

## GEO. HOOKER ASKS COUNCIL NOT TO RUSH THROUGH FISHER TRACTION PLANS

George Hooker, civic secretary of the City Club of Chicago, in a letter to Ald. Henry D. Capitain, chairman of the local transportation committee of the city council which is backing the enabling act of Walter Fisher and trying to get the council on record for it, gave a few of his views on traction and municipal ownership today. He asks for delay in consideration of the Fisher act until after election. It probably will be called by Ald. Capitain before the council meeting today.

In his letter Mr. Hooker, known as an expert on municipal affairs, expresses surprise that the same gentleman who put the Mueller law and the 1907 ordinances over on the city should be in the hire of the council to draw the enabling act which comes up for discussion and vote today.

He says that the Fisher bill as it outlines the future of the city's traction affairs would not give the people successful municipal ownership because of the high interest charges the city would have to pay on the bonds held by the traction barons even if the city were able to take over and operate the lines at the end of 30 years, as Fisher says.

He advocates a showdown to see whether the people or the corporations are most powerful in Illinois. He says the transportation committee should spend more time in bettering service than in devising means to hand over rights to the city's streets to the car barons.

In part, his letter reads:

"From the standpoint of the public I do not think the present an auspicious time to consider steps toward a 30 or 50-year, half billion dollar traction franchise, when Ald. Buck and Ald. Merriam have been defeated for the council, when Ald. Kennedy is in great danger of defeat, when in several wards alarming can-

didates who have been in retirement seem on the point of breaking into the council, and when the public mind and the agencies of public discussion are pre-occupied with the greatest war of all time. Instead, it seems to me that, in the line of immediate action, your committee should proceed to secure those improvements in service and in codified or extended facilities which are within the range of practical possibilities, and to that end should place the duty of securing these in the hands of competent persons of undoubted interest in that program.

"I confess to astonishment that after the collapse of the Mueller law certificate plan the same gentleman who drew that law, and who cites its authorship as evincing his attachment to municipal ownership, should be framing and offering his 30-50 year enabling bill as another ingenious device for getting municipal ownership.

"The purchase-subject-to-encumbrance-plan offered in the proposed bill would at best involve payment by the city of an interest rate on the debt at least 1 per cent higher than on municipal bonds. For the present street car capitalization of \$150,000,000 that would mean \$1,500,000 a year. For 60 per cent of the proposed half-billion dollar capitalization is would mean \$3,000,000 a year. That annual loss to the city might mean the difference between a practicable, successful municipal ownership plan and a failure. I have never favored any municipal ownership plan except by the use of the general credit of the city. The proposed alternative would, in my opinion, represent bad business judgment.

"If we do not mean business in talking about municipal ownership, I think we should cast away any guise of meaning business. If we do mean business I think we should openly and definitely proceed by the constitution revision method. If the corporation interests in Chicago and the