

**Communicated.**

Editor Sheridan Road News Letter:

DEAR SIR:—Your request to answer the question made by a subscriber in your last issue as to the meaning of "initiative" and "referendum" as political terms is received. To comply with your request in a satisfactory manner would require not only the whole of the News but one issue would hardly be sufficient. I assume, however, that the querist wanted a comprehensive, but brief definition, or perhaps a practical explanation of the meaning and the use of the terms.

**THE INITIATIVE.**

It is very common to speak of our government as a democracy, and so it is, but it is a representative democracy in the main, and a pure democracy, or a government directly by the people, only to a limited extent. If your querist will consult a good dictionary, he will find initiative to mean "an introductory step or movement—an act which originates or begins something." In politics it means the introductory act of a measure in legislation. For instance, if the people along a certain street should wish the street improved, they would sign a petition asking the council or legislative body to pass an ordinance to that effect. This would be taking the "initiative." So too, when the people of Ravinia district a short time ago wished to be annexed to the city of Highland Park they signed a petition to that effect, the law of the state having provided the manner in which it should be done; namely, that three fourths of the voters in the district and the owners of three-fourths of the property in value must sign the petition. This was taking the "initiative." To some extent the initiative in politics in this country has always existed, and much more so than many people suppose.

**THE REFERENDUM.**

The referendum is a kind of counterpart to the initiative. To some extent in this country, and notably so in Switzerland, the legislative body is limited. Either certain acts or under some circumstances all acts must be sent back to the people for final authority. Suppose for instance

the people of Illinois wish to amend their constitution. A proposition to do so could arise in either house of our general assembly by joint resolution, and if, after being formulated, it should be voted for by two-thirds of all the members elected to each of the two houses, the amendment would be submitted to the electors or voters of the state for adoption or rejection. If the majority of the electors at an election held in accordance with the law should vote for the amendment it would become part of our constitution; if against it, it would become null and void. This referring to the people as final authority is what is meant by the "referendum."

There are some species of legislation, especially municipal legislation, in which it seems eminently clear to the writer that the right to use the referendum should be preserved to the people. For instance, no intelligent citizen of Chicago who has given the matter any careful thought can hardly fail to realize that it would have saved to the people millions of dollars in the last few years in the one matter of street franchises if the people had had the right of the referendum and had used it. There is, we believe, a growing sentiment in favor of it.

Of the pure democracies—that is where the people meet as in the ancient times of Switzerland as a "Landgemeinde," or land community,—ancient Athens was perhaps the most notable example; so too Rome, Carthage, Sparta, and other states were to some extent pure democracies. Of modern governments, perhaps Switzerland, to the greatest extent, illustrates both the initiative and the referendum in its cantonal, as well as in its federal government.

If your correspondent, Mr. Editor would like to investigate the subject fully, I take pleasure in referring him to the "Referendum in America" by Oberholtzer, "Federal Government of Switzerland," by Bernard Moses; or, if he would prefer smaller works, "Direct legislation by the Citizenship through the Initiative or Referendum," by J. W. Sullivan, and a most excellent small work called

"Direct Legislation by the People," by Nathan Cree, would be both interesting and profitable reading.

H. P. DAVIDSON.

The ladies of the Baptist Church propose to give an entertainment in the Young Men's Club rooms Sept. 5th, which will be quite unique in many of its features.

Ed Laing did not have to use any fuel oil down at the pumping station Saturday and Sunday. All he did was to let the sun beat on those boilers and the steam "riz" up to 90 degrees per square inch.

Poor James McDonough of Highwood, held to the grand jury in the sum of \$1500 bonds. We don't believe he was intentionally or viciously dishonest, but he was most terribly unfortunate. Poor "Jim," we pity him, albeit the law must be upheld.

If you want a suit of all wool clothes made to order from anyone of two hundred pieces of Scotch imported goods, all for \$1500; go to the Glasgow Woolen Mills Co, and you will be abundantly satisfied. The writer blundered onto the concern the other day in the Palmer House block, and it was one of the wisest blunders he ever made.

Madame Winchester celebrated her 85th birthday a couple weeks ago at the home of her daughter, Mrs. W. O. Hipwell. She had the birthday cake, with five and eighty pansies and as many taper candles, and was as happy as saint could or need be. If you wonder at her excellent physical health, the soundness of her mental powers and the vivacity and cheerfulness of her spirits, we will explain by saying she is a native of that state which produces Green Mountain Boys.

**Low Excursion Rates to to the Atlantic Seaboard.**

Remember the Nickel Plate Road has solid through trains between Chicago and New York City. Also don't forget that the prevailing low rates excursion tickets announced for the first four days in September are on sale everywhere over the Nickel Plate Road. Reserve sleeping car space early.