

the Recall in all its applications and not to judges alone. And what a delectable argument it is! A band of outlaws, in a wild mountain region, shoot to death the sheriff, the prosecutor and the judge for doing their duty; therefore it is dangerous to reserve to the law-abiding people of any community the right to recall from office, in a formal and peaceable manner, by their votes, any sheriff, prosecutor or judge for not doing his duty! The Recall is lucky in the kind of opposition it provokes.



### Coal Strikers and Coal Trustees.

England, Germany and the United States are threatened with a coal famine in the very centers of inexhaustible natural deposits of coal, and an impotent public opinion is appalled. Such expression as it gets may be resolved into curses at striking coal miners. But coal miners have a right to strike. Their labor is their own. Slavery aside, and coal miners are under no obligations, legal or moral, to keep at work. It is for them to say whether or not they will dig coal for the pay they are offered; and they have as much right to say it collectively as individually. Curse them if it relieves your mind, but rest under no delusion. If you are cold because they won't dig coal, it is no more their affair than it is yours if they are hungry because you won't furnish them with food.



You are cursing in the wrong direction when you curse the strikers. You bark up the wrong tree. Instead of cursing them, curse the owners. The owners of natural coal deposits are responsible if coal is short-mined. They are responsible if there is a coal famine where natural coal deposits are abundant, for they hold title to those natural deposits as trustees for the common good. On no other sound principle can monopoly of these free gifts of nature be justified or excused. When mining stops in consequence of labor strikes, the crucial question is not whether strikers are over-exacting; it is whether owners of natural coal deposits are true to their trust.



Of course it is conceivable that the demands upon the owners of natural coal deposits by coal miners might be so irrational and extravagant as to make stoppage unavoidable. Mine owners are under no more obligation to keep on operating at a loss than are miners to keep on working at all. But mine owners *are* under obligations to keep on operating or surrender their trust. They must not

be allowed both to monopolize the coal deposits and to refuse to operate them. Unless they surrender the deposits they owe a duty to come to terms with the coal miners, to the end that coal mining shall go on without interruption. If they won't do this, then the government owes the duty of rescinding their trusteeship, of taking over the mines, and of producing coal by direct governmental operation.



So revolutionary an alternative may not in form be necessary, but the principle must be recognized. If the trust obligations of coal deposit owners are not redeemed, their trust must be rescinded; and the trustees must understand that it will be rescinded if necessary. Short of government operation there are many available methods, one of which, neither revolutionary nor beyond immediate reach, might fully serve the purpose. A reasonable minimum wage for coal-mining, based upon the principle that the ownership of natural coal deposits is a public trust and coupled with a warning that if this wage is refused as a minimum the trust method will be superseded by government operation, would probably be enough to prevent coal famines where natural coal deposits are plentiful. Natural coal deposits are essentially common property; how they shall be utilized for the common good raises a question of method; this question has been answered so far by creating ownerships in trust; but if the trust method fails, another method must be adopted. Trustees must be ejected if they cannot keep up the coal supply; and some method, ranging from government regulation or special taxation to governmental operation, must take its place.



### Waterpower Trusteeships.

Not content with permitting incompetent and unfaithful trusteeships of all our natural coal deposits, public opinion has kept silent while similar trusteeships are in process of creation for all our water power. One vigilant official sounds a warning. This is the commissioner of corporations, Herbert Knox Smith.



There would of course be no great danger in this trusteeing of waterpower were it not for the fact that the trusteeships are allowed to take on the color of property rights. The same absurd anomaly once attached to public office. It was regarded as the private property of the incumbent; and even to this day that absurdity survives in a

way. It is dying out, however, and the true principle that public office is a public trust has gained a strong foothold. The general establishment of the Recall would make its foothold firm. But the same principle is as sound with reference to occupancy of natural resources as to occupancy of public office.



All occupancy of natural resources is essentially a trust. If the occupancy take the form of ownership, that form should never be allowed to transmute itself into the substance of ownership. If it does, then all such advantages as it may have in form, while the idea of a trust remains vital within the form, will disappear; and some better form for conserving public rights must be adopted. Regarding waterpower, as with coal deposits, the form of ownership appears to have so far transmuted itself into legal substance that revolutionary remedies may be necessary to cure the resulting evils. There may, however, be enough waterpower left to afford a nucleus for legislative action in the way of a preliminary declaration of trust as to all future acquisitions of nominal ownership. But the hope is probably hopeless. History testifies strongly to the stubbornness of the possessing classes in clinging optimistically to their graft until the deluge comes—as come it always does.



### Public Service Management.

When Willis J. Spaulding, commissioner of public works of Springfield, Illinois, told of his work in speaking at the Illinois Water Supply Association, he made very plain the conditions of success in managing public service utilities. There was nothing overbearing or discourteous about what he said or the way he said it. He recognized that the membership of the association was about equally divided between those operating private and those operating municipal water plants; and he confessed that while he operated a municipal plant, he could imagine himself as operating or owning a private one, and in that case as probably pointing out the advantages of private ownership. But, he went on—

I hope no city in the State which owns its water plant is so unfortunate as to have it in charge of officials who do not believe that the city can successfully operate such a utility. Such officials are very apt to proceed to demonstrate by their management that their opinion is right. . . . To furnish the best service at the lowest possible cost should be the ambition and persistent effort of the water works manager, whether of a public or private plant. Approaching the subject with this purpose in mind

here is found a vast field for human endeavor and public service, full of interest and often presenting some very perplexing problems. . . . There is and should be a close and active relation between the public service corporation and the public whom they serve. If it be called the relation of master and servant, then the public should be the master. . . . The manager of a municipal plant often feels that his political life is at stake and acts a good deal like the Irishman in battle when he was charged with cowardice. He said he would rather be a coward for five minutes than a corpse the rest of his life. . . . It is very natural for us who hold our positions subject to the fortunes of politics to shun any policies which invite unfavorable criticism, even though we know them to be in the long run of great practical value to the patrons as a whole. However, in my rather limited political experience, I have observed that a few persons who may be affected adversely by a change of method, and there are always some of these, often exert an influence out of all proportion to their number. The average citizen is honest and fair and is interested in efficient government, especially in an efficient water department, and will, nine times out of ten, back up any honest progressive measure if given a reasonable chance to understand it. When we complain that we can not adopt this or that step in economy or toward equality on account of politics, let us try to be sure that we are not standing in mortal fear of a man of straw. . . . Under public ownership the water department becomes an arm of the government. The purpose of government, and in fact the only excuse for government, as I see it, is to preserve equitable relations between the individual members of the community. The working out of some phase of this great and comprehensive purpose is the function of each official, whether important or humble. In adopting or proposing policies in a water department the first consideration should be, are they equitable and will they promote the common good? We cannot have things ideal, but we can draw a picture or a blue print as it were of an ideal and work toward it, and at least leave things a little better than we found them.



### School Houses in Politics.

George A. Schilling's advice to the Chicago school board, that it allow school rooms to be used out of school hours for political meetings, is good advice. The school house should everywhere be the center of civic thought and activity. Making school houses non-partisan is in keeping with the old fashioned notion of making school debates non-partisan. The good effect upon school education of substituting live political questions for such soporifics as the question of a preference for city or for country life, is manifest. Equally so is the making of the school house a center for the social and political intercourse of its district. The principal argument against it is that which does duty chiefly against woman suffrage, the argument that