.

In the second place, we find this tendency furthermore evidenced by what has been going on during the last 25 or 30 years in other countries.

In Great Britain one-fourth of the street railways and 40 per cent of the mileage belong to municipalities, and 16 different systems are operated as well as owned by cities. In England and Wales 45 out of 64 great cities and towns own their water works. The same statement is true of most of the large cities and towns of Scotland. In Great Britain, taken as a whole, one-third of all gas works are public, while in 1897 municipal plants sold 45 per cent of the total consumption of electric energy. Similar statements could be truthfully made of several other European countries.

Some of the more general arguments in favor of the municipal ownership and operation of public utilities may be stated as follows:

1. Under such ownership and operation there is a complete elimination of the fraudulent schemings, plottings and conspiracies so much resorted to by private concerns in their efforts at procuring franchises, fixing rates, warding off competition, and the like.

The city, as owner, manager and operator of such utilities, is under the influence of no motive for corrupting its own officers, agents or employes. Its inhabitants therefore escape the demoralizing and contaminating effects of such schemings, plottings and conspiracies.

2. The users of such public utilities, when so owned and operated, receive fairer and more impartial treatment.

This results from the fact that the city, as such, is subject to no temptation for making rebates, reduced rates, or otherwise granting favors to officers, political bosses or other persons of influence with a view to cultivating their good-will or commanding their assistance in "ways that are dark and by means that are crooked." But if under any combination of circumstances the officers of a city shuold encounter any such temptations, the fact that all accounts and dealings relating to services performed through the agency of such utilities are made matters of public record, and therefore open to public inspection, would operate as a restraint, holding them to a more strict, honest and faithful performance of the duties imposed upon them in connection therewith.

3. Mechanics, unskilled laborers and wage-earners generally employed by the city in the construction, management and operation of such utilities are as a rule better paid, their comforts and safety more carefwully looked after, and they otherwise enjoy more humane and considerate treatment.

All this is, of course, due to the fact that the city, as such, is not under the sway of those selfish interests which impel private concerns to move in different directions. As an illustration of what is here stated I may say that when the City of Glasgow some years ago became owner and manager of its street-car lines the hours of laborers were reduced from 12 and 14 per day to 10, and wages were raised 2 shillings per week.

4. Municipal ownership and operation give better and more satisfactory service. For example, if it be water furnished, the quantity supplied is more generous and the quality better.

The reason for this is quite plain. As individuals, the agents of the city having charge of its water-works department suffer no loss in profit or income as a result of additional expenses required for such increase in quantity or improvement in quality, while at the same time they commend themselves to the good will of the people who use the water, and in so far as such good will is at all influential in their favor they are more likely to be able to hold their position in the city's service. But with respect to private concerns, every dollar they can save in the cutting down of expenses, however much it may decrease the quantity or reduce the quality of the water furnished, means to that extent a swelling of their profits.

5. Such better and more satisfactory service is provided for much less cost, both to the city, as such, and to the individual patrons thereof.

With a few possible exceptions, this seems to be the uniform experience here in the United States and in other countries as well.

I have in my possession the 14th annual report of the United States Commissioner of Labor, as prepared by Carroll D. Wright and published in 1899, wherein he deals exclusively with the water, gas and electric light plants of our country—a volume of more than 900 pages.

From an examination of certain of the tables making up this valuable and exhaustive report I feel safe in affirming that the charges made to consumers for electric light by private plants are upon an average not less than about 45 per cent higher than the charges made therefor by municipal plants. I furthermore find from such examination that the same statement is substantially true of the prices charged for water and gas by private concerns as compared with the prices of city plants.

In truth, I am so conservative in what I here say, I feel quite sure that a closer scanning of the many tables making up the report in question would show that I have not stated the case as strongly in favor of municipal charges as the facts would warrant.

But let us look in other directions for a few moments.

When in 1870 England bought out her private telegraph companies and made the telegraph a part of her postal system she reduced rates from one-third to one-half less than what they had been prior thereto.

France became owner of most of her telephone systems in 1889, and at once reduced the charges for service about 33 per cent.

When the City of Glasgow became owner and operator of her street-car plants in 1894 she not only reduced the number of hours street-car men were obliged to work daily, and increased their pay, as already stated above, but she also at the same time reduced fares about 33 per cent, and they now average only about 2 cents a fare.

If it should seem strange that the charges made by municipalities in the matters under consideration are lower than those of private concerns, it may be suggested that among the many reasons therefor we find the following: A city does not have to pay anything for franchises, nor for taxes, advertising, soliciting business or warding off competition, nor for the raising of corruption funds, for the election of favorites to office, for lobbyists or for big salaries to officers in charge of the business. It is at no expense for political cappers, henchmen or bosses. It pays no profits to stockholders or commissions to promoters or others. A city is not subject to so much annoyance, loss or damage growing out of strikes, lockouts and litigation as private concerns are, and whenever it realizes a profit from its operation of such utilities it goes into the public treasury, and to that extent lessens the burdens of taxation borne by its people.

Taking our proposed charter as a whole, I suppose the large number of votes cast in favor of its adoption by the members of the Charter Board present at their last meeting may be counted as some evidence, at least, of its merits.

Of the 23 members present on that occasion only two voted aganist it, while all the rest were in its favor. Those who voted for it as an entirety were Ned E. Ayer, F. E. Beach, H. W. Fries, Sigmund Frank, T. D. Honeyman, Paul Wessinger, John F. O'Shea, A. L. Mills and Isam White, all men of wealth belonging to our foremost business classes; Joseph N. Teal, R. L. Glisan, Harry Hogue, P. L. Willis, Daniel Malarkey and R. W. Montague, attorneys-at-law; A. J. Giesy and Harry Lane, physicians and surgeons; John Montag and J. T. Morgan, from the ranks of labor; Thomas C. Devlin, City Auditor, and Mayor H. S. Rowe.

In conclusion I ought doubtless to say that in this series of 11 letters I have been able to do nothing further than to touch very briefly upon some of the more important provisions of our proposed charter.

Many others of equal, possibly of more, importance might perhaps be enumerated by those who have studied it from points of view differing from those modes of glancing at it which have attracted my attention. While it is well understood that perfection cannot be claimed for it, and while, notwithstanding all the painstaking care bestowed upon it by its framers, it may still be found open to some objections, I am nevertheless of the opinion that, taken all in all, it is a materially better charter than the old one under which the several departments of our city government are now being carried on.

If this view of the matter be correct, modest and conservative as it may seem, it is abundantly sufficient to justify our fellow-citizens in ratifying it by a unanimous vote at our approaching election.

This done, and once moving steadily along upon the several lines of procedure blocked out for our future course by our new charter, we, as a people, may quite reasonably indulge the somewhat inspiring hope that the City of Portland, already recognized as "the pearl of the Willamette Valley," will through the years to come shine forth, so to speak, as the brightest jewel flaming in the municipal crown, ultimately to cover as with a mantle of glory the noble brow of the mighty Northwest. J. T. MORGAN.

The Butchers' Union of Denver has secured a signed-up scale with all the large Denver packing-houses, and all employes of the packing-houses must join the union.

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BY

Federated Trades Council

OF PORTLAND

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SALEM

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Second Train Leaves Union Depot at 8:30 A. M.
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Round Trip $1.00

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Eleventh Annual R. R. Excursion

OF

MT. HOOD DIVISION OF RAILWAY CONDUCTORS

OF PORTLAND

TO

Salem, Sunday, June 8

Grand Entertainment at the Fair Grounds, Good Music, Ball Game, Pigeon Shoot. First train leaves Portland at 8 A. M., second at 9 A. M. Leave Salem at 5 o'clock sharp.

Fare $1.00 Round Trip

Second Annual Excursion of Division 181

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Latourelle Falls, June 15

ON

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With large barge attached. Other steamers will be provided in case the crowd is too large for one. Cordray's Orchestra will furnish the music, and there will be dancing and refreshments on the barge. Boats leave Ash Street Dock at 8:30 P. M.

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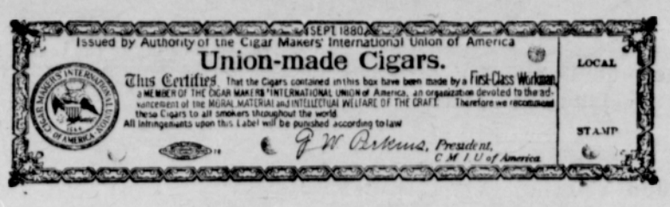

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