

The great metropolis of Chicago has declared for municipal ownership of street railways. On the 5th of April the so-called Mueller Street Railway Act was accepted by the municipal electorate by a large majority of votes. The Mueller law was enacted by the Illinois legislature in May, 1903, and it empowers any city in the State to "own, construct, acquire, buy and operate" street railways as municipal property, upon its acceptance by a majority vote. The city, however, cannot raise the money to buy the railway property without statutory authorization; and a *modus vivendi* inhering in the question: "Shall the Council, instead of granting any franchises, proceed to license the street railway companies until municipal ownership can be secured, and to compel them to give satisfactory service?" was adopted by the Chicagoans by a vote of 120,181 yeas to 48,055 nays. Mayor Carter H. Harrison is not at all sanguine of the outcome of this venture of municipal ownership for the good people of his borough. He fears that "the unsatisfactory condition of Chicago's civil service, which of late has given rise to a succession of serious scandals, indicates that the addition of 10,000 street car employees to the municipal pay-rolls would be injurious to the city government, and would not render less acute the existing evils of the traction system."

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The trouble is that municipal ownership demands a fine sense of probity if the people who exploit it would have it a success, and this fine sense does not at present exist. For our part we are distinctly of the opinion, formed after much enquiry and careful consideration, that municipal ownership, no matter how excellent it may appear in theory, in the present condition of things, political and municipal, would generally be disastrous to the interests of the state and lower still further the present low standard of public morality. What may be possible in England is not necessarily possible in this country.