

Ownership of Ottawa Street Railway.

BY a vote of seven to thirteen the city council of Ottawa has decided to submit to the property-owners a by-law empowering the city to buy the street railway for the sum of \$3,000,000. If the company are anxious to unload their property on the city the by-law will be actively promoted. The trouble is that there is no one to look after the interests of the city. The unlucky thirteen who voted to submit the by-law do not, with one or two exceptions, own enough property to carry a by-law for a hen house.

The property owners of Ottawa would be foolish to carry, or allow to be carried such a proposal. The proceedings of the meeting in question prove the unwisdom of such a step. The question as to who should operate the road was discussed. Some favored operation by the council: others a commission, and finally a motion disqualifying aldermen was carried by 13 to 9. But next year's council may have a better opinion of itself and may reverse this vote and determine that if the aldermen are responsible for the road they must regulate and superintend it.

The decision was that the road should be operated by a commission whose members should give their services free. That is a lovely proposition. It makes such commissioners as could be had freebooters. But no resolution or by-law can divest the city council of control of the management. The management may be direct by means of a set of city officials or indirect by means of a commission. The commission to manage the government railways of New Zealand was wrecked by the labor party, and the ablest expert chairman New South Wales ever had, Mr. Eddy, was driven from office by the criticism of hostile mem-

bers of the legislature. This we have on the testimony of the present prime minister of the Commonwealth of Australia. The electors would pay the taxes for the operation of this street railway. They would require an accounting—not from a commission—but from the elected representatives in the municipal legislature. They would also clamor for extensions in every direction, regardless of paying qualities. Ward jealousies would arise, the question of wages both for the operating crews and for the laborers, the question of appointments, the furnishing of supplies, the time limit on transfers, the rate of fares, the contracts for advertising, and a dozen other matters and the council could not legislate itself out of responsibility for them.

Someone would own the road. The proposal to be submitted is: Shall the City of Ottawa, that is, the corporate body known as the council with its corporate seal. No commission, therefore, could own the road. There is not on the face of the earth a single instance where the owner does not control. That is the reason that Sir Robert Hamilton, who had seen the work of the commissions in Melbourne and Sydney said: "I believe that any guard upon our parliamentary representatives in the shape of permanent commissions must, as experience appears to be already showing, break down." All this applies exactly to a municipal legislature such as the city council. The rate of fare on the Ottawa road is now four cents, and the system is well managed, and the stock pays eight per cent per annum. What would happen if this state of affairs was disturbed? First thing some demagogic candidate for the council at the annual