**Documents: Political Machines**

**We are responsible, not our leaders, since we follow them.  We let them divert our loyalty from the United States to some “party”; we let them boss the party and turn our democracies into autocracies.  We cheat our government and we let our leaders loot it, and we let them bribe our sovereignty form us.  We are content to let them pass bad laws, giving away public property in exchange from money.**

**Lincoln Steffens book *The Shame of the Cities* 1904**

**I’ve been readin’ a book by Lincoln Steffens on *The Shame of the Cities*. Steffens means well, but like all reformers, he don’t know how to make distinctions.  He can’t see no difference between honest graft and dishonest graft, and, consequently, he gets things all mixed up…For instance, I ain’t no looter.  The looter hogs it.   I never hogged.  I made my money in politics, but at the same time I served the organization and got more big improvements for New York City than any other livin’ man.**

**The Irish was born to rule, and they’re the honestest people in the world.  Show me the Irishman who would steal a roof off an orphanage! He don’t exist.  Of course, if an Irishman had the political pull and the roof was in bad shape, he might get the city authorities to put on a new one and get the contract for himself, and buy the old roof at a bargain-but that’s honest graft.**

**Talk by George Plunkitt, NYC political boss in 1905**

1.)    Which of the following is the best definition of graft?

a.       Corruption

b.      Exploitation

c.       Cheating

d.      Manipulation

2.)    Which of the following BEST describes Lincoln Steffens

a.       Suffragist c. Populist

b.      Hawk d. Muckraker

3.)    According to Plunkitt, what positive role do political bosses play?

a.       Keep big businessmen from dominating politics

b.      Protect jobs from immigrant workers

c.       Ensure voting rights are protected

d.      Provide services for the community

4.)    Using the documents above, describe what Plunkitt would mean by “good graft” and then describe why Steffens would argue that it is still bad for America.

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