

# Two Forms of Government

By HENRY WARE ALLEN

## I. DEMOCRACY

ALEXANDER POPE'S oft-quoted couplet—"For forms of government let fools contest; whate'er is best administer'd is best"—while clever, leads to an erroneous conclusion. If the law is better enforced in England or more efficiently in Germany, that does not prove those forms of government to be better than ours. An inferior machine may run more smoothly than a better one which is out of order. It is a common mistake to place emphasis where it does not belong, to give credit to that which is unessential, and to undervalue that which is essential. Many people assume that the *mode* of government is of little consequence, the only important thing being to have good men in public office. This is very much like saying that the *skill* of a locomotive engineer is inconsequential, the important consideration being that he should be a good man. A good system of government in the hands of inferior men is preferable to a wrong system of government in the hands of superior men.

Thomas Jefferson and his associates of 1776 established the individualistic form of government, which has prevailed in the United States since that time. Jeffersonian democracy is founded upon natural law. It works with nature; never against her. It asserts that that government is best which governs least, and has for its aim at all times the reduction of governmental functions and expenses to the minimum consistent with the maintenance of law and order. It recognizes the beneficent effect of normal competition between individuals and between business institutions; it also recognizes the tendency of men to abuse the exercise of power when given the opportunity to do so. Its fundamental principle is "Equal rights for all; special privileges to none."

Jeffersonian democracy accepts the dictum "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" as a mandate to resist at all times the invariable tendency of public officials to exceed the legitimate exercise of their power. It substitutes drastic action for flowery phrases. An illustration of this is found in the records of Jefferson's first term as president, during which he reduced the number of public officials fifty per cent. and also reduced the public debt by nearly thirty million dollars. Another instance was the veto message of President Cleveland returning a proposed appropriation of twenty-five thousand dollars for the relief of a group of unlucky farmers, with the statement that (1) such an act would be unconstitutional, and (2) that it is the province of the people to support the government, but not of the government to support the people.

Jeffersonian democracy is based upon absolute justice. Under its domain no citizen or class of citizens would be given any privileges not given to all. All men are created

equal and should have equal rights, opportunities and protection under the law; but entirely consistent with this is the right of all men to accumulate wealth in proportion to their ability and opportunity to do so, and without limit even to the accumulation of millions of dollars. It is the right of all men to prosper in accordance with their ability and industry.

Under Jeffersonian democracy wealth which has been earned is justly entitled to interest paid for its use, and the rate of interest upon invested capital cannot properly be regulated by law. Money is worth what it will bring in a free competitive market. Laws regulating rates of wages, hours of labor, prices of commodities and child-labor are not legitimate, and never have been enforceable, for where they seem to be necessary it is only because a full and free democracy is not in force.

What is generally not understood is that governments are amenable to the same moral laws as are individuals and that they are made to pay the penalty for violation of those laws with inexorable certainty.

European and other critics have at times called attention to certain glaring defects in our system of government as proof that our democracy is a failure. The explanation of this is that our democracy has included much that should have been excluded and has failed to include much that is essential to it, and furthermore that our democracy has carelessly been permitted to deteriorate in many serious respects. The first mistake was made by the continental fathers in not abolishing chattel slavery. This omission cost the nation a bloody civil war. Then we have been denied the right of international free trade. A contradiction to democracy of even greater importance which is still unappreciated and therefore uncorrected, is an unjust system of land tenure and taxation. This has promoted the greatest of all monopolies, that of the land on which all must live, and is therefore more intimately connected with the problem of general welfare than any other.

An important reform would be adoption of the proportional representation plan of voting, which provides justice to the voter by making every vote count, and justice to the candidates by giving them all a fair chance. An important condition of true democracy is renunciation of all imperialism, which so frequently leads to international war.

There are other needed reforms which, although not peculiar to Jeffersonian democracy, nevertheless are necessary in order to remove evils of administration. One of these is strict compliance with civil service principles. In certain respects it must be conceded that many European countries have made a far better record than have we. These are rather matters of detail than of basic character, and it is reasonable

to believe that their reform will be made easier after the more fundamental changes have been made. The all-important condition of democracy is that it must be true to the demands of justice in every way, for "Unless its foundations be laid in justice, the social structure cannot stand."

## II. SOCIALISM

In the year 1825 Robert Owen came to this country from England in order to present state socialism as a new and improved form of government. But the real founder of state socialism was Karl Marx, whose theory of government was published in his book "Das Kapital," in 1867. Karl Marx is today the patron saint of Russia and his doctrine has been the inspiration of Hitler, Mussolini and socialists everywhere. The salient feature of socialism is a denial of natural law and the substitution for it of arbitrary man-made law or "economic planning." Its foundation is based not upon principle, but expediency. It demands equality of status instead of equality of opportunity, which is as much against nature as would be a forest with the trees all of one size and shape. It assumes that the state is wiser than the people and must, therefore, be given the power to direct the activities of the citizens very much as school children are managed by their teacher. The case is clearly stated by Henry George in these words: "The socialists seem to us like men who would try to rule the wonderfully complex and delicate relations of their frames by conscious will." It is noteworthy that the Roman Catholic Church is unalterably opposed to socialism. This is because socialism is in essential opposition to religion, both natural and inspired, and also because socialists as a rule have been opposed to the church. It is inevitable that the adoption of any philosophy which is based on false premises and therefore wrong in principle will lead to other irregularities, for it is always true that error begets error. This is conspicuously true with totalitarianism. Socialism leads to communism, confiscation of private property, persecution of Jews and others opposed to its government, execution of leaders of the opposition, concentration camps, hatred of the democracies, false propaganda, and lastly an ambition to subjugate all other peoples. In the United States its antipathy to individualism has been manifested by enmity to business men and business enterprises. Socialism takes away the incentive for individual initiative, invention and achievement.

When the philosophy of socialism is embraced, it is an easy step to other irregularities of thought and action, the assumption, for example, that there is no moral law any more than there is natural law; that right and wrong, virtue and sin are only relative terms and have no definite application; that the property of all must be applied for the greatest good of the greatest number, regardless of equity; that the end always justifies the means. It is no mere coincidence that Robert Owen's advocacy of socialism in 1825 was coupled with an attack upon the normal marriage relation. It is in-

evitable that the repudiation of natural law inherent with state socialism has the effect of lessening one's respect for an orderly universe operating under divine law.

Something over fifty years ago Edward Bellamy published his interesting romance, "Looking Backward," which presented in a charming way the successful operation of socialism in the year 2000. This he called nationalism, and it presented a perfected state of society in contrast to the evil conditions which existed when the book was written. The idea was so captivating that nationalist clubs were formed in many places throughout the country. Soon afterward the term Christian Socialism, a misnomer, came into use. Prior to that time socialist agitators were usually of the bewhiskered type of European immigrants who proclaimed their philosophy as soap-box orators in our larger cities and were given but scant attention by the average man. A more seductive type was the "parlor socialist" of recent years, comprising men and women of culture and eminence in the literary and religious world. Their influence became manifest in popular journals and in the economic thought prevalent in colleges and universities. It was assumed that democracy was a failure; this was easily proved by the increasing number of unemployed, the growth of vice and crime, pauperism, distress and child labor. And following the line of least resistance, socialism was presented and is favored today as an alternative.

Although the vote for socialism has steadily diminished in successive national elections, measures which are essentially socialistic have been adopted to a startling degree by the administration in Washington. Could Jefferson, Lincoln, or Cleveland return to Washington today, he would be forced to conclude that state socialism has been triumphant at the polls. The multiplication of new governmental bureaus, governmental entry into the arena of business enterprises such as savings banks and life insurance, and what is more important than all else, a steadily increasing exercise of governmental supervision and regulation of every kind of business enterprise, constitute a serious challenge to our supposed democracy. By reference to the socialist party platform or to dictionaries, we find that the chief aim of socialism is the "socialization of all industry." This means enmity to Jeffersonian democracy, the profit system, free competition and capitalism. In times past this partial adoption of state socialism would doubtless have been arrested as unconstitutional.

The question that must be answered sooner or later by the American voter is, "Shall we surrender the individualism of Jeffersonian democracy under which we have lived since the establishment of the nation, or shall we exchange this for the socialism of Karl Marx that is now in full flower in Russia, Germany and Italy?" There is no half-way compromise. We must go in one direction or the other. Socialism is just as much a poison when presented to us by a twentieth century clergyman of the Christian Church as when presented by Stalin, Hitler, or Mussolini.