

The for a few hours in
a stadium,



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The people formulate and express their will in a mass meeting and they assemble for this purpose as often as required. In the small City-States of ancient Greece and Rome all adult male citizens were expected to meet together in the Assembly—the Ecclesia of Athens, the Comititia of Rome. Pure democracy had not been confined to the ancient world. Its surviving relics are found today in the Swiss landsgemeinde or popular legislature.

There were twenty- six landsgemeinden in the middle of the eighteenth century; today, there are only five, and one of them has been confined to elective functions. On a Sunday in April or May the adult male citizens in the Canton assemble to consider in full open-air meetings the governmental affairs of the Canton. At such meetings new laws are agreed upon and old laws changed, taxes levied, budgets adopted and officials chosen. But pure or direct democracy can exist and function only in small States with a limited, homogeneous population where people can conveniently meet and deliberate together. In large and complex societies, when the number of the people is too large and the area of the State is too extensive, direct democracy is impracticable.

Even the Swiss landsgemeinde is cantonal and nowhere is it associated with the national government. This institution has been commended by some writers with great enthusiasm, but a close acquaintance with its actual working produces a very different effect. “ It would be naive,” says Rappard, a Swiss scholar, “ to believe that even a small community of a few thousand well-trained citizens could, under the complex conditions of the twentieth century, effectively govern itself by means of such an ephemeral legislative assembly. One might as well expect a football crowd, assembled for a few

hours in a stadium, to make itself responsible for the establishment of an academic curriculum or for the drafting of a measure of social insurance.

” Direct democracy now assumes the form of the referendum and the popular initiative, and they have long been familiar in Switzerland and the United States. After the First World War they made an appearance in Germany, Latvia, Estonia, Ireland and even in Soviet Russia. They were deleted from the Irish Constitution in 1928, and were lying dormant for thirteen years in Germany when Hitler struck down the Weimer Constitution.

The 1936 Constitution of U. S. S. R. empowered the Presidium to submit, on its own initiative, legislative measures and other important matters to popular vote and hold a referendum. The 1977 Constitution abolished it, but substituted that referendum might be invoked as a last resort if both the Houses failed to reach agreement on a legislative measure for the second time after its reference to the Conciliation Committee. In U. S.

A. direct legislation is obtainable only in eleven States, most of them in the west. Popular or direct legislation, as Sait remarks, “ is little more than a fad outside of Switzerland, where unique conditions prevail.” In Switzerland direct legislation has a natural growth or, as Bryce says, it is “ racy of the soil. There are institutions which, like plants, flourish only on their hillside and under their own sunshine.” Indirect or Representative Democracy: The prevailing system of democracy is indirect or representative. The will of the State is formulated and expressed not directly by the people themselves, but by their representatives to whom they delegate the power of discussion and

decision making. They are referred to as representatives and this type of government as representative democracy.

The representatives are periodically elected by the people. John Stuart Mill defines indirect or representative democracy as one in which “ the whole people or some numerous portions of them, exercise the governing power through deputies periodically elected by themselves.” In a representative democracy the ultimate source of authority remains with the people. But it draws a distinction between the possession of authority which resides in the electorate and its exercise, which is by the elected representatives.

Hobhouse says, “ Democracy means or may mean, two things which, though allied in idea, are not necessarily found together in practice, viz., (i) direct participation of the mass of ordinary citizens in the public life of the community, (ii) ultimate popular sovereignty.” The voters elect the representatives for a number of years and after the expiry of their term, they report back to their masters, the electors. The electors judge them by their deeds and determine whether or not they should repose their trust in them for the next term. If they prefer to discontinue with them, they would do so by electing new representatives.

Representative democracy guarantees, in other terms, a general harmony of purpose between government and the governed by reconciling effective authority and political freedom. It must, however, be noted that voters who have returned their representatives in a majority and placed them in office to make a policy and run the government, must not exert undue pressure, personal or regional, on them for the fulfilments of their own ends. To

pressurize them for gaining personal and selfish advantages and benefits is a democratic sin which deserves no coordination for it demoralises the citizens and detracts democratic ideals. A degree of pressure is permissible to remind representatives of their constituents' sentiments, but it must not get out of hand.

The law-makers and administrators have to be able to give reasoned consideration to policies and programmes, and they cannot be stampeded by regional or group clamour of the moment. Indeed, if superior men are selected for office, then they should be allowed to exercise their knowledge and intelligence in an atmosphere of calm and objectivity. After World War I a good deal of dissatisfaction was expressed against the working of representative democracy, and devices of popular control, the referendum, the initiative and recall, were introduced by some of the States. These devices aimed at transferring from the representatives to the people themselves the right to have the final verdict over legislative and administrative matters and to recall from office those representatives who did not perform their duties diligently, honestly, or in accordance with the wishes of the people. But the dominant verdict has proved hostile to these direct devices of popular control and the representative institutions continue to be instruments of democracy.