

The period of real-improvement in a condition of the city arrives and its progress on all lines is assured, not for a brief season but for all future time, when the controlling number of citizens attain a "realizing sense" of their individual and collective rights.

There is always in every municipality a certain element and it not infrequently is the controlling power, which exists to injury of the city, which hinders its development, which takes toll from its growth, which makes the public treasury a private spoil, which levies blackmail, which fosters wickedness that it may increase its gains, which in one way and another fattens and fattens on the body politic after the manner of parasites.

That city approaches nearest perfection in its government and safety and genuine prosperity, in its growth, and grows more year by year, a proper habitation for human beings, where the people have the intelligence and the courage to claim their own; to demand that every cent coming into the municipal treasury shall be expended for the common good; that there shall be no robbery, nor perversion nor waste; that there shall be no gangs, nor "pushes," nor "pulls," nor conspiracies, nor conspirators, nor combinations of any name or nature hostile to the public welfare.

Where the people of a municipality know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain them, all this spoliation and misappropriation and waste and wrong may be prevented; the door may be locked and the thief kept out; the walls may be so watched that no robber may climb over. But this is not enough. Care must be taken that the city not only is not robbed, but that it makes the most of its own; that it improves its possessions and develops its resources and prospers in its regular business.

The attention of the sovereign people of Kansas City is called to this division of the subject, because just now is the time for its consideration. What shall the city do with its own? with those immensely valuable natural monopolies, which may be a source of revenue to the body corporate, but which are now given away to individuals that they may acquire wealth at the expense of the city? What shall be done with the franchises of gas and water soon to expire? Shall the city longer pay for the use of its own? Shall it buy where it might sell? Shall it spend money where it might make money? Shall it longer give away without consideration that which has value? The people of Kansas City, all stockholders in the municipality, interested in the development and earning capacity of their joint property, should think of this matter.

The question is by no means a new one. However little attention may have been given the matter of the ownership and exercise of franchises here; it is an open question or has come up for decision in nearly all the great cities of the world, where the people are supposed to govern. An immense amount of information has been collected and is being collected on the subject. Object lessons are abundant. One in Chicago recently cited in THE STAR, may be profitably brought up again. The Chicago City Railway Company possesses a property sufficient to pay interest on about 50 millions of dollars. This property has grown from a nominal investment of about \$100,000 made about thirty years ago. It all began with a franchise given away by the city of Chicago, whereby the Chicago Railway company was allowed to take possession of public property, lay its tracks and charge each passenger five cents fare within the city limits by day or night. There is a good deal more to this story, but confining it to this outline, should the city of Chicago to-day own, control and find a source of public revenue in this 50 million dollar property, or should it belong to a private corporation, to individual men, for their use and behoof?

Kansas City is in a condition to learn the lesson Chicago should have learned thirty years ago. A flood of light has been poured on the whole subject of the construction, the government, the development of cities in thirty years. The books have been opened and all the varying transactions of municipal and private ownership have been made clear. Are the parties interested (and they comprise every living inhabitant of Kansas City) ready for the question? Have they thought of it?