

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP NEWS

(SELECTED)

Union of Canadian Municipalities

The Union of Canadian Municipalities at a recent meeting placed its attitude on Municipal Ownership on record in the following resolution:

"That in the opinion of this convention, as public utilities are so constituted that it is impossible for them to be operated by competition they should either be controlled and regulated by the government or should be operated by the public, and that they should not, in any event, be left to do as they please."

TORONTO GAS PLANT

Less complaints and better service than ever before, an increase in wages of employees of 10 to 12 per cent., a saving to the city of \$20 a night (over \$7,000 per year) is the record of Toronto's first year of municipal ownership of its plant.

MUNICIPAL MARKETS

It is generally admitted that the cost of living is higher in American cities than it is in Continental cities, largely as a result of our non-interference with respect to the necessities of life, that is, our lack of market regulation. A few of our cities have taken up the question of municipal markets, but with only slight interest. Boston, Baltimore, New Orleans and a number of smaller cities have each established a market system, but none of them has developed it very far.

In Boston the market is in charge of a public official, paid by the fees collected from the marketmen. There is, however, no attempt to regulate or to standardize prices, or to gather statistical data, so that there is now no real advantage to the consumers from the public control of the market. In Baltimore the system is very much the same. Except for the regulation of the prices of stalls the control is also ineffective. Chicago has no market buildings, simply a market place. It is, however, the closest market in the country. One can buy almost all products of the soil for less money than anywhere else in America. The city is the fruit market for the world, due chiefly to its railway facilities. New Orleans furnishes the best example of a municipal market. The city operates four markets of its own, which yield \$10,000 a year, and also leases rights for \$186,000. In this instance the city enterprises which exist are under the right of reversion to the city.

All these efforts, however slight, have resulted in good financial gains. Boston nets a profit of \$60,000 a year; Baltimore, about \$50,000; New Orleans, nearly \$79,000. Yet only a very small proportion of our cities have turned to this matter at all, and those that have, have made no adequate provision.

In contrast with this, practically all the municipalities of continental Europe have monopolized the market rights, and the markets are subject to public control; the cities also reserving the right to originate new markets. The cit-

ies there are doing what the commission merchant does here. We are constantly threatened with a monopoly of the necessities of life. The object of municipal markets, says E. Thomas, in an article on "Paris Stock Markets," is to get the price of provisions down to the minimum. Continental cities realize that the establishment of a market price is as important as the question of the tariff. The object of the markets is also to insure an established relationship between the city and the country, thereby making direct access to the city more easy for the farming communities.

Paris has by far the best markets in the world. The "Halles Centrales" is the greatest distributing point for the whole city. There are ten halls of which three whole pavilions and three half-pavilions are devoted to wholesale, the rest to retail trade. The outside space is given to fruits and vegetables. The management of the halls is under the control of the Department of the Seine, but is really under the immediate supervision of the Police. The sales are conducted by persons called representatives of the shippers, appointed by the Police, the middleman's commission being thus avoided. These representatives receive a certain per cent., fixed by law, for their services in conducting the sales, which are usually by auction. The books and records of sale are always subject to inspection by the proper authorities. Sanitary conditions are also carefully supervised—in fact every detail is carefully watched, made to produce revenue where possible, or kept from doing harm, where necessary.

Direct dealing between producer and consumer is general. The wholesale dealer sets his price according to that of the market, which is law. The price set in Paris is the price for the surrounding country, and special agents are engaged in reporting the prices to Belgium, Spain, parts of Germany, and other neighboring district. Some of these agents are working for themselves, the others are appointed by the Board of Trade and must give security for faithful reports, and agree to engage in no other business while in office. They note and report the general business done, and it is from their figure that the price is compiled.

The Paris market is extremely easy of access (more particularly the Paris market price) since all business can be done through one of the representatives. The results from the system are regularity of standards of price and quality, direct exchange for cash, and guaranteed sanitary goods.

In Belgium, Germany and Italy, markets are also either owned or controlled by the cities. London has no central market place. In Convent Garden, however, prices are regulated by parliament. There is much to be done in the way of markets in our American cities, though the work must proceed cautiously. The market is, from the standpoint of economics and society, a necessity, and the time is near when we will realize this fact. The alternative is a corner in the necessities of life.

Men Wanted! To work for Public Ownership of Telephones, Telegraphs, Elevators, Stock Yards, Abattoirs and Railways. "What we have we'll hold and what we haven't got we'll go after."—M. C. Hamilton.