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Honest Answers to Honest Questions

BY ALLAN L. BENSON

**Author of Socialism Made Plain, Confessions of Capitalism, New Zealand's
Reply to Pessimism, etc.**



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PREFACE.

Socialists are always glad to answer honest questions regarding the plan of government that they advocate. Not only are Socialists glad to answer honest questions, but they invite such questions. We make our appeal to the intelligence of the country. And the asking of a question is always the indication of a mind in action.

This pamphlet is intended to reply to a few of the questions that are most frequently asked of every Socialist. They have been answered as fairly, as honestly and as intelligently as the writer is capable of answering them. It is confidently hoped and believed that the spirit of fairness will be apparent to every reader. And while the writer differs from all of those who ask questions, he gives them credit for the same honesty of purpose and the same intelligence that he hopes all who differ from him will concede to him.

Readers of this pamphlet who desire to ask other questions about Socialism should address their inquiries to the *Social-Democratic Herald*, Milwaukee, Wis. The questions and the answers will be printed in the *Herald*. In fact, I personally urge everyone who has any interest in the study of the subject of Socialism to send 10 cents to the *Herald* for a trial subscription of 10 weeks. I consider the *Herald* one of the two or three papers in the whole country that are doing really constructive work in behalf of Socialism. No paper is doing better work than the *Herald*. You ought to become acquainted with it.

Detroit, Mich.

ALLAN L. BENSON.

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Author of "SOCIALISM MADE PLAIN" etc.

A great many good men cannot understand why Social-Democrats should advocate the ownership by the government of all the railroads, steamships, factories, mines, and industries of all kinds. Government is corrupt, they say. It cannot always be trusted to do well all that we now ask it to do. Why then, they ask, should we entrust greater responsibilities to a government that has not always been faithful in smaller things; that is sometimes dishonest, sometimes incompetent and sometimes both dishonest and incompetent. And furthermore, these critics ask, would not the ownership of all industry by the people through the government, result in the formation of a corrupt political machine that could plunder the people at will with little danger of being overthrown, because of the great number of votes that it might be able to control?

These are all fair questions. They occur, in one form or another, to almost everybody who gives consideration to the subject of Socialism. They strike within reaching distance of the heart of Socialism. If they could not be satisfactorily answered, Socialism would be a mere dream, unworthy of the consideration of any practical man. It therefore becomes necessary for Socialists to answer these questions and to answer them fairly. To do so is the purpose of this pamphlet.

It is the System that is Wrong.

It may as well be admitted at the beginning that if government under Social-Democracy were to be the same as government under capitalism—the kind of government we now have—that many of the criticisms implied in the foregoing questions would be well based. Conditions would not be as bad as they now are, but they would not be enough better than existing conditions to make the arrangement satisfactory. Justice would not be done and those who are now Socialists would be the first ones to agitate for something else.

It may therefore be presumed that when Socialists advocate the ownership of all industries by the people through the government that they contemplate the formation of a different government—a better government. But can such a government be formed, ask the critics? Are Socialists more nearly honest than Democrats and Republicans? And is it not "human nature" to be selfish and to let selfishness run to seed and become graft when the possession of a public office gives the holder an opportunity to betray the people for his own private profit?

These are more good questions, and as such they are entitled to good answers—convincing answers if they can be given. Socialists contend that convincing answers can be given to these questions.

In reply, we declare that it is possible to establish a better government than we now have—a government in which legislation will not be

bought and sold and a government that will deal fairly with all of the people. Yet we do not contend we are more nearly honest than Democrats or Republicans. That which we call the "social conscience," or the desire for the well being of the whole community, tends to make Socialists more nearly honest than a man who desires only the well being of himself. But that is not enough. Social-Democrats make no great claims for themselves as individuals. They are only human. They like the good things of life and dislike the bad things as much as does any Democrat or Republican. And, realizing as they do that money brings the good things and lack of it the bad things, they are subject to temptation. And if Socialists were sharged with the duty of administering such a government as we now have, all of them would not stand the strain of their temptations. Some of them would betray their trusts and be sent to the penitentiary, just as some of the capitalist office holders who betray their trusts are now sent to the penitentiary. In short, human nature is just the same in all parties and Social-Democrats are neither better nor worse than anybody else. The great bulk of those who vote the Democratic and Republican tickets are honest. They are simple folk like ourselves who work hard for a living, get little for their work, are not tempted much because temptation does not come their way and therefore do not fall. And the Republican and Democratic office holders who betray their trusts were in the beginning good men, too. Their positions simply brought too many temptations to bear upon them. There were too many opportunities to improve their own conditions at the expense of others. And really, there is much to be said in favor of the great number of Democratic and Republican office holders who remain honest in spite of the tremendous temptations to be dishonest. It takes a real man to remain honest and poor when he has the opportunity to become dishonest and rich. And the pity of it is that the dishonest office holders can nevertheless sell out the people so often and thus destroy all of the efforts of the honest officials to bring about honest government.

Origin of Bad Government.

In order to bring about good government, it therefore becomes necessary to trace bad government to its origin, to seek out its source, and learn, if we can, whence bad government springs. Consider, therefore, whether these be not facts:

1—Government can be administered for the benefit of all of the people, or for the benefit of some of the people;

2—If administered for the benefit of some of the people, those who receive benefits to which they are not entitled obtain benefits that belong to the rest of the people;

3—Legislation that is for the benefit of some of the people and to the disadvantage of the rest of the people is valuable to those who want unjust advantages over their fellow men, and is therefore sought by those who want such unjust advantages;

4—No legislator will wilfully vote for a measure that gives unjust advantages to a few by depriving the rest of the people of something that belongs to them—there must be an incentive;

5—The man who wants legislation that will give him an unjust advantage over his fellow men considers it commercially profitable to pay for it—to give a bribe;

6—The legislator who has it in his power to help to enact such unjust legislation is tempted by the proffered bribe; the honest legislator resists the temptation and the dishonest one does not.

Mind you, we are now excavating to lay the foundations of the structure of honest government and we do not want to remove any of the foundation stones of the present government that are good. We are not ruthless wreckers—we are builders. But we want to build well. Are these statements true then, or are they not?

Conceding that they are true, we are prepared to take the next step to discover if we can, whether the control of all industry by the government would tend to make the government more corrupt even than it is now, or whether it would tend to make the government more nearly honest, if not absolutely honest. If the statements are true, we have these further facts:

1—Laws can be enacted that will give some persons an unjust advantage over other persons;

2—Some legislators are willing to vote, when bribed either directly or indirectly, for bills that will help some persons at the expense of all the others.

We are getting down now nearly to the root of things. The next step is to learn, if we can, who these persons are who are corrupting the government by obtaining legislation that gives them an advantage over the rest of the people. And we must also try to discover in what they are engaged.

Who Corrupt Government.

Are the farmers the ones who are corrupting our government? Are the lobbyists who are hanging around every hall of legislation from the city council chamber to the national capitol—are they trying to bribe through bills that would give the *farmers* an unjust advantage over the railroads, the beef trust, the harvesting machinery trust and all the rest of us? Are the corner grocers or the labor unions the ones who are responsible for all of our bad laws? Look sharply! There are the bribe-givers! Whom do they represent? Is it *you*? Are *you* the one who makes the city council act so strangely? Is it *you* who are giving banquets and telling funny stories to the state legislature when it is in session? Are you and others like you the ones who make your homes in Washington while congress is in session and are so often seen in the company of those who have it in their power to make laws for the good of all of us, or laws that are only good for some of us and bad for the rest of us?

You know you are not. We know you are not. But we also know this:

That the lobbyists who are hanging around halls of legislation represent those who have interests that can be helped by legislation that will take money from all the rest and give it to them.

And by this we mean:

In the cities:

The street railway companies;
 The steam railway companies;
 The gas companies;
 The telephone companies;
 The water companies;
 The electric light companies.

In the states:

The steam railway companies;
 The electric railway companies;
 The telephone companies.

In the nation:

The steam railway companies;
 The express companies;
 The Standard Oil company;
 The steel trust;
 The beef trust;
 The sugar trust;
 Every monopolistic interest;
 Every privilege-entrenched interest.

This list is merely a suggestion. It is not complete. It could not be made complete in a book smaller than a dictionary. But it suggests the answer to the question we have asked. We wanted to know what interests were engaged in corrupting government. We know now.

Private Corporations the Bribe-Givers.

It is the interests that want the government to give them an unfair advantage over the rest of us. And these interests are the great corporations that are engaged in the manufacture, transportation and distribution of the things that the rest of us must have.

Not all of these interests are trying to buy legislation that would give them even a greater advantage than they now have. Most of them do not feel that it would be wise to ask for more than they have. All they fear is that some of the unjust advantages they now have will be taken away from them. Bills for that purpose are before every congress, every legislature and every city council. The possessors of these unjust advantages do not want these bills passed. They are in favor of "letting well enough alone," of "standing pat." It sometimes costs money to "stand pat." The business man, banker or whoever is concerned, pays it. The legislator receives it. Nobody else knows it. But we know that our bill does not go through. Something happened to it. And, not knowing what made the "thing" happen, we continue to vote the same ticket that is voted by the man who made "it" happen and also made the ticket that we vote.

The Social-Democrats purpose that the government shall own and operate *all* industries, including the industries just mentioned that are engaged in corrupting government. And the question under consideration is *not* whether it is necessary, or would be wise for the government to own and operate all industries. That is the subject for another argument. We are concerned now only in meeting the question of whether the public ownership of all industries would result in colossal

corruption in the government as well as in the creation of a great political machine that could not be easily overthrown. Therefore, let us ask:

Which of the industries now engaged in corrupting government would continue to do so under Socialism when these industries were owned by the government?

And why and how would they continue to corrupt the government?

The industries would be wiped out of existence as private corporations. They would, in fact, be a part of the government. There would be no possible private profit in any of them for anybody, inasmuch as they would be operated not for the purpose of making anybody rich, but for the purpose of rendering service to us all. The opportunity to increase private profit by buying unjust legislation is the only cause of existing governmental corruption. And that incentive would be removed by public ownership by the transformation of private industries into public industries operated for the good of all and the profit of none. There can be no bribery without a bribe-giver. The private owner of industry is always the bribe-giver. Public ownership would remove the private owner. And the government could not bribe itself.

Is the Answer Satisfactory?

Does the foregoing then, constitute a satisfactory answer to the question as to whether the public ownership of industry would tend to make the government even more corrupt than it is now? And mind you, we have not proposed to "change human nature." We have admitted that Social-Democrats are just men, with all the faults and weaknesses of men. We have simply proceeded on the theory that great temptations will make some men fall and that in falling, they will hurt all. So we suggest that the temptations be removed. We believe the average man wants only what belongs to him. But we also believe that human nature can stand only about so much of a strain. We want to give men an opportunity to think of being better by making it impossible for them to spend so much time trying to get what belongs to others without being caught. And in passing, let this question be asked of those defenders of the existing system who nevertheless do not like to be sold out by their law-makers:

When and how do you expect to stop corruption, so long as law-makers have it in their power to sell what the man who wants to rob you is willing to buy?

Fear of punishment will not stop the law-maker who is tempted beyond his power of resistance by a proffered bribe. Make your punishment as severe as you like, and the corruption will still go on. You cannot do more than kill your bribe-taker. Yet for centuries we have been killing men who murdered that they might steal and the murdering and the stealing still go on. In fact, you can set this down as true: Create a sufficient incentive for any wrong action and some will always be found who will be willing to take the chance to win the prize. Let the great industries that deal in the things we all must have continue to be owned by private corporations or individuals who can increase their profits by unjust laws and there will always be unjust laws.

Legislators can be found who will sell them. And the historic mission of public ownership of public utilities under capitalistic governments is not to increase the material well-being of the workers, but to remove from existence the private corporations that are now engaged in buying unjust laws of law-makers. In the European cities where municipal ownership has been longest tried, the workers, as a class are no better off than before. Those who are fortunate enough to have employment may be better housed, provided they live in public tenements. They may have more baths if public baths be provided. And both of these things add not only to the comforts of living, but to the health of those who have them. But they do not help the swarms of festering poor who are rotting in London because they are denied the opportunity to work, nor do they leave a wider margin between income and expenses among those who do work for wages. For as soon as municipal ownership decreases the cost of living, the man who is at work has to work for less or somebody who is idle and hungry will take his job at a wage that represents only the decreased cost of living.

Value of Municipal Ownership.

But municipal ownership *does* show the advantages of public ownership in eliminating the private owners; and in eliminating the private owners it does away with those who are now most busily engaged in corrupting legislators. As municipal ownership and national ownership of public utilities go on, corruption will decrease because the corruptors will be disappearing, and the people will get more of an opportunity to enact laws that will be in their own interests. European cities that own many of the public utilities that corrupt our councils are much better governed than American cities. No one who knows the facts will deny this. And England is the latest country to show what the people can do for themselves when the nationalization of certain public utilities removes from existence private corporations that often find it to their advantage to spend huge sums during campaigns to control elections. Fifty laboring men are now sitting in the British parliament. It is not contended that municipal ownership put them there by decreasing corruption, but it undoubtedly helped. It gives the people a better chance to rule themselves. And in affording an example of the advantage to be gained by eliminating the profits of private capitalists, it turns the thoughts of the people the right way. And as we nationalize our railways, express companies, coal mines, etc., in this country we shall make progress. We shall not immediately improve the condition of the workers by so doing. Opportunity will not be given to an additional man to work, and those who do work will receive as now only wages that represent the cost of living. But the absence of the bribe-givers will hasten the day when we can make laws for ourselves that will really help us.

Socialism and a Political Machine.

The next question that arises is whether a great political machine would spring up under Socialism; whether the government if in control of all industries would control the votes of the workers engaged in those industries to build up a ring with which to plunder the people—a ring

that would graft, enact bad laws and do even worse things than capitalist law-makers, judges and executive officers now do.

This point cannot be investigated too carefully. We have enough of grafting now. We want less, not more, and none if possible. Nor do we want more bad laws. On the other hand, we want to get rid of the bad laws we now have.

Socialists agree with you on all these points.

But we differ from you, possibly, on two other points. You may believe that graft can be destroyed, all the bad laws repealed and all of the necessary good laws enacted while private individuals continue to own all of the railroads, mills, factories and other implements with which workingmen produce wealth. If you hold this belief, we differ from you. We believe that so long as private interests are permitted to exist that can be helped by unjust legislation, the money of these private interests will always be sufficient to buy unjust legislation. At any rate, those who may believe as you possibly believe are in the majority at this time, and if it were possible for you to do what you believe you can do, you should have made some progress by this time. You have made no progress. Never was graft so widespread in this country as it is today. Never was it so difficult to get an important bill for the benefit of the people through a legislature or a congress. Never was it so difficult as it is today to get a legislature or a congress to repeal a law that enormously enriches a few persons by robbing everybody else. These are facts. They are generally admitted. You may differ from us as to why these facts exist, but you can hardly deny the existence of the facts themselves.

The other point upon which we may differ is this: You may believe that conditions would be as bad or worse under Socialism. You may say, as so many do, that men would have to administer the government even under Socialism and that Socialists are no more nearly honest, as a class, than are the men who compose the rank and file of the other parties. We admit all of this and reply that a strong financial incentive to be dishonest will corrupt many men and that if such incentives be removed, dishonesty, so far at least as concerns the making and enforcing of laws, will disappear. We propose, as has been said, to remove the incentive to dishonesty by removing the great private corporations that now cause legislative dishonesty.

The Kind of Government We Want.

But we purpose to do more than this. We purpose to make this a government *of* the people. We purpose to make this government as responsive to the will of the people as a ship is to the movements of its rudder. It is not such a government now. Your lawmakers do not make the laws you want made. They do not repeal the laws you want repealed. And if they were to pass and the president were to sign a bill tomorrow that would permit the trusts to take even the shirt off your back, you could not help it. The bill would have become law and the shirt would have disappeared before you could do anything. And even then, what could you do? You could wait until the next election and elect new lawmakers. The new lawmakers might betray you, just as the old ones did—they frequently do. Or you could try to overthrow

the government by force of arms, if you could find enough others who wanted to plunge the country into civil war. And you do not want war any more than we Socialists do—you are as peaceful as we are, and like us, want only to be permitted to live and work at peace and not be robbed of what you produce.

Now mind you, we contend that the public ownership of the means of production and distribution of wealth would prevent all of this kind of dishonesty by removing the incentive that now causes it. But we also take into consideration the fact that legislators who are not dishonest, and who have no incentive to be so, may yet be stupid; they may not realize what the people should have so well as the people themselves may know; or they make serious blunders by passing bills that the people do not want to become laws. And desiring, as we do, that we shall have a government that shall mirror the desires of the people as faithfully as a placid lake mirrors the trees on its shore, we have provided for these possible occasional shortcomings on the part of those who will make our laws.

Three Socialist Safeguards.

Here is what we propose:

We would have the constitution of the nation, of every state and the charter of every city provide that the people, if they should so desire, might vote directly on bills that they wished to become laws and that when approved by a majority of the voters, such bills should become laws without any action on the part of the congress, state legislature, or municipal council.

We would also give the people the constitutional right to vote on any bill already passed by any legislative body and repeal it if a majority of the voters did not want the law to be enforced.

And we would furthermore give the people the right to recall any officer before the expiration of his term of office and elect a new officer in his place, provided a majority should decide to do so.

These measures are contained in every national Socialist platform and are known as the "Initiative," meaning the right of the people to pass laws for themselves if their lawmakers be negligent; the "Referendum," meaning the right of the people to have laws already passed *referred* to them to be vetoed or upheld, as the people might choose; and the "Right of Recall," meaning the right of the people to rid themselves immediately of an incompetent or a dilatory representative without waiting several years for his term of office to expire, during which time laws desired by the people might not be obtainable.

These Socialist measures would put the people right at the helm of the government. If your congress will not pass the law you want, pass it yourself. If your congress pass the law you do not want, repeal it yourself. If your alderman, your mayor, your state legislator, your governor, your senator, representative, or even your president persistently refuse to do what you elected him to do, *put him out*. And do not wait for his term of office to expire several years hence, put him out *now*.

Existing Methods Would Wreck a Private Business.

What business man would run his business as you run your government, which is, or ought to be, *your* business? How long would he stay in business if he did? Think what you do! When you elect an officer, you give him your power of attorney to act for you for a certain length of time. During the term of office for which you elect him, any legislative act that he may legally perform binds you as much as if you had performed it yourself. Yet you do not know what he will do, and take no measure to prevent him from doing what you do not want him to do. You know some of the things that before election—*when he wants your vote*—he says he will do, but he does not always do as he says. And if he chooses to break faith with you, you are helpless. He may vote to give away a franchise that will blister the backs of your unborn grandchildren, but you cannot help it. The United States Supreme Court decided as long ago as 1819 that a franchise is a contract that cannot be abrogated by one party without the consent of the other, and though your legislator may have been bribed to betray you—as he frequently is—you have no redress. What is gone is gone and you cannot get him out of office before he can sell you out again unless you can go into court and prove his criminality—which is a most difficult thing to do.

No business man could run his business this way. When a business man hires a traveling salesman, he tells him what he is to sell and fixes the price at which it is to be sold. And if the traveling salesman disobey any of these orders, his employer may discharge him at any time. You do not tell your legislators what they may not buy for you, or what they may not sell that is already yours. Nor have you anything to say about the prices that they shall bind you to pay for what they buy for you, or the prices you shall receive for what they sell for you. They may give away millions of acres of public lands to the railroads, as they have often done—you can not prevent it. They may pass tariff laws that will compel you to pay to the trusts millions of dollars of profits—you cannot stop them. All you can do is to lie back and wait until their terms of office expire and then elect new officers—who will succumb to the same temptations that made the old officers betray you. Could any merchant long remain in business if he gave his traveling salesmen, cashiers, clerks and other employees power to buy and sell for him whatever they pleased at whatever prices they pleased and bound himself to let them do as they pleased for a term of years? A 40-acre farm could not be run this way. Yet that is the way you run the greatest business on the face of the earth—the United States government. And then you wonder that the business is not run in your interest. And you doubt if Socialists, with different methods, could run it better.

How to Make Your Own Laws.

Consider next the Socialist measure known as the "Initiative"—the right of the people to enact laws for themselves if their legislators in city, state or nation will not enact them. See how this would work with reference to the national constitution. You may have noticed in these latter days that nearly everything of importance that the people

want to do for themselves is either declared unconstitutional by the supreme court, or the way to do it is made practically impossible by the difficulty of the method prescribed by the constitution. Witness the income tax law, which the United States Supreme Court declared unconstitutional in 1895. The common people, who contribute the hundreds of millions that are expended annually in support of the government wanted the rich to pay taxes on their incomes. Congress was finally badgered into passing such a law. The rich, of course, immediately resisted it, declaring it to be unconstitutional. Nine supreme court judges were called upon to decide the question. All of the judges may reasonably be supposed to have been equally learned in the constitution. Yet the judges could not agree. Finally, five judges made up their minds that the law was unconstitutional and four clung to the belief that it was all right and should be enforced. It was currently reported at the time that one of the judges, who was at first inclined to support the law, changed his mind during the night at the last moment, but at any rate, the majority had their way and the law was swept aside.

Then again: No intelligent man doubts for a moment that if the people of this country could have their way United States senators would be elected by the people by direct vote instead of by the state legislatures. Time after time the national house of representatives has approved proposed constitutional amendments looking to this reform only to have them pigeon-holed by the senate. Yet the constitution provides that amendments to the constitution can be made in only two ways. One way is to have two-thirds of both houses of congress approve the proposed amendment and submit it to the vote of the legislatures of all states, three-fourths of which must approve it in order for it to become effective. The other way is for two-thirds of the legislatures to propose an amendment, which must, to become effective, be approved by three quarters of the legislatures, or by three quarters of the state constitutional conventions, provided congress shall decide to submit the amendment to conventions instead of legislatures.

Changes Our Forefathers Could Not Foresee.

The constitution-makers were afraid the poor would plunder the rich if it were made too easy for the people to revise the constitution. They desired to make it difficult to amend the constitution. They succeeded. The constitution has been amended 15 times. The first 10 amendments were submitted at the time the original constitution was put to a vote of the people. The eleventh amendment was submitted in 1794 and the twelfth in 1803. The last three amendments, growing out of the civil war were submitted in 1865.—66—69.

The point is that in planning to make it difficult to amend the constitution, the fathers of our country overdid themselves. They could not see that in a century the rich would be so strong that the constitution, instead of aiming to prevent the poor from plundering the rich, should attempt to prevent the rich from plundering the poor. And being unable to foresee what has come to pass, they have left us in a perilous position. We can not change our own constitution without getting the consent not only of the house of representa-

tives, but of two thirds of the senators that represent the plutocracy of the country. Or else we must get the consent of two thirds of the legislatures that elect these plutocratic senators and are therefore controlled by the same interests that control the senators. And the ominous feature of the whole arrangement is that with the exception of the two amendments noted, which were adopted soon after the original constitution and before the great corporations of today were in existence, no amendment to the constitution has ever been made except as the result of war.

See how much more sensibly they do such things in Switzerland, where they have the initiative. If a small percentage of the Swiss voters petition for an amendment to the constitution, the national legislature is compelled to draw up such an amendment and submit it to the people, who if they choose, may adopt it. If we had the same power, how long do you believe it would be before we would have constitutional amendments that would permit us to tax the incomes of the rich and elect our own United States senators? And if we also had the right to enact such other laws as congress would not enact for us, how long do you suppose it would be before we would own railroads, express lines, telegraph and telephone services and perhaps our coal mines? Other nations own all these things now. We do not because those who do own them also own our legislators and will not let the men whom we foolishly elect to office for them give us the laws we want. Yet the people of every little canton in Switzerland can make for themselves such laws as they want provided their legislators will not make them.

How The People Might Veto Laws.

The Swiss people have another measure that the Socialists want this country to have—the "Referendum"—the power of the people to veto bills passed by their law-making bodies if they care to do so. In Switzerland, no law of a certain class vitally affecting the people can go into effect until three months after its enactment. In the meantime, the people have an opportunity to consider it, and if there be a sufficient opposition, a small percentage of the qualified electors, varying from 5 to 14 per cent, may petition to have the law submitted to a vote of the people. Mind you, up to this time, the law has not gone into effect. The people hold the reins. If a majority approve the law it becomes effective. Otherwise it goes where our legislators now put most of our bills—into the rubbish heap.

In this country we are annually paying the railroads 32 times as much for carrying our letters as the railroads charge the express companies for carrying the same weight. We are also annually paying the railroads a rental for mail cars that amounts each year to the value of the cars themselves—and the cars last from 20 to 35 years. We are giving the trusts tariff privileges that enable them to ship their goods half way around the earth and sell them to foreigners for less than they charge us for them here at home. Would it have been *different* if the people had had an opportunity to vote on these laws before they went into effect, and veto them if they desired?

But Senator Lodge, of Massachusetts said in a speech at Brooklyn, Mass., in 1905, that it would be "un-American" to have the referendum in this country—the grafters always believe that it would be "un-American" for the people to have anything they really need. And there are others who argue that while the referendum is all right for a small country like Switzerland it would be entirely out of place in a large country like the United States. Such critics usually contend that the possession of the power to pass or repeal laws that others had passed, would result in a continuous series of special elections. We will consider first the objection that the principle of the referendum is un-American.

Referendum Distinctly American.

The New International Encyclopedia says:

"In the United States, the referendum is employed, in one form or another, in every state and in every municipality. *Very early in our history* it became an established principle of American law that all state constitutions and proposed amendments should depend for their validity upon their ratification by the electorate at the polls.***One of the most general uses of the referendum is to determine whether towns and cities shall permit the sale of intoxicating liquors. Another favorite subject of the referendum has been the question of the location of state capitals and county seats."

Oberholtzer, in his authoritative work on "The Referendum in America," says:

"In every state of the union, in the country, the city, the township and the school district we employ, and in New England have employed since the Revolution, this popular principle of the referendum."

The California legislature cannot pass a law appropriating more than \$300,000 without submitting it to a vote of the people. But it *can* pass laws that will permit private corporations to rob the people of California of millions without submitting such laws to a popular vote.

Colorado will not permit the area of a county to be reduced without the consent of the people of the county. But Colorado *will* permit a corrupt city council to give away to private corporations franchise rights that will cost the people millions.

Michigan will not permit supervisors of counties to borrow more than \$1,000 for the construction of public buildings or highways without the consent of the people. But it *will* permit the state legislature to pass laws that will enable the railroads to escape millions of dollars of just taxes—taxes that the poor are afterward compelled to pay.

Wisconsin will not permit, without the express approval of the people, the division of a county containing less than 900 square miles of territory. But Wisconsin *will* permit the city council of Milwaukee to give a grossly unjust franchise to a railroad and the supreme court of the United States will compel the people of Milwaukee to give to the railroad every dollar for which the franchise calls.

It is the same in the rest of the states.

And so far as concerns the objection that the possession of the referendum by the people would result in an endless series of elections,

there is only this to say: Switzerland's experience proves the contrary. In nineteen years, the Swiss have only 20 times demanded the right to vote on measures that had been passed by their national legislature, 14 of the laws being approved and six vetoed. The very existence of the referendum keeps a large number of bad laws from being passed. It is hardly worth while to pass a bad law when the people can veto it before it goes into effect.

So it is folly to say that the referendum is "un-American," or that it keeps the people who have it voting all the time. Socialists merely propose that we have the privilege of voting on the *important* bills as well as the unimportant ones. We are more concerned about the *million dollar grafts* than we are about the bonding of school districts to build school houses.

For the reasons that have been given, Socialists are quite sure that the ownership of all the mills, factories, railroads and every other thing collectively used in the production of wealth by labor would *not* result in more corruption, but in *no* corruption. And they are also quite sure that no combine of government officers could build up a political machine to perpetuate themselves in power while they plundered the people.

Still Greater Reason for Public Ownership.

It is not however entirely to prevent corruption that Socialists advocate the ownership by the people, through the government, of the great tools that modern workmen use to produce wealth. We contend that if a small number of men own all the tools with which all other men must work, the tool-owners can compel the tool-users to accept in wages only a part of their product and give the tool-owners the rest. And as the tools of modern industry are too expensive for the men who use them to own, we propose that the workers own them collectively through the government and give no idlers a part of what they produce.

But it requires a book on Socialism to explain all this.

And this is not even a pamphlet on Socialism. It is merely a little heart-to-heart talk with those who fear that Socialism, for the reasons given at the beginning, would result in more governmental corruption than we now have in the creation of a political machine that would outdo anything that capitalism has called into being.

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It Makes a Difference.

The French Revolution is the most intensely absorbing act in the whole drama of human history. To some it was a hideous nightmare. To others it was a terrible judgment day—a day of wrath appointed for the crimes of kings. To measure the crimes that were committed in the name of the people we must consider the crimes that were committed in the name of the old regime. The crimes that were committed by the Revolution have been made the most of. They have been fully catalogued. But the centuries were blind to the atrocities that were committed by king and grandee against the people, they were deaf to the groans of those who were left to rot and die in the dungeons of feudal France. When Marie Antoinette was led to the guillotine all the world stood aghast. When the knife fell and the blood spurted and the headless trunk of a queen was carted off for burial, a thrill of horror encircled the globe. It was royal blood that the Revolution shed. One royal execution attracted more attention and commanded more sympathy than ten thousand wretches whose lives were harried out of them by crimes committed in the name of the law. It is still so. Remember Bloody Sunday, when the poor people who demanded an audience with the "Little Father" were shot down in the streets of St. Petersburg. Did our government at Washington send to the people of Russia any message of indignation or sympathy? But a few days later when one Grand Duke was murdered, *were not the condolences of the American Republic cabled forth with to the Czar's Government!* When the cravat of Louis the Sixteenth was untied and his royal

neck was laid on the block of the Revolution the crowned heads of Europe fell into a rage. They were shocked that a fat and stupid king should be done to death, though they had borne complacently enough the sufferings of their own unnumbered victims. It was nothing to them that the trenches of senseless battlefields should be filled with the mangled bodies of husbands and fathers; it was nothing to them that their mute dungeons should confound the innocent with the guilty, and stop forever the pitiful cry for justice and liberty; it was nothing to them that harpies held high revel in king's palaces while labor was bent by the weight of taxes and men and women and children were driven to eat grass with the beasts of the field. Said the dying Revolutionist to the Bishop, in Victor Hugo's story, "I will weep with you for the children."—*Rev. H. S. Bigelow.*

Socialism and the Home.

It is often asserted by the enemies of Socialism, that Socialism will destroy the home, and numbers of unthinking people open their mouths and unquestioningly swallow the assertion. As a matter of fact Socialism will make the home possible. When a woman is assured of a good honorable livelihood she will not enter into a matrimonial bondage for the sake of a home, so-called. Consequently she will be governed by natural selection in her choice of a husband. Under these conditions only those who are congenial to each other will marry. This will greatly lessen the number of separations. However, Socialism does not propose to compel incompatible couples to live together and rear children

in an atmosphere of hate and dread. An enlightened people would never permit such an unholy state of affairs to obtain. Capitalism chains together couples who are as unsuited companions as lion and lamb, and either by law of court or law of hunger, compels submission and endurance until the smouldering fires of hate inflame the sufferer to violence or insanity. Many a woman lives with a human brute, willing rather to bear with his loathsome mistreatment than to run the risk of starvation for herself and children by causing his arrest, or by leaving his "protection."

Under capitalism both husband and wife are so overworked that the best of them has been given to toil; and they spend their few hours together harassed and worn, and nervous or wearied to the point of stolidity, never knowing the best of themselves or each other.

What can such conditions breed but disappointment and quarrelsome reproaches?

In our large cities there are whole districts where men and women live together without the formality of a marriage-tie. The girl works in some down-town store or shop. The man cannot marry legally because the man may lose his job any day and be compelled to go somewhere else to get work, neither one alone can support them both; so if he goes to Kansas City or Butte to get work, she must stay on where she is, and form another similar tie or begin the starvation business. Do you call this a home?

If you do, Socialism will destroy the home, for it will put an end to this. Then there is the great multitude of sweet-souled girls and clean men who have a sense of propriety which forbids such a life.

They, too, realize that they cannot support children, so they go on month after month, and year after year hoping that fortune will smile on them so that they can afford to marry and raise their family—until they finally die as old maids and old bachelors. The establishment of Socialism would unite thousands, yes, millions of these and create for each couple a happy home.

Down in the basement of tenements, crowded into one room, live fathers and mothers and children innumerable—ten or fourteen of them in one room sometimes. All day long the whole family work at some sort of sweat-shop work and get barely enough to pay for their noisome hole and to keep them in the meanest of food. Socialism would "destroy" such a home.

In our beautiful south-land, yes, and in our own pharisaical eastern states, whole families, father, mother, and children down to six years of age, work twelve hours or more of every day in mill or mine. Would Socialism make these homes happy?

Socialism will not destroy anything good. Socialism will make happy homes by the thousand, and it will forever exterminate the closeted horror of the "homes" of capitalism.—Edith Eddy Bradford in *Common Sense*.

—
"Fast trains clash," reads a newspaper heading again. It is fair to say that there is scarcely a railroad accident in the United States that cannot be traced to overworked employees or the unwillingness of the profit-greedy railroad coupon-clipper to put on the necessary safety appliances. But it would be just awful to have the government run the railroads! It would be stark staring Socialism!