

· C O M M E N T ·

On Radical Liberalism

REGARDING "The Decay of Liberalism" by Francis Neilson,¹ if my article on British Liberalism² did nothing more than stimulate Neilson, I can regard it as worth while. Neilson's article is extremely interesting, and the last part is not only a comment on, but a contribution to the history of Liberalism in its last phase.

I do not share his disappointment in the Liberal leaders who paid less attention to the old radicalism than to the later policy of social legislation, and I am not convinced that land legislation was the panacea that the radicals thought it was. In fact the group of radicals to which Neilson belonged was almost as much a special reform interest within the party as the temperance men.

What sets the radicals apart from all the other English reformers, either in Cobden's day or Neilson's, is their clear, direct thinking. One cannot misunderstand them, though one may disagree with them. When radicalism was merged, or possibly submerged in Gladstonian liberalism, some of the clarity was lost. Nevertheless some individuals—such as John Morley—maintained these great qualities. What Neilson writes stems from a great tradition.

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¹ AMER. JOUR. ECON. SOCIO., Vol. 4, No. 3 (April, 1945), pp. 281-310.

² *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (October, 1944), pp. 67-79.