

THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY

By Harold J. Laski

Harper & Brothers, \$2.50

In this book, which may be considered a companion piece to "Parliamentary Government in England," Professor Laski discusses the President's relations with other governmental authorities and describes their interaction. Whether or not we agree with his interpretation of the Presidency, we shall nevertheless gain from it a keener insight into the functioning of the American government.

In the last paragraph he writes, "Power, no doubt, is always a dangerous thing; and the temptation to its abuse, as no generation has learned more surely than our own, the subtlest poison to which a man may succumb." But he continues, "Yet power is also opportunity, and to face danger with confidence is the price of its fulfillment. That is why I end with the emphasis that the President of the United States must be given the power commensurate to the function he has to perform." That function, he believes, is "to lead his people forward."

The negative state must give way to a positive state which demands a positive President, who (presumably) will act in the best interests of the people. The presumption involved here introduces an element of uncertainty; historical data are lacking to establish a probability that a powerful executive would use his power for the general good, and evidence is plentiful to support a theory that power almost invariably corrupts those who wield it.

Dr. Laski's attitude toward dictatorship (some dictatorship, possibly) may be inferred from this sentence: "But in America, as in no country save one in the world today, there are the two supreme possibilities of exhilaration and hope."

Save one, sezee; one wonders which?

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