

legitimate obligations of the roads in other cases, would undoubtedly be of very great benefit. If the experiment were found successful in these cases the government could gradually increase its possessions, making the income from its roads pay their expenses and cost. Under such a plan there would be no necessity for electing a great bonded indebtedness to buy out all the roads in the country. If the experiment proved unsuccessful the government could relinquish the roads to the stockholders or bondholders again.

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But the chief objection to government ownership and management of railroads is, as pointed out by the NEWS, the fear that the roads would be a great political machine to be used by the party in power for their benefit. That positions on the roads would be among the spoils of office, as too many government positions are today. I admit the force of this objection and would not favor any extension of government functions until a rigid civil service law was in force that covered all branches of the service. We certainly have made some improvement in this direction. If we admit that we cannot finally enforce civil service regulations among all departments of the government, we had better concede at once that a Republican form of government is a failure; that the United States is incapable of governing itself, and invite a strong European monarchy to take charge of our government. The British empire has a civil service that is never affected in the slightest degree by any change of party, and is outside the influence of the most powerful politician. We ought to be ashamed to admit that we will never be able to place our public service beyond the reach of party influence.

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But government ownership of railroads does not necessarily mean government operation of trains. Competition in transportation can be secured by government ownership of road beds and private operation of trains. This would confine the government to only keeping up the road beds and freight offices and the dispatching of trains. The cars and engine, round houses and repair shops, etc., would be owned by private companies and individuals and the army of men employed in these departments would be under private employment. The government employees would therefore be comparatively small in number and the danger of political manipulation correspondingly reduced.

With government ownership of road beds and any transportation companies or individuals would have the privilege of running trains over the road, subject to the timetable of the road, on the payment of a certain price per car or ton per mile. This would give perfect competition. The company offering the best service at the lowest prices would get the bulk of the business. Large manufacturing or mining concerns could run their own trains. Cities, commercial bodies or societies could lease trains for excursion purposes. Freight and passenger rates would be fixed by the cost of the service, not as now by what the traffic

will bear. It would be impossible to freeze out private coal mine operators, smelters, elevators, etc., as is now done by railway companies which are interested in such enterprises. It would place every business enterprise on the same footing, and success would depend upon economy, good judgment, quality and price, rather than upon standing in with the railroads and getting a good rebate.

It is this direction that the demand for government ownership of railroads is taking. The demand for government ownership is becoming stronger as the abuses of private ownership become more oppressive. It is estimated that nearly nine-tenths of the people of California want government ownership of the Pacific roads. It is bound to come sooner or later—the sooner the better. I think the plan outlined in this article offers the safest and most feasible plan yet proposed.

N. B. DRESSER.

### SPRAYING—AND OTHER ITEMS.

At present this seems to be an unsolved problem. It appears to be an interesting question to many of our people but is viewed from different standpoints. Some want a strong law; others want some mild educational measure; still others want everything abolished in regard to the matter—another illustration of the old adage, "divided we fall."

We believe in order to get this matter before the people in proper shape a State board of agriculture should be organized. In this way the matter could be put in the hands of the people at little or no cost to the State. Again such an organization is needed, to which all branches of agriculture should gravitate; and an organization of this kind would understand the wishes and needs of the people in every branch of our agricultural interest. Then we would not need to be as we are now, everybody asking for legislation and no one seeming to know what is needed. So far four bills have been presented to the Legislature, but our legislators, having been struck by a cyclone of economy, consigned them to oblivion. Economy seems to be the watchword of many members of the present Legislature and we believe they will have the support of the people in this course.

We have been repeatedly asked for our views on this question, but having been appointed on a special committee to try and adopt some measure that would be acceptable to the Legislature, and holding opposite views to the majority of the committee, we did not wish to prejudice their report; but now that this and all other spray bills so far presented have been thrown out, we feel at liberty to present what we consider to be the views of the majority of the people of the State. We have a petition before us signed by 428 fruitgrowers and beekeepers and coming from nearly all parts of the State, asking that a spray law be passed without providing that no trees, vines, etc., shall be sprayed with any poisonous substance while in bloom as it washes the pollen out of the blossom, thus destroying much of the fruit and killing the bees. This would be decidedly wrong and no person claims

the right of any law that will allow one person to injure another. Besides in this case the injury would be twofold, as we need the honey bee to fertilize the blossoms if we would make a success of growing seeds or fruit. These petitioners also ask that the law relating to foul-brood among bees be so amended as to make it operative; they do not ask for any money consideration but that some measure may be adopted to protect the beekeepers from this dread disease. These people say that if our legislators are not generous enough to give us some simple law to work to in trying to eradicate this dread disease from among our bees, especially when they are willing to pay the cost, then they prefer that all acts relating to the subject be repealed as they are and have been taxed for years and are receiving little or no benefit. Who will say that this is just or right? We find that the bee industry is of much more importance and benefit to the State than many of our people suppose, and it should be encouraged. So also should our fruit industry; but it also should be made as near as possible self-sustaining. A majority of our fruit growers believe that if we had some plain educational spray law it could be operated at little cost under a State board of agriculture. All necessary information could be distributed through the press or otherwise throughout the entire State for less than one-third the money paid out by one county to inspectors under the operation of our late spray law. Some parts of this law were too arbitrary, and it came so near being a failure that our legislators do not seem willing to again try the experiment. Yet we find that there is still a few that would like to have another law of this kind adopted. They assert that we need a strong cast-iron law, one that will force everybody to come to time as they express it, and that nothing short of this would answer the purpose. Now, while some of those people are honest in their views it should be remembered that with a few of them the main object is an office, or for what there is in it. Again, we find a great many from nearly all parts of the State who assert just as positively that we need no spray laws. They tell us this matter should not be forced on the people; they argue that it is unjust and unconstitutional to make it a matter of compulsion. Still others tell us that while they are willing to support the best possible measure for the benefit of the fruit industry, they believe that it should be educational instead of arbitrary. While some may hold extreme views on this as on all other questions, and while it does not seem to be in the nature of things for all to see alike, it should be plain that every one should exert himself for the best general interest for the success of our fruit industry; and no one should be willing to fall back into the same old run that we have been traveling so long, for any one doing this can hardly be considered a friend to the fruit industry. We would like to impress on all interested in our fruit growing industry this one fact, that success in this matter depends more on our own efforts than on the actions of our neighbors. Of course if our neighbor does nothing to save his fruit, it will take little extra effort on our part to make a