

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### GOVERNMENTAL AND SOCIAL IDEALS

1. **Extension of Government Control.**—As the earlier chapters of this volume have shown, the various social problems of the day are all different manifestations of the one great central social problem of how to arrange the life of men together in society. From his earliest appearance man has been a gregarious being, impelled to live in groups. The result has been those more or less closely unified bodies of men, women and children which we call societies. The essential feature of a society is that each individual member is more or less closely dependent upon the other members for his well-being and even for his life. The more civilization advances and the more highly developed societies become, the more numerous and intricate become the ties which bind the individual to his group and the greater become the responsibilities of each individual toward his group.

Human societies are differentiated from the groups of gregarious animals primarily by the fact that the units of the human groups have an intelligence and will power which enable them to direct their own activities to an extent unknown among any animals. This power of self-direction the human being applies not only to himself as an individual but to the activities and interests of the group of which he is a part. It is this voluntary control of group activities which constitutes the subject-matter of social science and since in the complicated societies of modern times there are few individual acts which do not have some bearing upon social welfare, the

field of social science includes almost the entire range of human behavior.

As we have already seen, the first deliberate acts of organized society had to do with repressing certain aspects of the conduct of its individual members which arose from the natural and universal motive of self-interest and self-seeking. It was the conflict of interests between the individual and his group, as already explained, which led to the organization of the state and to the first bodies of definitely formulated social regulations. From this early beginning down to the present, the functions of the state have always been primarily concerned with the repressive control of the actions of individuals where self-interest conflicted with group interest.

Within recent times, however, it has become evident that in many respects social interrelationships have become so extensive and inclusive that it is necessary for the highest welfare of the group not only to restrain the conduct of individuals in cases where private interest conflicts with public interest, but also to promote and direct certain activities where private interest and public interest are harmonious and where both can be served to the highest degree only by organized group efforts. In this way there has been added to the earlier coercive function of the state another function which may be described as positive or constructive.

Numerous examples of the application of this new idea are furnished by every up-to-date community, such as public playgrounds, baths, and theaters; municipally owned public utilities, government banks and loan agencies, public schools, etc. To a very considerable extent the practical political problems of today revolve about the question as to how far and in what directions this new

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type of state activities should be extended. In almost every case it proves true that each new extension which is proposed meets with vigorous opposition. In a certain sense the citizens of any modern state may be divided politically into two great groups: those who favor and those who oppose the extension of governmental authority and control.

The primary reason for the widespread opposition to any increase in what is called "state interference" is found in the fact that each new extension of state activities necessarily infringes to a greater or less extent upon the individual rights, liberties, privileges and opportunities of its citizens. For example, the public school system of the United States removes the opportunities which would otherwise exist for tens of thousands of citizens to make their living by teaching and conducting schools on an independent basis. Again, whenever any municipality decides to take over its own gas works, water supply system, or street railways, it reduces to just that extent the opportunities for the employment of individual initiative. When a government sets aside a great tract of land as a playground, park or natural preserve, it limits the freedom of its citizens with respect to the use of that territory. So in every other particular, the extension of official group activities restricts by just so much the activities of individuals.

**2. Conflicting Views.**—There is a real ground for difference of opinion as to the desirability of limiting individual liberty by the extension of state activities. Virtually every human being almost instinctively prizes his personal freedom and individual self-direction more than almost any other possession. We seem to be so constituted that to a large extent our happiness varies

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directly with the degree to which we are masters of ourselves. Furthermore, there seems to be no doubt that many of the qualities which are most essential not only to individual advancement but to social progress also, such as ambition, initiative, inventiveness, hardihood, etc., tend to be developed by individual liberty and to be repressed by group control of individual behavior. The motive of self-interest is so deeply entrenched in human nature that most men will exert themselves most vigorously and most effectively when they are in direct control of their own activities and when they are assured that the results of their endeavors will accrue to themselves personally and not to their group at large.

There is accordingly a strong *prima facie* ground for the position that state interference should consistently be restricted to the lowest minimum required for the orderly conduct of society, in other words, that the coercive or repressive function of the state should be regarded as its primary reason for existence, and that the positive function should be invoked only in case of an urgent and obvious necessity. An additional support for this argument is found in the fact that the state is by no means the only agency of social control, but that religion and public opinion are available for the support and promotion of those group activities to which the agencies of the state are not regarded as applicable.

On the other hand, there is abundant evidence that the whole trend of social evolution is in the direction of a progressive extension of state authority and activity. A study of the history of modern civilization shows beyond any question that every important change in the functions of the state has been in the direction of enlargement rather than of restriction. We may rest assured that

for such a well-nigh universal social tendency there must be some good reason.

**3. Growth of Social Interdependence.**—The fundamental reason for the necessity of the extension of state activity is the growing dependence upon one another of individuals in modern societies which has been so frequently illustrated in the foregoing pages. The illustration selected for the beginning of this volume was chosen because it portrayed this social interdependency and because interdependency is the central fact of modern organized life. There is every reason to expect that this interdependency will increase rather than diminish in the future. The increasing division and subdivision of labor, the increasing geographical localization of industries, the increasing specialization of professions and occupations—all tend to multiply the points of dependence of each upon all and all upon each. So does the steady growth of population and the tendency of men to live more and more in compact communities where the doings of every individual are of vital importance to the others and where the opportunities for contagion, cultural and moral as well as physiological, are constantly increased.

The only scientific attitude accordingly seems to be to accept the necessity of a continually extended state activity as a fact established by the nature of human society and to devote one's attention to the problems of directing and controlling this tendency in ways which shall be beneficial rather than the reverse. This means that while we must be ready to accept the changes which social evolution demands, we should nevertheless always be alert to determine whether the time is really right for each new change. There is ample ground for that type

of conservatism which expresses itself by a close scrutiny of each proposed innovation to see whether it represents an actual stage in cultural evolution or whether it is merely the invention of some visionary who has worked out his own particular scheme of human progress. We are also fully justified in being on our guard against the premature introduction by forcible means of social forms for which, tho destined to come eventually, society is not yet prepared.

These great questions arising from the antagonism between individual liberty and state activity involve problems of the form as well as the functions of the state organization. As a general principle we may affirm that the enlargement of functions requires a corresponding increase in the popular control of the machinery of the state. To the extent to which a government is purely coercive and repressive, the autocratic type may be regarded as efficient and tolerable. But the effort to make the state the agency for the promotion of the public interest in positive ways requires that the people themselves should be the seat of final authority. State control of the life of the individual can be tolerated only when the individual himself is the ultimate unit of control and when the state is genuinely a group organization representing the composite will of the people. The individual can be required to relinquish his personal freedom only upon condition that he merges his individuality with that of others and that group freedom is the substitute for individual freedom. In other words, state domination is logical and can be efficient and helpful only when the form of state organization is democratic. It follows that if the trend of social evolution is toward the extension of group activities, the trend of political

evolution must also be in the direction of democracy. There can be no question that this is true.

**4. Tendencies in Municipal Government.**—These principles have a bearing upon many of the most acute problems confronting our country at the present time. Perhaps no political question is of greater importance and difficulty than the administration of our municipal affairs. The rapid growth of great cities is one of the universal phenomena of modern societies. It is particularly marked and particularly significant in the United States. It affects our national life in many different ways. The typical form of our city government was determined long before the United States became an independent nation by the machinery created for the handling of the affairs of the small towns which then existed. The typical governmental agency was the town meeting which took the responsibility for most of the important affairs of the community. The responsibilities of the town government as such were few and the town officials were few in number and represented the most elementary functions. The sheriff, the local magistrate, the constable, the mayor and the councilmen, were the characteristic town officials. The control of the people was direct and intelligent. Each citizen was in a position to be informed as to the affairs of his own town and to express his will concerning them. The responsibility of the officials to the public was immediate and effective.

The municipal governments of our modern great cities represent to a large extent enlargements of and additions to the old colonial type of governmental organization. As new functions have been added to the government, new departments, boards and commissions

have been created. Of course, the institution of the town meeting has had to be abandoned with the growth of population and a representative form substituted. Thus, while the increase of functions has demanded a larger rather than a smaller degree of democratic administration, there has been an actual loss in popular control. As the city officials have gained in power and responsibility, they have lost in direct accountability to and control by the people whom they are supposed to serve. The institutions of the ward boss and the political ring have grown up. Sectional interests have developed within the community at large and officials are chosen with a view to their serving the welfare of a local group rather than an entire city. The various new departments have been created in a haphazard and rule-of-thumb manner so that their duties are not clearly defined, and there is a vast amount of duplication and waste of effort and money. The conduct of municipal politics has been allowed to become entangled with the interests of the great national political parties, so that city elections are often manipulated for party purposes quite regardless of the problems of the city itself.

This is especially unfortunate, since there are in fact very few particulars in which the interests of the great political parties have any bearing on municipal problems. It is seldom in the extreme that any important city problem is even remotely connected with the affairs of the great parties. These and various other factors have brought about a situation such that we cannot successfully deny the charge made by both foreign and native observers that the greatest political failure of the American people is in the administration of its cities, and that we have in fact the worst governed cities in the world.

5. "Commission" and "City Manager".—A situation so flagrant as this could not fail to attract the attention of the students of social and political affairs in this country. Within the last two or three decades a vast amount of attention has been given by some of the best intellects of the country to the problem of improving the political administration of the country, and some definite results have already been achieved. Foremost among these are certain plans for entirely different forms of municipal government. The most important of these are known as the "commission" and "city manager" forms of government. These two systems which may be developed independently or in conjunction with each other have already proved effective in a number of American communities. Under the commission form of government, the administration of the affairs of the city is intrusted to a small body of men popularly elected from the city at large. The traditional distinction between legislative and executive departments is abandoned and the necessity of checks and balances no longer admitted. The commission is really a sort of executive committee charged with the running of the city. The terms of office differ in different cities where the plan has been tried. The members of the commission are paid sufficiently large salaries to enable competent men to devote their entire time to the city government.

One great advantage of this plan is that it disposes of the long ballot so familiar to every voter in a modern city, and makes it possible for each voter to become familiar with the ability, character and past record of each candidate for whom he votes. This is an immeasurable advantage, for under the existing system the average voter must of necessity be almost completely

ignorant as to the qualifications of most of the persons for whom he casts his ballot.

The distinctive feature of the city manager form of government is that the affairs of the city are intrusted to a single responsible executive instead of to a committee. The idea back of this plan is that the conduct of a modern city is really a business proposition and should be conducted on business principles. Recognition is given to the fact already mentioned that the real problems of the modern city are seldom if ever political in the narrow sense of the word but rather economic and social. It is believed that the same necessity for efficient administration exists as in the case of an industrial or commercial enterprise, and that the same general methods will be effective.

Of course under this plan the choice of the manager is the vital thing. This is frequently intrusted to a commission elected by the people who in this case serve without pay and whose main function, aside from legislation, is the choice and supervision of the city manager. This plan has been tried out with great success in a large number of American cities, one of its most satisfactory features being a great increase in economy in the administration of municipal affairs. Another great advantage of both of these plans is that they get away from the old-fashioned assumption of a permanent clash of interests between different groups in the city's population. The assumption which underlies the new plans is that all the citizens are equally interested in one major object, namely, the efficient and economical administration of their common affairs. The points upon which opinion may differ may be numerous but they are not such as to require the division of the voters into permanently competing or antagonistic groups.

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6. **Extension of Federal and State Authority.**—Important as are the problems of municipal government in other countries as well as in the United States, it must be recognized that the difference in theory as to the functions of the state has a much wider application than to municipal affairs alone. It has in fact a bearing upon every type of organization in which the necessity of governmental authority expresses itself. Accordingly, in the United States we have not only problems of municipal administration but also of state and federal administration. At the present time perhaps most of our immediate problems are associated with the question of the extension of the functions of the federal government. During the period of the war, and as a necessary expedient for the successful conduct of the war, the authority of the federal government over the lives of individuals was vastly extended. New departments were created and the powers and responsibilities of existing departments and officials were greatly increased. Had the war lasted several years longer, it is possible that the people of the United States might have become accustomed to these wider federal functions and have been prepared to accept their continuance after peace was restored. As it was, the war terminated before the officials of the government had become fully competent in the administration of their new duties and before the people of the country had become adjusted to the new situation. Consequently the coming of peace was attended with many difficult situations with respect to the problems of maintaining the new federal administration or of restoring the interests as nearly as possible to their pre-war position.

The most spectacular case was that of the railroads. There is no doubt that when the government took over

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the administration of the railroads many people looked upon this action as merely the first step toward an eventual permanent ownership or control of these great utilities by the government. What would have happened with a longer war no one can say. The facts showed that the country as a whole was not ready to make this great social change, and the railroads were given back. On the other hand, this fact does not in the least contradict the existence of the general tendency already discussed in the direction of extended governmental activity. It may very possibly be true that the return of the railroads to private management is a purely temporary thing and that in a relatively short time we may again see the federal government taking control permanently as a result of the deliberate convictions and will of the people, not as an emergency measure.

In view of the fact that the greatest actual division of political opinion in this country is on the question of the extension of state control, it is unfortunate that the cleavage between our great parties does not clearly represent this division of opinion. Many of the issues of our political elections would be much more clearly outlined if the voters could feel that one great party stood definitely for the extension of state activities and the other for their restriction.

**7. Anarchism and Communism.**—While it is true that the political parties in this country have not as yet adjusted themselves fully to the fundamental problems of state organization, there can be discerned here as in the world at large certain great movements which represent the different phases of thought and opinion on these great questions. In some cases these movements have

already been crystallized in the form of political parties, some of which have already achieved a certain degree of influence. At the extremes of these movements stand anarchism and communism. Anarchism represents the convictions of those who feel that government itself is so great an evil that it should be entirely abolished and that only thru the unfettered exercise of personal liberty can human happiness be achieved. This movement, both in theory and in practice, is almost exclusively destructive and is so contrary to all the teachings of history and social science as to merit slight consideration as an indication of probable future developments.

At the other extreme stands communism which maintains that the necessity of group action is so great that all the interests of men should be pooled and that all life activities should be carried on on a common basis including not only economic affairs but matters relating to religion and the family. This movement denies that there are any departments of human life which inherently lie outside the field of complete socialization. It maintains that the relations of men and women, of parents and children, of property rights and family life are just as much subject to the necessity of joint control as are production and distribution. The very fact that communism represents an extreme of opinion indicates that it is little likely of realization, since the path of human progress almost always lies along the middle ground rather than thru either extreme. It may merely be noted in passing that communism is much more in harmony with the general trend of social evolution than anarchism.

**8. Socialistic Tendencies.**—Between the two extremes stand the moderate movements of individualism and

socialism. Individualism may be thought of as represented in general by the situation which actually exists today, under which the majority of our life interests are still within our own control. Socialism represents the moderate phase of the tendency to extend governmental control as rapidly as possible. The line in which socialism regards this extension as most feasible and most desirable at the present time is in the control of the industrial activities of society. Socialism is beyond question one of the most distinctive and significant movements of the present day. It is unquestionably growing in influence and attracting an increasing amount of attention. Unfortunately, it is very imperfectly understood by either its adherents or its opponents, and a vast amount of misunderstanding and misinterpretation with reference to it exists.

So many different things masquerade under the name of socialism and the word socialism is used to condemn so many different ideas and practices that it is difficult to formulate a definition of socialism which will prove satisfactory to every one or will even represent approximate truth. However, out of all the confusion one fundamental principle or objective may be discerned, and this may be set down as the most satisfactory definition of socialism as a movement. This is the social ownership and state control of the material means of production.

This definition needs to be carefully considered not only with reference to what it includes but with reference to what it does not include. In the first place it does not include the abolition of private property. Under socialism individuals would still be allowed the ownership of any amount of consumable goods, provided they used those goods for their own immediate satisfaction

and not for the acquirement of more wealth. Thus, a man might own a house, but he must live in it and not rent it. He might own any number of automobiles but he must use them to increase his pleasure, not to increase his wealth. He might own land, but he must use it for his own individual purposes of personal satisfaction, not for the production of greater wealth. It is true indeed that some socialistic authorities have felt it necessary to concede that an individual may own and cultivate as much land as he can manage by the efforts of himself and his own family. By no socialist, however, would he be allowed to rent any land.

What is not to be individually owned under socialism is capital in the strict sense of the word, that is, all material goods which are used in the production of more wealth or are used to increase the money income of the possessor instead of for the direct satisfaction of his desires. The result of such a change is obvious. It would do away at one stroke with all property income, both rent and interest, and would leave only those forms of income which are earned thru personal activities and which may be called "service income." No one could acquire any material wealth save that which he earned thru his own service to society.

**9. Principles of Socialism.**—Space is lacking to attempt either a historical survey of the socialistic movement or a critical analysis of its present claims and arguments. What is important is to grasp its real meaning and the distinction between it and communism and anarchism with which it is frequently absurdly confused. Certain facts about socialism should be constantly kept in mind by one who wishes to interpret modern movements intelligently. In the first place socialism is not

opposed to capitalism in the correct use of that word. Socialism is not concerned with the abandonment of the material means of production but solely with their ownership. Under a socialistic economy, the tendency would be toward a greater rather than a smaller use of machinery of all kinds. Certainly socialism does not involve a change in the form of government but in its functions. It is, therefore, in no way opposed to democracy. In fact, in accordance with the principles stated in an earlier paragraph, it implies an extension rather than a restriction of democracy. It would be possible to establish socialism as an economic system in the United States without any material change in our governmental institutions whatever. Any movements, theoretical or practical, which involve changes in the form of government as well as in the ownership of capital are something more than socialistic in the strict sense.

Socialism recognizes the progressive character of human society. It admits that institutions which are no longer socially expedient may have had utility in the past. It does not deny that the system of individualistic capitalism may have been valuable during the experimental period of capitalistic development. It does claim, however, that at the present time actual conditions are such as to render the continuation of the present terms of the ownership of capital socially injurious and prejudicial to the attainment of the utilitarian goal. It claims that the established rights of ownership in capital, and the power which goes with that ownership, and the control which it gives of the lives of other individuals no longer conduce to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It therefore maintains that a change is both desirable and in the end inevitable.

As a practical expedient, socialism at the present time

is so thoroly entangled with other things not necessarily related to it that the passing of judgment becomes difficult. Every thinking citizen of a modern society must be prepared to form his own judgment and to modify it as changing conditions demand. From the general point of view of scientific analysis we may simply say that socialism in its essence appears to be in line with the trend of social evolution, and that there is reason to apprehend social changes in the near future which shall be in the general direction of the socialistic ideal. Just what form these will take, time alone can tell.

#### REVIEW.

What are the main functions of the state?

Give arguments for and against the limiting of individual liberty by the extension of state activities.

State the advantages of the commission and city manager forms of government.

What is anarchism? Communism?

Explain the principles of socialism.