



In the interests of every department of the Municipal Institutions of Ontario.

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Municipal Ownership.

Because Boston was seized with such a bad attack of municipal ownership craze that it carried it to an absurd length, unthinking people are indulging in a general condemnation of the practice of civic corporations doing their own work where practicable. Chatham's limited experience in the municipal management of its water and light plants has been eminently satisfactory, but probably had it gone in for some of Boston's Utopian projects the result would not have been so pleasing. Boston has been experimenting with "municipal ownership," and the results are summed up in Harper's Weekly by Guild A. Copeland, in an article headed "An Insolvent Utopia." Among the things which it was determined Boston should provide for itself, instead of permitting selfish and greedy private persons to provide it for them, were its stationery and printing, its actual carpentry, including both construction and repairs, its electrical installations, and its ice plant. Carpenters, wheelwrights, veterinaries, were "civil servants." To escape the terrors and tests of competitive examinations these were asked for and placed on the municipal pay-rolls as "ship calkers," "rubber gasket makers," "beam tenders," and even "an expert swimmer." What was the practical output of all this apparatus had not really been investigated until the accession of the present mayor, a level-headed business man. He was struck, on being called upon to sign some vouchers relating to a matter which he knew something about, by the excess over the market prices of material and labor. From this proceeded an investigation which has resulted in the turning over to private enterprise of a number of "public utilities," upon the ground that it cost too much for the city to provide them for itself. Mr.

Copeland gives the instances. A job of electrical equipment on the ferry boats which should have cost \$6,800, cost \$10,200. A job of electricity in a building for hospital nurses, should have cost \$1,528, and did cost \$4,754. Work on the armory, which could have been done for \$2,600, was done for \$6,700. And so forth. The city's ice, from its own philanthropic plant, costs about \$60 a ton. And so forth. In all there is no direct charge of dishonesty or speculation. It was simply the extravagance engendered, as a limited experience of human nature would have shown, that it was sure to be engendered, by withdrawing the incentive to diligence and frugality furnished by private interest, and putting nothing equivalent in its place. There was an element of conscious humbug in the evasion of the rules of the civil service. These were "beaten" in many ways, so as to make "patronage" out of the enormous multiplication of places caused by municipal ownership."

Civic Ownership in Winnipeg

In Winnipeg the corporation has taken over the electric light and waterworks franchises, and seems to be solving the problem of municipal ownership to its own satisfaction. The waterworks supply under private control was most disgraceful. About one-half the place was without any other service than that given by artesian wells, and until very recently many households were supplied by water carts. The council recently established a new system, having as a source of supply, not as formerly the Assiniboia river, but the subterranean sources to the west of the city, which are said to have their origin in Lake Manitoba. Of the financial results of the taking over of the waterworks system. The *Tribune* says:

"Those who talk of what it would cost the country to buy or build railways, should study the result of the purchase and construction of waterworks by this city. Instead of costing the city anything or adding anything to the taxes of the ratepayers, the earnings of the waterworks system more than pay interest on the bonds and other annual charges. Under continued private ownership the profits of business would have gone to shareholders residing, perhaps in Germany, while the people here would have to pay much higher rates in return for a poorer service."

The *Tribune* declares that in case of street lighting the results are equally instructive. A year or two ago, when the work was done by a private corporation the city had to pay 47 cents a night for each light. But here let us allow our Winnipeg contemporaries tell its own story:

"When the agitation for public ownership alarmed the company, it offered reductions, if the city would make a new contract for a term of years. For a three years' contract, for instance, if the city would take from 200 to 250 lights per night, the company offered a rate of 37½

cents each. This was a substantial reduction, but the council was determined on public ownership, and as the sequel showed, wisely, for according to the official report made a day or two ago the cost to the city, including the cost of owning the plant, is less than 22 cents a night for each lamp; 250 lamps at 37½ cents would cost within a few cents of \$94 per night. At 21 cents they will cost less than \$54 per night; a difference of \$12,000. And the lights are much better.

"If farmers, in considering the railway question, want to know how public ownership works, they need not go outside their own province for an example."

In estimating the saving of the present system in Winnipeg over the former the Winnipeg council makes allowance for wear and tear and interest, everything in fact that enters into cost to private owners of plants when estimating the profits for a year. It must be remembered, in this connection, that fuel, oil and wages are higher in Winnipeg than in Ontario, and production, therefore, is more costly than in these parts.

So far as Brantford is concerned, civic ownership of the water supply has been tried with results of a most satisfactory character. As for electric lighting, it has not been found desirable, thus far, to adopt a similar policy, although the question of private v. public control has been fully investigated. The question is not one for theorizing, but for practical and businesslike treatment in the light of existing conditions. There is no particular virtue in municipal ownership unless it can be conclusively established that it will give the people the most economical and the most efficient service.

A Town Transformed by Women

Dissatisfied with the progress of the town under masculine rule, the women of Healdsburg, Cal., says an exchange, gently but firmly took possession of the reins and are now driving the municipal coach their own way. Their organization is called the Ladies' Improvement Club of Healdsburg, and it was formed in August of last year. Since that time, in the short space of nine months, this is what the club has accomplished:

A municipal water system.

A municipal electric light plant.

Comfortable seats in the park.

Names given to the streets.

Sign-boards with street names placed at street corners.

A drinking fountain for the park costing \$600.

All these improvements had been discussed for years by the men. It remained for the women to make them realities. And with the exception of the electric light and water system, the city taxes have not been increased by as much as a farthing to pay for these things.