

clears, though that may be generations hence, history will have to be re-written, for it will then be plain that one of the all-including Events has culminated at last. Then the historian will say: "As once the unconscious test of the life and value of each individual was his or her real attitude towards human slavery, so now (as at last we can perceive) the unconscious test these hundred years has been, *ultimate democracy*—in other words, one's real attitude of mind towards all natural resources and all other people.



Then, once more, in an obscure corner of the Threshing Floors of eternity some one will ask a question, will utter a protest against ancient wrong; and a little dust will rise, and earth will begin to tremble with its new-found problem, and before the ink is dry on the last page of the re-written histories, they will have become monuments of error, as another dawn begins to broaden over the world.

But now, in 1912, the dust and noise of the uncleaned Threshing Floors are everywhere, day and night; and each one of us, from hobo to billionaire, from jail-bird to emperor, must be flailed, sifted, winnowed.

CHARLES HOWARD SHINN.



## DIRECT LEGISLATION.

Direct legislation embraces three main processes known as the Initiative, Referendum and Recall. The Initiative is the proposal of a law by the people, the Referendum is the submission of a law to the people, the Recall makes it possible for the voters to oust public officers who prove recreant to duty.



There is a confused impression in the minds of many that the choosing of rulers is the substance of freedom and self-government: that a people who elect their lawmakers are really making the laws. It is this wrong impression which breeds that spirit of disinterest which is manifest in marking the ballot. We very often hear voters say that it makes little difference to the great majority how the ballot is marked, that one set of office-seekers will turn out as bad as another. In other words, that there is no choice between the candidates.

The exercise of the right of suffrage does not constitute self-government. The selection of a Governor is not governing, any more than the selection of a captain is commanding, or the choice

of an organist or pianist is playing. The choice of a legislature is not self-government any more than the selection of a jailor or the choice of a jail is freedom. An apprentice may be allowed to choose the master to whom he is to be bound for years, and a lunatic or minor who is deemed incapable of governing his own affairs may, nevertheless, have the privilege of selecting the guardian who is to govern him. A people may elect their rulers and yet live under an absolute despotism.

This was true in old Rome when the king was elected by the whole body of citizens. It is true now of the Western Fulahs in Africa and the Kamtsadales in Asia, who elect their chiefs, but after election must obey the head man's orders. It is true in many of the cities of America, where the people go to the polls year after year in the fond delusion that they have a voice in the administration of public affairs, whereas in reality a ring of rascals holds the city in its grasp. Which ever nominee the citizens may vote for, the ring will rule the same as before; enacting its private purposes into law, pouring the public moneys into its purse, filling appointments with its creatures to perpetuate its power, and controlling the city for its plunder, regardless of the interests or the wishes of the people.

This is true in the nation and the States as well as in the cities. The rule of a Congress or legislature that does the will of a railroad or syndicate of gamblers in opposition to public opinion and the good of the commonwealth, is a despotism as truly as ever the rule of a Tarquin or a Caesar was. Napoleon himself, the arch-despot of modern times, was elected to his imperial power.



Direct Legislation is not so dangerous as present-day political bosses would have us believe. There is method in their madness. What is proposed is merely to get back to pure democratic government, that is, so far as it may be deemed practicable. Back to the town-meeting principle of government, where every man has a personal interest in shaping the politics of his city, State and Nation. What is wanted is a *popular* government as against the present *delegated* government, which has proved unsatisfactory.

Senator Bourne of Oregon well puts it when he says, "The Initiative and Referendum is the keystone of the arch of popular government, for by means of this the people may accomplish such other reforms as they desire. The Initiative develops the electorate because it encourages study of principles and policies of government, and affords the originator of new ideas in government an op-

portunity to secure popular judgment upon his measures if a certain per cent. of the voters of his State deem the same worthy of submission to popular vote. The Referendum prevents misuse of the power temporarily centralized in the legislature."



Unquestionably the Referendum will tend to purify politics and elevate government. Under the Initiative and Referendum it would no longer pay rich corporations to buy franchises from legislatures, because the legislature could not settle the matter; the people have the final decision, and they are so many that it might cost more to buy their votes for the franchise than the privilege is worth. Why not adopt that method which will minimize the possibility of Big Business controlling law-making functions?

We all know that a powerful lobby is continually at work in State and national capitols. In whose interests are they laboring? Not in yours and mine—the great mass of voters. They are in the employ of business interests. It costs money to employ clever lawyers for the purpose of safeguarding monopolistic privileges.

It is to make ineffective the work of these paid hirelings that Direct Legislation aims. Their baneful influence over legislation is felt by the housekeeper and the voter. It is an influence which negatives the will of thousands of honest voters.

The fundamental political argument for Direct Legislation is that it is necessary to true self government. It is the only practicable means of destroying the great law-making monopoly which holds us in its grip today, and which is not only a terrible evil in itself, but the prolific parent and protector of other monopolies and oppressions.

If the control of affairs is put into the hands of a few men for life, without responsibility to the controlled, everybody recognizes the fact that the government is an aristocracy. If the control is put in the hands of a few for two or three years without responsibility to the controlled during that time, there is an aristocracy as much as before. To have a government by the people, the legislative agents must be subject to the control of the people every moment. If for one instant they cease to be subject to the orders of the people, for that instant they cease to be servants, and become sovereigns in place of the people.

VICTOR E. FEHRNSTROM.



The more society is improved and education perfected, the more equality will prevail and liberty be extended.—Aristotle.

## CONDENSED EDITORIALS

### A HIGHER KIND OF POLITICS.

Louis F. Post, in the Chicago Daily Press of August 24.

Who is to be the next President makes little difference, compared with the kind of laws we are to have. So watch Ohio, the State that is going to talk about law-making for herself before she helps again at President-making for the rest of us.

Ohio will talk for herself, but she will talk to us all. And her voice will be the voice of her people, not of her "Jackpotters."

Her Constitutional Convention, presided over by Herbert S. Bigelow, a fundamental democrat, has whipped into shape 41 amendments to the Constitution of the State. Her voters are to say on the 3rd of September whether or not those amendments are the kind of laws they want.

They will decide such questions as these: A three-fourths vote for jury verdicts? No death penalty? Reasonable hours, pay and conditions for labor? Conservation of natural resources? Easy and safe transfers of real estate? No prison-labor by contract? Regulation and limitation of the liquor traffic? An easier way to amend the State Constitution?

They will also decide the question of woman suffrage. Six States already allow women to vote at all elections—Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Washington and California. Will Ohio be the seventh?

And they will decide the question of home rule for cities. Shall every Ohio city have the right to make its own charter by the vote of its own inhabitants, and to manage its own light, heat and traction services as most cities are now allowed to manage their own water supply?

The Ohio voters will also decide the question of adopting the Initiative and Referendum, one or the other of which, or both, have been adopted in more than a quarter of the States—South Dakota, Utah, Oregon, Nevada, Montana, Oklahoma, Maine, Missouri, Michigan, Arkansas, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico and California. By the Initiative and Referendum, representative government may be prevented from representing private instead of public interests. If representatives pass laws the people don't want, the Referendum would empower a majority of the people to say, "Veto!" If representatives refuse to pass laws the people do want, the Initiative would empower a majority of the people to say, "Let them be laws nevertheless!"

Watch the September election returns from Ohio, and see what kind of thinking on those subjects the "Buckeyes" are doing.



'An Arab said to his son, "O my child, in the day of resurrection they will ask you, 'What have you done in the world?' and not 'From whom are you descended?' That is, they will inquire about your virtue, and not about your father."—Saadi.