

ONE MAN'S OPINIONS

BY N. D. COCHRAN.

Franchises in Toledo.—The Toledo street railway situation is interesting, because the people there have waited patiently for franchises to expire so that the franchise value would come back to the people where it belongs.

The real fighting began when Golden Rule Jones was mayor, elected as an Independent or non-partisan. A machine council passed an ordinance renewing all franchises for 25 years. Mayor Jones vetoed the ordinance. That was in 1903.

It became known that council on a certain night was going to pass the ordinance over the mayor's veto. As editor of the Toledo News-Bee at that time I called upon the people to visit their council in person and present a petition-in-boots.

Thousands of citizens went to the council that night and protested. The machine councilmen were afraid to deliver the goods to the company. They laid the ordinance on the table.

When Mayor Jones died a machine president of the council succeeded him as mayor. Another franchise ordinance was passed. Mayor Finch, however, listened to public protest and vetoed it. Another petition-in-boots prevented its passage over his veto—by the narrow margin of one vote.

From then on the people elected a non-partisan, or independent mayor and city council. There was never any chance of the franchise grabbers getting an ordinance by that council.

Last year the franchise promoters stirred up the people by reviving the old A. P. A. agitation and elected a solid Republican council and city administration. That administration took hold Jan. 1 this year. The company immediately got busy negotiating for another franchise.

Just before retiring last year, however, the independent council passed a three-cent fare to go into effect March 28, the day when all unexpired

franchises would terminate. Mayor Whitlock immediately signed it.

That is the ordinance which started the present trouble. The new council would have to repeal it before it could do anything to help the company out. Public sentiment, however, was so strong that nobody dares attempt the repeal. One reason was that all parties in the last municipal election pledged themselves to three-cent fares and universal transfers.

Finally, on the Monday night before the franchises expired and the independent ordinance went into effect, council passed a resolution deciding to enforce the ordinance. And the city solicitor decided to fight for it in the courts.

On Friday night at midnight, March 27, the franchises expired and the three-cent fare ordinance went into effect. In the meantime, the company went into U. S. court and asked for an injunction restraining the city from enforcing the ordinance, but it wasn't granted.

At midnight last Friday night people began tendering a three-cent fare. But the conductors had orders to accept nothing but a five-cent fare or ticket, and to not eject anybody from the cars who refused to pay the regular fare. The result was that on Saturday and Sunday thousands of people rode for nothing. They would tender three cents, the conductor would refuse it, and the people rode free.

That is the situation now. The big fact in the situation, however, is that millions of franchise value now belong to the people. The company had nearly \$30,000,000 of securities on property whose physical value is much less than \$6,000,000; and all the excess represented franchise value.

And the people now demand municipal ownership and operation.

The Democratic Split.—It was inevitable that the Democratic party soon or late would split as the Republican party split in 1912.