

such repeal as an amendment to a pending bill. It is worthy of note that only 102 Democrats (out of 218) attended this caucus, and that Mr. Bryan, of Nebraska, the intellectual leader of the free-coinage Democracy, strongly opposed the repeal of the tax. Two years ago Mr. Bryan made a brief speech against the State bank-note proposition, and, despite his strong desire that the currency should be increased, he holds fast to the principle that the entire currency of the country should be issued by the National Government. The bitter experiences of the past with the haphazard inflation and contraction inseparable from notes based on private credit demonstrate, to our minds, the correctness of this principle.



Senator Wolcott's resolution respecting the coining of Mexican dollars by the idle American mints is interesting rather than important. As Senator Wolcott frankly stated, it has no relation to bimetallism. The demand for Mexican dollars, particularly in China, appears to be greater than the Mexican mints are able to supply. Senator Wolcott proposed that the consent of the Mexican Government be obtained, if possible, to the coinage of these dollars by the United States mints. Such coinage would not add one dollar to our own currency, or lessen the demand for gold in any part of the world. It would simply enable silver-producers to get a trifle better price for their product, since silver is more in demand in the form of these dollars than as bullion. As Senator Wolcott stated, the Mexican dollar is the only modern coin which ever gained any general adoption in the Orient as a standard of value. "The English Government, for a time, at Hong Kong, started the coinage of a British dollar, and coined some 10,000,000 of them. Some of them were used in circulation, some of them as buttons, as bangles, as ornaments, but they made no general impress upon the country, and their coinage was withdrawn." So with the French experiment in the same direction, and so with our "trade-dollar." When even the Mexican Government started to change the emblem on its dollar, "the change was unacceptable to the Chinese Government, and so the old Mexican dollar still stands as the standard of circulation in that country." Through the attachment of the Orient to this coin, the Mexican mints are overcrowded, though the Government makes a seigniorage charge of 4.4 per cent. (or 2.4 per cent. more than its export duty on silver bullion). It is extremely doubtful whether the Mexican authorities will consent to share with our Government the privilege of minting this coin. It is worthy of note that the Senators most opposed to any increase in the currency voted for the Wolcott resolution, which, of course, was carried.



An examination of the text of the rapid-transit bills before the New York Legislature indicates that the praise of the one and the censure of the other by the New York City press has been alike indiscriminating. The Chamber of Commerce bill contains the entirely satisfactory provision that the awarding of the contract for the construction of the rapid-transit system shall be intrusted to a non-partisan commission, composed of men who stand high in the public confidence. The trades-union bill—which has already passed the Assembly—leaves the appointment of the commission to the Mayor of New York; and this provision is at present unsatisfactory to the trades-unionists themselves, who have found in the Tammany Mayor an uncompromising opponent of the principle of municipal ownership. This principle is the vital point in the whole problem, and the carrying out of this principle ought

not to be intrusted to an opponent. Beyond this point, however, the Chamber of Commerce bill is open to very serious objection from the manner in which it compromises this principle. The Chamber, it will be remembered, seemed on the point of indorsing the discredited principle of lending the public credit to a private corporation, when ex-Mayor Hewitt's admirable speech led it, apparently, to accept the principle that the public should own whatever the public money paid for. The bill that was drafted, however, comes very near to reintroducing the principle disavowed.



The Chamber of Commerce bill provides, in the first place, that the commission may sell outright the franchise of the city in the road. It ought not to be sold under any circumstances, and certainly the power to sell is too great to be intrusted to a commission, however appointed. In the next place, the bill provides that the corporation to which the public money is loaned may, with the consent of the commissioners, still further bond the property and franchise of the system, and may make a contract with the commissioners for "a renewal or renewals of the lease of said road upon the expiration of the original term." The lending of the public credit to a money-making corporation endowed with such powers comes dangerously near violating the constitutional provision prohibiting the lending of public credit to a private company. When we consider the rapid cheapening of transportation and the rapid growth of the metropolis, even the minimum of thirty-five years is too long a period for the public to alienate the control of a property which the public money has constructed. There is danger that New York would be simply repeating the disastrous blunder made by Philadelphia in 1835, when it placed its gas-works under the control of trustees, whom it could not dislodge till 1885, despite wasteful management and extravagant charges. The trades-union bill has here the right principle. The property when constructed should be in all respects under public control, and the fares ought to be reduced as rapidly as the improvements in transportation and the growth of the traffic make possible. The trades-union bill also recognizes the sound principle that the people of New York City, and not the Legislature of the State, should decide whether this investment of the city's money shall be made. A legislative committee has been appointed to incorporate, if possible, in a single bill the desirable features of the two measures. We trust that it will accept from the Chamber of Commerce bill the principle that the system be constructed by a non-partisan commission, and from the trades-union bill the principle that the administration of the public property shall remain under direct public control, subject only to *short* leases.



State Comptroller Roberts, of New York, has made public the report of the accountant who has been examining the books of the Corporation Tax Department. Unfortunately, the spirit of this report is that of a prosecuting attorney, for it brings out in the strongest possible light the losses which the State has sustained under the last three Democratic Comptrollers, but does not even mention the United States Supreme Court decision which was the occasion of the heaviest losses. A law passed in this State in 1880 taxed railroad corporations upon their gross earnings. Under two Comptrollers this tax was collected, but during the administration of the third—Comptroller Chapin—the United States Supreme Court (in the case of the Philadelphia and Southern Mail Steamship Company vs. Pennsylvania) decided that the Pennsylvania tax

on the gross receipts from distinctively inter-State traffic was unconstitutional. This decision was widely believed to lay down principles which would overthrow the taxes on gross receipts in all States, so far as these receipts came from traffic which crossed a State line. Comptroller Chapin, without requiring the constitutionality of the New York law to be tested, not only discontinued the collection of the New York tax on inter-State business, but began to refund the taxes on such traffic that had been paid in previous years. The sums thus refunded—which were in the neighborhood of \$1,500,000—were not directly paid over to the corporations, but were credited to their accounts, and made in the form of rebates on the taxes assessed in subsequent years. Some of these rebates were seemingly extravagant in amount. For example, the Syracuse, Binghamton, and New York Railway, which lies entirely within the State, is reported to have paid in seven years on its gross earnings only \$27,000, and to have received in rebates because of inter-State traffic \$18,000. This, however, is a minor matter; what is of importance is the fact that last year a Maine law taxing gross receipts of railroads came before the United States Supreme Court, and the decision was rendered that this law was constitutional. A test case involving the New York law has likewise been brought before the New York Supreme Court in General Term, and the decision rendered that this law is at all points constitutional. If the Court of Appeals shall sustain this decision, the sum due the State for taxes uncollected since 1886, and for taxes illegally refunded for the six years preceding, will amount to \$3,000,000. To what extent and in what way the Comptrollers will now collect from the corporations this enormous sum of back dues is a question of the first importance, whose answer will furnish a most interesting conclusion to a most interesting illustration of the manner in which public tax-officials deal with corporations.

The New York "Times" gives a history of the movement for woman suffrage in the State of New York in 1867. From this history it appears that the advocates of woman suffrage then urged upon the Constitutional Convention the plan which The Outlook has recently proposed for determining the will of the women of New York on this subject. We must frankly confess that we had not thought that our plan, of an election in which women only should vote for the purpose of determining whether women wish to vote, would be regarded as practicable. We are now inclined to propose it more seriously, since it was urged upon the Constitutional Convention in 1867. The following is the form of constitutional amendment proposed by the women suffragists at that time:

"That the Legislature at the first session after the adoption of this Constitution shall provide by law—

"1. For an accurate enumeration to be made of all citizen females in this State above the age of twenty-one years.

"2. For an election to be held as soon as practicable after the completion of such enumeration, at which election only citizen females above the age of twenty-one years shall be entitled to vote upon the question 'Shall the right of suffrage be extended to females?' yes or no. And that if the number of votes in the affirmative cast at such election shall be a majority of the whole number of citizen females shown by the enumeration aforesaid, then, and from that time forth, the right of suffrage shall be secure to all citizen females of this State above the age of twenty-one years."

The National Miners' Union, at its fifth annual Convention in Columbus, Ohio, last week, decided upon a National strike, to begin at the end of this week, unless wages should be restored to a higher level. Over one hundred delegates were present, representing, with more or less authority,

something like two hundred thousand miners. The President of the Union, ex-Labor Commissioner McBride, of Ohio, declared in his annual address that wages had now been reduced to a degree that was intolerable, and the strike, if carried out, will apparently be for the principle of a "standard of living" so clearly enunciated in the English miners' strike last year.—On the Great Northern Railroad—Mr. James J. Hill's new road from St. Paul to Seattle—a strike has been ordered which may tie up the whole system. This strike is under the direction of the American Union, an organization with which the officers of the older railroad brotherhoods are not in entire sympathy. The strikers demand the restoration of the wages of a year ago. Up to this time President Hill has managed his men with rare tact or sympathy—or both—and there is hope that the present difficulties may be arbitrated.—The antagonistic decisions of Judge Caldwell at Omaha and Judge Jenkins at Milwaukee regarding the enjoining of railway employees from striking are now likely to be reviewed by the Supreme Court. At all events, Judge Jenkins's decision has been appealed from. Judge Jenkins, it will be remembered, enjoined railway employees from quitting work in order to enforce their demands, while Judge Caldwell declared that "the period of compulsory service, save as a punishment for crime, has passed."

We commented last week on the uncertain ground upon which the Liberal Ministry is standing in England. On the whole, the events of the last seven days have tended to strengthen that ground, and it is clear that if the Ministry goes down it will go with colors flying. There are two groups of supporters in the House of Commons whom it must hold—the Radicals and the Irish. The Radicals are likely to be kept in the ranks by the new Registration Bill introduced by Mr. Morley last week, which, although not quite as inclusive as the promise in the Newcastle programme, will make an addition to the electorate of several hundred thousand voters, principally by the reduction of the qualification by residence from six to three months. The new bill, if the telegraphic abstracts are accurate, does not uncompromisingly embody the principle of "one man, one vote," but it goes a long distance in that direction. Its leading features are semi-annual revision of the registration, simultaneous elections for Parliament throughout the United Kingdom, restrictions upon the plural voting, and a three months' residence qualification. The bill is criticised because it does not provide for such a redistribution or reapportionment as would relieve the present electoral system of its inequalities; but it enfranchises a great group of workingmen, who would naturally fall into the Liberal ranks, while it disfranchises a large number of Unionist electors by its restrictions of plural voting. The feature of simultaneous elections is not unlikely to be fraught with consequences of considerable moment. Readers of The Outlook have not forgotten how, in Presidential years, the vote of the States which held their State elections not long before the National election was watched for, and how much influence the decision of such States had upon that election. In the same way the districts and boroughs voting earliest in England have had a good deal of influence on those which voted later, and as the general elections have sometimes occupied ten days, the result of the first day's balloting had much to do with the final result of all the ballotings. The Liberal Ministry is likely to hold the other group, the Irish, by means of the Evicted Tenants Bill, which will be introduced this week, and which is likely to confirm the Liberals in power for some time to come, or else to bring about a speedy dissolution.