

Government Ownership of Monopolies

Monopolies may be divided into two classes—natural and artificial. Natural monopolies include the means of communication and transportation. Railways, waterways, irrigation works, telegraphs, telephones, are especially important. Street car lines, whether they are surface lines, subways, or elevated, and the means of lighting cities, are scarcely less so. These are primary businesses in society upon which businesses of every other kind are dependent. The fact that the most desirable spots or lines of land are occupied, gives a business an advantage. Street car lines very often occupy what we may call exclusive lines of land, as in ordinary streets we cannot well have more than two tracks; and competition must come from subway or elevated railways, and further, the street car service of a city must be used in connection with the street car plant. The same applies to telegraph services. The ordinary commodities of one city may compete with the commodities of another city. Were this the case with respect to railway and telegraph services, we could import them from any other country, or invite competition from any other city, and in that way get them much cheaper, but unfortunately they must be used in connection with the plant which furnishes the services. Thus, if two competing companies are furnishing services of the kind mentioned, they will gain by combination. But gain is the purpose for which business is carried on, and increased gain is like a powerful magnet, sooner or later it pulls the competing companies together. Competition sooner or later gives way to consolidation. The gas business furnishes a good illustration of this, the geographical area within which this business is conducted is so small that the movement towards monopoly has always been rapid. Competition in the gas business has been attempted in countries with all kinds of political government and under every circumstance. It has been tried with the most solemn promises on the part of those starting rival companies, that competition would be permanent and genuine. But the nature of the business, as monopoly, has been strong enough to overcome every obstacle, and guarantees have not been worth the paper on which they have been printed. I am safe in saying that it would be difficult to point to one single instance of permanently successful competition. It is always suggestive that contests between gas companies, railways and the like, are called "wars," as "gas wars," "railway rate wars." This word indicates that these contests are something different from ordinary competition. A war is not something permanent, but destructive, which looks forward to termination based on some agreement. England and America have been inclined to favor private ownership, but in England they are rapidly coming under government control, not only are cities acquiring local monopolies, but the telegraph has been made a part of the postoffice, and there is a strong movement in favor of a nationalization of railways.

Government ownership cannot be accomplished in a day or a year; those who have control of these gigantic monopolies have immense resources at their back; they have in their service eminent lawyers; they control a very considerable portion of the press, and can impose obstacles towards any movement in the direction of government ownership. But the tide has turned, and is now flowing in the direction of public control. If the issue is put fairly before the people, the decision will be, at this date, in favor of government or municipal ownership. Several cities in Canada have recently given a majority in favor of municipal ownership of telephones and electric street lighting plants, while just recently Chicago gave a large majority in favor of municipal ownership of street railways. There can be no doubt but that the educational work of the trade unions has been, and now

is, and in the future will be, a powerful factor in promoting the cause of public ownership.

Public utilities should belong to the people and all the benefits derived therefrom, whether financial or moral. Under the present system we find the few amassing great fortunes at the expense of the many, and principally through the gains of monopoly.

The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few has reached alarming proportions, especially in the United States. In England one-half of the wealth is owned by one-thirtieth of the population, while in the United States it is owned by one-seventieth. Until recently England was considered the land of concentrated wealth. One writer estimates that twenty-five thousand people own half the wealth of the United States. Another estimate gives twenty per cent. as being owned by three one-hundredths of one per cent. of the population; seventy-one per cent. owned by nine per cent. of the families, and twenty-nine per cent. of the wealth is all that falls to ninety-one per cent. of the population. Private ownership or monopoly is the principal cause for this unequal distribution of wealth, aided by a protective tariff.

Private fortunes vary in extent from one million to twenty, and even one hundred million dollars.

Public ownership would make it simply impossible for anyone to plunder the public in this manner, and the gains, heretofore received by private individuals, would, in one way and another, be diffused among the people at large, and would result in a wider enjoyment of moderate comfort, while a wise system of regulation and taxation of inheritances would in time tend to break up the immense fortunes owned by the few. When the purchasing power of the masses is increased, prosperity will become more permanent, and those periods of depression which cause so much suffering and privation will almost disappear.

In conclusion, I would like to refer briefly to the social phase of government ownership. Railways could be so managed that they would increase the facilities and ease of travel, and thus make it possible for more people to visit different parts of their own country and even foreign countries; they would increase enjoyment and make it easy for people to see the beauties of nature; they would have a tendency to decentralize the population of our large cities, and the poor people who find enjoyment in the cities could own their own homes in the country. This could be brought about by reducing the fares to cost for the benefit of the working classes. In Germany workingmen's trains are running, on which the fare is only two-thirds of a cent a mile, and the Australian railway, owned and operated by the State, are to some extent operated and managed for general social purposes, and the school children are carried free in some parts of Australia, thus helping to scatter the population of cities over large areas.

Macaulay says: "Of all inventions, the alphabet and printing press alone excepted, those inventions which abridge space have done most for civilization. If this is true, we must favor an administration of railway, telegraphs, etc., which will place them most fully at the service of the public, making social welfare the chief consideration."

Municipal monopolies could, under municipal ownership and operation, be managed with reference to the greatest good of the greatest number. The workingman or woman who, in cities, trudges to and from their work because they cannot pay five-cent street car fare, of which two cents represent economic surplus, could ride instead of walk, if the fare were reduced to three cents.

The railway mileage of the world outside the United States, Great Britain and Canada, owned by private corporations, is 84,834 miles, while 146,813 miles are owned by various states, viz.: Germany, Russia, France, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Italy, Holland, Roumania, Aus-

tralia and New Zealand, and with the exception of France, the cost of state administration is very much less than that of private administration, but in every instance the people benefit under government ownership. This being so, it is our duty as unionists to advocate the cause of government ownership and vote for it whenever we get the opportunity.

J. H. Pickles.

BUY UNION-LABELED GOODS.

The man who condemns the manufacturers who employ female and child labor at less than living wages and then purchases the goods produced by such labor is no better than the manufacturer himself. In order to wipe out the evil it must be attacked from every quarter. Buy only union-label goods and hit the unfair manufacturer in his weakest place.—Chicago Union Label Bulletin.

GRAY HAIR



Easily Dispersed with by using the New Discovery

Trade **COLORATOR** Mark

It is clean, not sticky. A delightful toilet preparation. Black, Dark Brown, Medium Brown, Chestnut, Auburn, Golden Ash. \$1.00 and \$2.00 sizes for sale at drug stores, hair dressers and department stores or direct from

The Seven Sutherland Sisters,

Sole Distributors for Canada,

129 Bay St., TORONTO, Ont.

J. H. BAILEY, Foreign Manager

Lady attendants.

Call any time

This paper is seeking to advance the Industrial Interest of our City. It closely represents a class whose purchases make the business of the town; it, therefore, confidently solicits the Patronage of every business man in the city.

Chas. Bush

MANUFACTURERS
OF

PRINTING INKS

124 BAY STREET, TORONTO

Secretaries' Attention

WANTED—Everywhere outside of Toronto—GOOD, RELIABLE AGENTS TO SOLICIT SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR

"THE TRIBUNE"

Get Your Paper Free

By sending us TEN SUBSCRIPTIONS, with the cash, we will send you the Paper for One Year FREE.

Get your Credential and Subscription Forms at once and

GET TO WORK

\$1.00 Per Year Post Paid