

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CONCLUSION

FROM the preceding analysis of the city several things are manifest. In the first place, the modern city is a new thing to the world. It has no prototype in history. The cities of ancient and mediæval times were capitals or trading centres; they were organized on a slave or a class basis; their free population was relatively small, while the government was in the hands of an aristocratic class. The modern city, on the other hand, is an industrial product; it came upon us unprepared for its coming. Only within the past few years have we gotten over the surprise at its growth and only recently have we begun to accept it as a permanent thing. The city is no longer an incident, it is the controlling force in modern civilization. Already it contains nearly one half of the population in America and Germany, while in Great Britain 80 per cent. of the people live under urban surroundings.

The newness of the city is one explanation of our failures. In addition, our traditions were those of an agricultural people while our political institutions were designed for agricultural needs. They were not suited to great urban aggregations of people whose life was closely inter-related and whose

comfort, convenience, and safety necessitated community control over the aggressions of private interests and the performance of many functions not possible under rural conditions. Not only was the city charter inadequate to these new emergencies, but our constitutions and laws, the decisions of the courts, and the public opinion which sanctioned them were unfitted to the easy control of the problems which a highly complex industrial life involved. Three centuries of agricultural traditions had so moulded our political institutions that we were unable to cope with the city and provide for its needs when it came upon us.

#### **The Cost of Individualism.**

As a consequence of these traditions individualism has been the prevailing note in our politics. It reflected our frontier life and the *laissez-faire* philosophy which we inherited from Great Britain. This philosophy was sanctioned by the university and the press, by statesmen and the universal opinion of the nation. We distrusted the State and the city and refused to intrust them with power. Individualism has been carried to such an extreme that the establishment of a proper balance between public and private rights has involved tremendous costs to the community as well as administrative and political confusion in city, State, and nation.

This exaggerated individualism is reflected not only in the political machinery but in the physical side of the city as well. Because of a distrust of democracy on the one hand and officials on the

other, the city was unable to control the private interests which became more powerful than the community itself. This was especially true of the public-utility corporations, of land speculators and builders. And it is on its physical side that the city has most signally failed. It is here that our most costly failures are recorded. In this field, too, the heaviest burdens have been incurred for posterity.

This is the underlying explanation of the American city. It is not the voter, not the people, who are primarily at fault, but institutions, traditions, and public opinion which have failed to keep pace with the problems we have been called upon to face.

#### **The Changing View-Point.**

But our point of view is rapidly changing as is our social psychology. We are abandoning the *laissez-faire* distrust of the State and are acquiring a belief in democracy. The city reflects this new point of view even more markedly than does the nation. And as a first step in the establishment of a proper balance municipal charters are being adopted which abandon the traditional theory of American politics of divided responsibility and checks and balances. City charters are being rapidly democratized. Already nearly four hundred cities have adopted the most democratic machinery of any municipalities in the world. The commission form of government and the federal plan adopted by our larger cities are both responsive and responsible. They are adjusted to the easy expression of the popular will and the popular control of administra-



tive and legislative officials. Along with this has gone simple, direct methods of nomination and election as well as the short ballot and the divorce of city from the State and national elections. This reduced the burden on the electorate. It made it possible for the voter himself to select his representatives rather than to delegate that selection to the boss and the political machine through which, by reason of the confusion, the voter has been compelled to act. By reason of the initiative, referendum, and recall the city has been still further democratized. Through these agencies abuses of political power and corruption and the exploitation of the city by privileged interests have been checked, while new ideas are being promoted.

Along with this the State is loosening its hold upon the city. Home rule is being granted. This movement has not extended very far as yet; only a few of our States have permitted the community to determine for itself as to its form of government. And none of our States have completely emancipated the cities as to the activities they shall undertake and the functions they shall perform. We are still fearful of ourselves and are still too solicitous of the rights of private property. In many States cities are permitted to engage in certain public-utility activities and to regulate private property under the police power. But no State has freed the city as has Germany; no State has extended the sovereign right to the community to determine for itself how far it shall proceed in the processes of socialization;

as to how its taxes shall be collected and the extent to which it shall use its credit for the promotion of its life. In addition, the city is still under the restraints of the constitution and the courts in its attempts to control private property in the public interest.

### **The Necessity for Further Freedom.**

Without these powers of control, of public ownership and of financial autonomy, the city will remain helpless before the problems which confront it. It cannot build, cannot plan, cannot protect itself from the aggressions of privileged wealth. These problems cannot be corrected by the State and they cannot be corrected in the same way by all cities. Still further extension of power must be granted before our cities will be able to develop in a big, constructive way.

Freedom is the first need of the city. Through it a new psychology, a new city patriotism, a new city sense will be created. Through freedom to experiment variety will be substituted for uniformity, while a new sense of affection will lead to an awakening in municipal politics and to constructive policies of city building.

### **The City and Co-operation.**

The survey of the city further shows that municipal well-being is in direct ratio to the increase of co-operation, whether voluntary or compulsory. It is voluntary in the division of labor, the specialization of talents, and the increase in wealth, which come through these processes. It is compulsory

where the services have been undertaken by the community itself. Necessity led to the first steps in compulsory co-operation, necessity for protection, for health, for education, for the elementary services which have become a commonplace in every city. Even the most backward city is socialized to a remarkable degree in comparison with the country districts; it performs a multitude of services which to our forefathers were unknown. And these activities are constantly increasing, usually with the approval of the entire community. And each new advance, each new activity, adds to the comfort, convenience, and happiness of living.

Socialization involved the building of streets and sewers, the maintenance of police and fire departments, all of which reduce the dangers and burdens of urban life. They made security possible, promoted health as well as the freedom of the individual in every walk of life. Socialization brought schools. Education, culture, and the refinements of life began to appear. All of these gains were the fruits of co-operation. They could not have existed without it. Other functions were added. The health departments have grown until they touch the life of the citizen in countless unseen ways. Through public sanitation the city has become far more healthy than the country districts.

These are the simplest forms of community co-operation. As to their propriety there is little dispute. We now accept these services as the most natural thing in the world. And co-operation will



continue to encroach into other fields. It will continue to crowd out private initiative.

### **New Ideas of Municipal Service.**

The city is beginning to enter the industrial field, not for the purpose of making profits but for the purpose of community service. Water-plants are generally owned by the city. This was the beginning of municipal business. Cities then entered the electric-lighting business. Street-railways and gas companies are still in private hands, but a number of cities are experimenting in this field as well. We are coming to realize that the public-utility services are so essentially public in their nature that they cannot with safety be left in private hands.

This programme of industrial co-operation is known as municipal ownership in America, municipal trading in Great Britain, and municipal socialism in Germany, in which latter country it has been carried into many fields. And there is no means of telling where the movement will stop. It knows no set limits, no *a priori* confines. But as public opinion becomes more articulate, as the poverty, inconveniences, and unjust distribution of wealth become more apparent, the city will undoubtedly aim at their correction. Already it is recognized that vice and crime are largely social. They are traceable to low wages, irregular employment, bad housing, inadequate education. And they can only be corrected by changing the social conditions which produce these evils. And this can only be done by the further widening of the community's activities,

by the further socializing of municipal activities, by continued intrusion into the field of private enterprise.

A survey of the cities of America, and particularly those of Europe, demonstrates that those cities are best governed, are most comfortable and beautiful, that have carried the process of socialization furthest. The German city is recognized as the most advanced in the world, not only in its administration but in the comfort and general well-being of its citizens. And the German cities not only own the public service corporations, they have added many other services, such as abattoirs and markets, as a means of cutting down the cost of living and insuring the supply of clean and wholesome food. Savings-banks and pawn-shops are maintained for the poor. The city loans its credit for the building of working-men's houses; it buys land and co-operates in the erection of model apartments. The German city, despite the fact that it is governed by business men with no sympathy for socialism, has carried co-operation further than any city in the world.

### **The Need of City Planning.**

City building is the next and most important step. It is positive, constructive, and, in a sense, final. It involves planning the city as a unit, as a whole, as an architect plans a building. It involves a new vision of the city in which all property will be subject to the community. It involves, too, a recognition of the city as a sovereign political agency.

And as we come to visualize the city as an agency



of service we will acquire many things now in private hands. We will have to take over the waterfronts, erect docks and harbors, and acquire the means of transportation not only for the promotion of industry but for the service of the people. Other public-service utilities, like gas, water, and electric-lighting activities are part of the circulatory system of the community and should be owned and operated by it. Provision will have to be made for terminals; in the larger cities for subways or elevated roads. Markets must be provided for the protection of the consumer, while adequate provision must be made for recreation and the leisure life of the people.

All of these agencies must be owned by and made a part of the city rather than remain in private hands. It will be necessary to relieve congestion, to provide parks, play-places, and sites for public buildings, the cost of which might have been saved had foresight been shown in the original plans.

All this involves a new ideal of the city, a new sense of the obligations and possibilities of organized government. Solicitude for people will take the place of solicitude for property; the ideal of human welfare will be substituted for the ideal of economy. The measure of the city of to-morrow will be the service it renders to the people.

And, despite the magnitude of the programme, evidences are not wanting that the American city will be equal to its task. Public opinion is coming to protest against the misery, suffering, and poverty

which the coming of the city has brought in its train. And to meet these new burdens new sources of revenue are being sought, and they are being found in the increasing urban land values, a natural source from which additional and adequate revenues can be derived. Land values increase with the growth of population and reflect every advance of the community. Public improvements add to their value as do the improvements in the public service. Land values are a social treasure awaiting taxation by the community for carrying forward a new civilization which will minimize the sacrifices which the coming of the city has entailed and socialize the wealth which is now enjoyed by the few.