

The Grain Grower's Guide

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It Will Stop the Spoils System in Canada



SINCE the plan of direct legislation has been endorsed by the great majority of Grain Growers' Associations, and United Farmers' Unions in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta it has become a subject of live, pulsating interest to the members. The system

proposed of the initiative, referendum and recall has been acclaimed by nine-tenths of those who have had the matter explained to them as a remedy for the present day legislative evils.

In view of this, then, it will be opportune to trace the beginnings of effective thought on this subject, and to examine the progress of its advancement in the world to the present time.

The drift of public sentiment towards the extension of the initiative and referendum is shown by the early articles written upon the subject. In 1886 Professor A. V. Dicey of Oxford University wrote on the referendum in "The Nation"; in 1888 Boyd Winchester, U. S. Minister to Switzerland, began to write about Swiss institutions; Professor Bernard Moses in the following year published an essay on "The Federal Government of Switzerland" and Sir Francis Adams "Swiss Confederation" also appeared in 1889.

In 1890 the "Universal Review" contained an article on the referendum by E. A. Freeman, and W. D. McCrackan wrote a series of letters on the initiative and referendum for the New York Evening Post, and followed them with articles in other publications. In 1891-2 many writers took up the subject, and the first direct legislation organization in America was formed in Newark in 1892. There is now a National Direct Legislation League.

Since the early nineties there has been so much written on the subject that today it requires six or eight pages of small type to record the titles of the books and leading articles which have been published in the United States and Canada. That there is nothing partizan about the movement is shown by the fact that it has received support from the press of all shades of political partizanship. In some of the states in the union it has been made a plank in the platform of every party in the state. In England the conservative party has stated the referendum as one of its leading aims, and in Australia a powerful movement is on foot to secure the obligatory referendum in case of any deadlocks or legislative disagreement between the two houses.

Endorsed by Leaders of Thought

Among the supporters of direct legislation are such men as John Wanamaker, William J. Bryan, John J. Woolley, the prohibitionist, Samuel Gompers, labor leader, Dr. Lyman Abbott, Lord Salisbury, Lord Rosebery, William Dean Howells, Arthur J. Balfour, Hon. Robert Treat Paine, Jr. and Frances E. Willard.

William Dean Howells wrote "I am altogether in favor of the initiative and referendum as the only means of allowing the people really to take part in making their laws and governing themselves."

A letter from Rev. Lyman Abbott contains these words: "In my judgment the remedy for the evils of democracy is more democracy; a fresh appeal from the few to the many; from the managers to the people. I believe in the referendum and within limits the initiative because it is one form of this appeal from the few to the many."

Something about the Growth of Direct Legislation; What it has Accomplished; What the Leaders of Thought Think of it; How it Destroys the Power of Legislators to Legislate for personal ends; Its Tremendous Advantage over the present system by means of which Party Success means Power to Mould the Laws of the Country



The Hon. John Wanamaker wrote, "I heartily approve of the idea of giving the people a veto on corrupt legislation. The movement to secure for the people a more direct and immediate control over legislation shall have my support. I trust such a movement will receive the thoughtful attention of all who would improve our political and industrial conditions. I am willing to trust public questions to the intelligence and conscience of the people."

Frances E. Willard, president of the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union, wrote: "I believe in direct legislation and think it is so greatly needed that language cannot express the dire necessity under which we find ourselves. The reign of the people is the one thing my soul desires to see;

because they have lost control of their government, the most powerful instrumentality for the creation and distribution of wealth in society. Its government must be recovered by the American people, peaceably if possible, but it must be recovered. Direct legislation would be the ideal means for this peaceable revolution. If the revolution is to be accomplished otherwise, direct legislation will stand forth in the new order as the only means for expressing the popular will that a free people will exercise. No future republic will ever repeat the mistake of giving its delegates the opportunity to become its masters."

Lord Salisbury, the great English statesman, has said: "I believe that nothing could oppose a bulwark to popular passion except an arrangement for

people's will is sovereign all the time. From absolute king to sovereign people—that is the fundamental movement of the age; and do you think it will stop part way? Will forces that the kings and emperors and aristocracies of Europe have not been able to resist be held in check by a few politicians and plutocrats? Not if the people continue to think. Not if the press and the school can be kept from the schemers' control. If the movement toward democracy does not stop—if the evolution of equality in government does not cease, direct legislation must come. It has come in Switzerland and to a large extent in America, is used to some extent in England and France; is vigorously demanded in New Zealand and Australia, and is bound to come here, and in every other country where the trend to democracy is strong, because there is no other way in which the rule of the few can be entirely supplanted by the rule of the many."

An idea of how the movement for direct legislation has grown in the United States may be gained from the fact that in the last few years direct legislation amendments or laws have been introduced in almost every legislature in the country. The following are some of the states where direct legislation measures have been introduced: Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Delaware, New Jersey, Maine, Massachusetts, Missouri, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Washington, Montana, Idaho, New York, Illinois, North and South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Oregon, Washington, California and perhaps elsewhere. In some states vigorous work has been done for the referendum at every opportunity since 1894. In a number of cases the measure has passed one house and in some cases both houses, but failed for lack of a 2-3 vote or for some other reason. In still other cases, the bill came within a few votes of passing.

South Dakota was the first state to embody, in November, 1898, constitutional provisions for the initiative and referendum. Oregon was the second state to pass a constitutional amendment for direct legislation which was adopted on June 4, 1906, by a vote of 47,678 to 16,735. The people of Oregon are now proving the educational value of their legislative responsibility. A committee of 18 citizens has only recently drawn up a bill for new constitutional amendments, thanks to the freedom of initiative accorded them. It is "Designed to provide a system by which the conduct of state and county government may be made as efficient and economical as the management by the citizens of their private business."

Prevented a Franchise Grab

An instance of the benefits of the referendum was recently afforded in Kansas City where the people, with their votes, prevented a franchise grab. The existing franchises of the Kansas City Street Car Company will expire in 1925. Taking time by the forelock, the company sought an extension of 20 years, carrying their monopoly down to 1951. This was granted by the council and approved by the mayor, but was checked by the referendum. The ordinance made little or no provision for public protection, and it re-enacted all legal rights as to fares which the company now have.

The late Professor Frank Parsons, in his book, "The City for the People,"

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the reign of the politician is a public ignominy. I also believe that direct legislation is certain to become the great political issue in the immediate future. The people are being educated by events. They are coming to see that there is no hope for reform under the existing system of voting."

The following extract is from a letter written by Henry D. Lloyd, author of "Wealth Against Commonwealth":

"Direct legislation—the initiative and referendum—must be supported by every believer in free government. The people have carelessly allowed their delegates in party, corporation and government to become their rulers, and now they are awakening to the startling fact that the delegate has become their exploiter. The people are losing control of their means of subsistence

deliberate and careful reference of any matter in dispute to the votes of the people."

Direct Legislation Must Come

The late Professor Frank Parsons writes in his book, "The City for the People": "A little more than a hundred years ago every nation in the civilized world was under an absolute aristocracy. The past century has been full of tremendous movement in the direction of democracy; 1775 all absolute monarchy; 1875 not an absolute government in America or Europe, except in Russia and Turkey; all the rest on the high ground of constitutional government, with representative houses and wide suffrage, or still further up the slope where kings and nobles absolutely vanish, with a few almost at the top, where the