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## Social Politics and Modern Democracies

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**SOCIAL POLITICS AND MODERN DEMOCRACIES.** By Charles W. Pipkin. 2 vols. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1931. Vol. I, pp. xxxiv, 377; vol. II, pp. vii, 417.

“The nineteenth century”, wrote Mr. Hobhouse, “might be called the age of Liberalism, yet its close saw the fortunes of that great movement brought to their lowest ebb.” This last sacrament to an expiring cause is what, in its fundamental aspects, Professor Pipkin has elaborated in two well-documented volumes. What impresses him, however, is not the bankruptcy of the liberal philosophy, but rather its subsequent triumph in new forms of political expression. Here was a staunchly built school, embellished by those Gothic patterns of individual liberty, national rights and popular sovereignty, and buttressed by a distinguished parliamentary record, that in the cold light of twentieth century imperialism and social democracy seemed more of a relic than a citadel. Not that the validity of liberal teachings was denied, it was rather that youthful statesmen had been pushed to different points of observation, and saw the old principles with a new emphasis. Popular government defined in the haunting phrases of Mill and Gladstone was a heritage, but good will and assured response through the extension of its lessons to social and economic problems was a program.

With this view, Professor Pipkin has selected England and France as modern democracies within which to observe an unfolding of the new liberalism. Beginning with the background of industrial legislation and the modern labor movement, the basis is laid in the first two chapters for an examination of the more recent social legislation that forms the content of the first volume. Here is, on the one hand, a lesson in the slow, methodical response of parliamentary government to group pressures, and the cautious acceptance of extended administrative power inevitably implied from public regulation; and on the other, the development of the labor movement, free from the disturbing tenets of Marxism, but inspired by local community interests that fit the circumstances with a facility that transplanted philosophies have rarely equaled. Expression, therefore, was not in the formulation of manifestos and charters, but, with roots deep in a vague feeling of social destiny, was solidified in legislative acts and administrative structure.

By 1900 there had developed a spirit of compromise upon

many principles,—a willingness, indeed, to accept two doctrines and steer a course between them. The result was a growth of social legislation rarely paralleled in modern democratic government. Chapter III outlines the statutory sequences affecting conditions of work,—factory and coal mine regulation, industrial accident compensation, child labor and educational requirements; chapter IV, housing and planning acts; chapter V, the national pension policy for old age, widows and orphans; chapters VI and VII, minimum wage scale legislation; and chapters VIII to XII, the budget of 1909, the national insurance system and the industrial and political alliances of the labor party.

Particularly significant are chapters VI and VII dealing with the development of a national standard of life through the regulation of a living wage; and, in the light of contemporary industrial conditions, chapter IX pertaining to the national social insurance system and its administration. Both movements introduced and established new principles in democratic government,—the first, that a minimum wage is recognized as the first charge on industry, and the second, that the state accepts the responsibility for either work or maintenance. Both, moreover, developed administrative machinery that, in their operation, expressed new principles of political organization. Trade Boards, in the first case (consisting of representatives of employers and workers in equal numbers, together with members appointed by the Ministry of Labor), were given power to fix and to apply a general minimum trade rate of wages, to consider matters referred to them by government departments and to make recommendations with reference to industrial conditions (p. 159). They became, indeed, acknowledged instruments of self-government and within their competence acted as industrial legislatures. In the second case the compulsory insurance act in its administrative features carried with it what “was probably the widest power of subordinate legislation ever conferred by Parliament upon any body of officials” (p. 243), an emphatic evidence of the growing importance of administrative officers and commissions, and of the changing character of modern parliaments.

Volume II opens with a survey of the social movement in France, and proceeds (chapter III) to a description of French advisory and consultative institutions,—particularly the National Labor Supply Council, trade councils and the new National Economic Council. Chapter IV outlines the organization of labor in

the State; chapters V and VI, the codification of French labor law and legislation pertaining to conditions of work; chapter VII, social insurance in France; chapters VIII and IX, political aspects of the French labor movement with emphasis on socialism and revolutionary syndicalism; chapter X present developments since the war, and chapter XI treats the industrial labor movement in France.

Chapter XII is a general survey of both volumes and among the best in the study. Broadly speaking the French labor movement has suffered from the instability of the French party system, the individualism of the French employers, and the independence and stubbornness of the French workers (p. 338). In England, there never was the sullen rebellion of organized groups that desired the failure of the existing government. The English trade unionist, moreover, very early learned the principle of compromise, and whereas within both countries there has been a determination to use democratic methods, the English technique has advanced far enough to place two labor governments in power, while French labor is still in many instances arguing the principles of 1900. "France", Professor Pipkin concludes, "with her passionate devotion to idealism, her militant enthusiasm for causes, will always freshen the conception of men about their governments. England, holding fast to her practical way of working out difficulties, will none the less strengthen anew the foundations of belief everywhere in popular government."

White the study incorporates considerable material from the author's "The Idea of Social Justice", the presentation is new and extended. The method is largely historical,—prefaced by a short survey, a review of legislation is presented based largely on parliamentary debates and statutes, with descriptions of administrative devices accompanying each undertaking. The volumes are scholarly, well written and thorough. As hand books on social legislation they will be indispensable to those who wish to develop any part of the field, while in their broader significance, they are an epitome of a new democracy that is the outstanding emphasis of contemporary politics.

—JOHN F. SLY.

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