

attempt of the traction ring to "put it over" them. Not only are the essential facts getting to be understood, but the refusal of the Chamber of Commerce to debate the question, and the evident coming together against the Schmidt ordinance of all the old time traction-ring leaders and camp followers, are having their natural and wholesome effect. The indications point to the adoption of the Schmidt ordinance at the referendum on the 3d, as distinctly as the arguments against it show the weakness of the case of its adversaries.

\* \* \*

### GRAFT.

Very comprehensive is this term "graft," and both definite and elastic. It is, therefore, a dangerous word to use at random. Belonging in the domain of ethics, though outside of law, it involves the thought of getting something for nothing, or of appropriating covertly, indirectly, or by stealth that which is not rightfully ours, yet without legal criminality. To grasp its significance we must consider what is rightfully ours. This is necessary in order that we may know what is *not*, and thereby apply the ethical test.

+

Starting with the assumption that our existing possessions are morally as well as legally ours, let us ask this question: "How can those who desire money, wealth or property get possession of it?" The answer seems to be: By working, or by begging, or by stealing.

Working (giving service in some form of hand or brain labor) is simply earning, and squares with the moral law. Begging is inexcusable and immoral except where the beggar is crippled or suffering from deprivation of opportunity to labor. Stealing is recognized by the Mosaic tablets in the command, "Thou shalt not steal," and is noted by statutory law, along with many near-synonyms such as purloining, embezzling, borrowing-and-forgetting-to-return, robbery, plunder, pillage and the rest. But modern life has developed a dangerously subtle method of obtaining the wealth or property of others which hardly comes under the head of earning or begging or stealing. This method we call "graft."

Probably the only difference is in the manner of appropriation, and not in the moral turpitude of the acts, which run all the way from taking a peanut from the vender because you are a policeman, to plundering a city of its public service utilities or pillaging a nation by tariff laws.

At first, borrowing - and - forgetting - to - return

methods might seem to belong in the graft category, but examination will show a delicate difference—a difference that may suggest the earmark of all graft. Whereas the borrower requests and the lender voluntarily accedes, the grafter demands and the grafter complies, not voluntarily, but under coercion.

In the petty individual grafts illustrated by peanut appropriations, we have the coercive force of official position pressing for concessions from the vender who looks for immunities or protection that might not be otherwise obtainable. In the case of public service plunder we have a greater complexity of minor factors converging into economic and institutional conditions, based on general ignorance of social rights and relations.

+

The concession of a franchise, is the granting of a private privilege. It creates a class having the power of government over the many. With public service corporations that control public highways, this power is almost incalculable. It involves control of city streets, of county and State roads, and of national highways. It embraces gas, electricity, light, heat, sometimes water, telephone, telegraph, and street, State and national railways, etc.—the entire arterial system of the nation for the transportation of persons and property and the transmission of service and intelligence. This is truly a government by the few within a government of the many.

The granting of a franchise is not needed for a grocery store, carpenter shop or blacksmith shop. Yet the greed for privilege is gradually extending into the smaller details of commercial life through fine-interferences called licenses. Were public service corporations merely commercial or manufacturing affairs there would be no need of franchises. Financial investments would be made on the ordinary basis of sound business. Charges would be levied to cover the legitimate investment—including maintenance of unimpaired property, and cost of producing the required service, including wages and interest on investment. This is all that morally legitimate business has a right to or does demand.

But in franchise grants there is something vastly more important than legitimate business. There is a delegated taxing power of government which is capitalized by the grantees. This capitalized power is sold on the market. With the proceeds the tangible equipment is paid for. And then the people, whose grants have paid for all, are com-

pelled to pay again in price for use. Add to this the "unearned increment" constantly accruing by reason of community growth, and the results are enormous.

+

These special privileges of the national steam roads of the United States alone, amount to eighty-hundred million dollars (\$8,000,000,000) in excess of the fifty-hundred million dollars (\$5,000,000,000) of actual cost of created property. On a five per cent basis this would amount to an excess tribute over the normal cost of service of some four-hundred millions (\$400,000,000) annually.

The values (excess) of the New York city railways are calculated to be forty millions (\$40,000,000) annually.

Here is a daily, hourly, unjust tribute, a plunder of the nation's enterprise and thrift, a "graft," that will account for much of the difficulties of labor and capital without going any further. It also accounts for the "war-chest" fillings—the supplies that are used to prostitute legislatures, to buy such judges as can be bought, to purchase the legal power to interfere with attempts at restoration by the people, to get hold of and organize a venal press to confuse, mislead and betray. Out of the pockets of the people themselves come the fund that is used to destroy them.

When we look further at the great power that can be, and has been, used by this combination to destroy opposing individuals, business and manufacturing enterprises, towns and even cities in some cases, can we wonder at the power of graft? Yet this is only one of the great powers, and is a secondary one, which is based on the great primary one of private appropriation of ground rents—this being another story.

+

It is very probable that ninety per cent of all that we know of graft in America arises from the private appropriation of these enormous publicly created values—the operation of the law of freedom of competition among an industrial mass pressing against artificial restrictions legislatively created for the benefit of a privileged few. In the competition of this slave-mass, artificially restricted by privilege, the "line of least resistance," "the easiest way," is toward the service of privilege. Here is the most to be gained by the least exertion.

The eventual outcome? (1) A caste society of privileged and unprivileged—with its degeneracy and ultimate destruction; or (2) a socialist com-

monwealth—with its disintegration through factions fighting for the oligarchic or autocratic power to regulate the forms of restrictions it deems necessary to impose; or (3) the greatest free society in the history of the world made possible (a) by the restoration of truly democratic-republican government—through universal use of the Initiative, Referendum and Recall, and (b) by the absolute destruction of every form of special privilege known to man, which would involve free-trade, free highways, and free land—obtainable by taking into the public treasuries all publicly created values and leaving to the individual all personal creations, without tax, let or hindrance.

Dangerous graft would then be no more.

+

Graft is no more inherent in human nature than is typhoid, tuberculosis or poverty. It is an abnormal, not a normal condition. It is pathological, not a physiological condition. Qualities that we condemn in a great grafter we might have reason to commend in a free citizen.

We are not free. A new civilization has been born. It has burst its bonds, and many of us are still pecking about at the broken shell—not yet knowing that we are out in the open air, ready to grow. Our ancient forms of government, borrowed from Rome, through England, many of them, have become fetiches unworthy of preservation. The real seats of government to-day are in the commercial centers. Commercial rulers allow us to peck at and play with obsolete forms, to keep us amused or busy till we are wise enough to quit this foolish worship and attend to business.

Some of the master-grafters of the land are great constructive workers. They are building the world. They are too busy to wait for us to cease our foolishness, so they continue to build along perverted lines rather than not build at all. Divert this action into right channels, and all will be well with the world.

+

The "yellow-jack" in Havana, manifested itself in the individual as a dangerous fever. It was due to physical environment socially changeable. Centuries of medication of the individual victims did not kill it. That work was only puttering with the symptoms. But correct civic thinking resulted in sanitary engineering that changed the physical environment, and lo, the "yellow-jack" was dead. Really a social disease, it was killed by right civic action.

Graft is the individual manifestation of a social disease curable by removing the cause through

social action. A degenerate people; a "Reign of Terror"; a "French Revolution"—this tells the story of France on the same lines.

Must we have a "terror," or a "revolution," or shall we by civic sanitary engineering remove the cause? It is up to us. We may be sure that anything short of removing the cause will be ineffectual, and the cause can be removed. The rational civic will of a great people can build this nation in all its parts, to the fulness of its best ideals.

EDMUND NORTON.

---

## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

---

### AUSTRALIA.

Corowa, New South Wales, June 3, 1909.

The Federal Parliament adjourned soon after the formation of the Fisher (Labor) ministry last November (vol. xi, p. 918). The principal planks of the Government program, as announced by Mr. Fisher in April, were: A graduated tax on land values, with \$25,000 exemption; referendum to amend the Constitution so as to empower the Federal Parliament to fix rates of wages ("new protection"); an Australian navy; provision of land defences by means of a modified form of conscription; control of the currency, and a Commonwealth note issue; nationalization of the iron industry; the severance of Commonwealth from State finances on an equitable basis after 1910, the Commonwealth to take over the State debts.

✦

During the recess, repeated efforts were made to get the three parties in opposition to the Government to join together, and in the middle of May a fusion was effected, with Mr. Deakin as leader of the united party. When the House met at the end of the month, the Fisher ministry was defeated by 39 votes to 30. Four members who formerly supported Mr. Deakin, including Sir William Lyne, who was treasurer in his last ministry, refused to join in the fusion and voted with the Labor party.

Mr. Fisher asked for a dissolution of Parliament, but this was refused, and Mr. Deakin has formed a new ministry.

Following are the terms on which the fusion was made: (1) No interference with the present customs tariff; (2) a referendum to be taken to amend the Constitution to enable a State Wages Board or Arbitration Court to refer to the Interstate Commission for adjustment any unfair competitive rates or conditions in another State (this amendment not to be sought if all the States authorize the Commonwealth to legislate to this extent); (3) to develop the Australian navy and the military forces, with the advice and assistance of the British admiralty and war office; (4) until a complete scheme is prepared to adjust the financial relations of the Commonwealth and the States, an interim arrangement to be proposed for dealing with the Customs and Excise revenue of the Commonwealth (the Federal Constitution provides that, until the end of 1910, at least three-fourths of the revenue from customs and excise must be paid over to the States).

State elections were held in Tasmania at the end of April, when the Labor party increased from seven to twelve in a House of 30. An excellent method of proportional voting (a modification of the Hare system) was employed at this election, and appears to have given general satisfaction. For the lower house elections, the State was divided into five constituencies, each returning six members. Miss C. H. Spence, of Adelaide, and Mr. E. J. Nanson, professor of mathematics at the Melbourne University, are the chief advocates in Australia of proportional voting, and it is due largely to their efforts that it was adopted in Tasmania.

ERNEST BRAY.

---

## INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

---

### PROFESSOR FOSTER'S CASE.

Chicago, July 10.

I so seldom find anything in *The Public* editorials with which I am not in accord that I feel more free to express my disagreement with a part of your article entitled "Paganistic Queasiness" (p. 629). In this editorial you speak of the action of the Baptist ministers in expelling Professor Foster from their conference. You call the ministers "queasy" and "pagans," and you are puzzled to know why Professor Foster objects to his own expulsion "instead of wearing the honor with ill-concealed pride." We all have a right to our opinion, but in my judgment the ministers did right to expel Prof. Foster, and I do not see how they can be justly termed "queasy." I did not think then (and I am still of the same opinion) that I deserved to be called "queasy" or "sick at the stomach," when I enlisted in the Union army in the sixties. I stood up for a principle then, and the ministers, as I believe, were doing the same thing when they expelled Professor Foster. Professor Foster has a perfect right to believe and say what he pleases, but he should give his utterances at the right place, and under the proper conditions. One writer expresses my views when he says:—"Prof. Foster is at liberty to express himself within the bounds voluntarily placed upon himself by his social connections. Should he wish to free himself he should at once relieve himself of the restricting obligations by severing his connections. This is the only honorable way and any other way is an imposition. To prate about liberty and the abuse of such in the case of Prof. Foster is begging the question. Unbridled liberty is anarchy and destructive." As the Inter Ocean well said—"Is it honorable and honest for a man to enter an institution under pledge to support it, and then insist on staying in it while trying to destroy it? . . . It is a question that has nothing to do with theology, orthodox or heterodox."

JAMES P. CADMAN.

✦ ✦ ✦

A man hurried into a quick lunch restaurant recently and called to the waiter: "Give me a ham sandwich."

"Yes, sir," said the waiter, reaching for the sandwich, "will you eat it or take it with you?"

"Both!" was the unexpected but obvious reply.—*Ladies' Home Journal*.