

EDITORIALS

Statecraft as a Practical Art

Everyone seems to agree that the English have a great talent for government, but no one seems to notice that England itself is one of the worst governed states of modern times. The English, in time of peace, pay appalling taxes to no purpose, and in time of war they pour out their blood to the same witless end. The country offers rich pasturage for a small gang of knavish money-grabbers and professional politicians, but what the average Englishman gets out of it is hard to discern. If he is of the hard-working, well-meaning, useful middle class he is barely able to make a decent living; if he is of the working class he is always on the verge of starvation. All of the money seems to go to a few men, none of them of any visible value to the state. They and their women waste it, and that is the end of it. Every gambling-house in Europe is crowded with Englishmen, and it is they, and not Americans, who support such playgrounds as the Engadine, Egypt and the Riviera. London is full of expensive restaurants, night-clubs, and other such arenas of conspicuous waste. But the average Englishman is lucky if he is able to dine upon a cut from a greasy joint and two soggy vegetables.

This gross and crying unfairness in the distribution of the national wealth has been going on for two centuries. Every politician in practise during that time has made loud promises to remedy it, but not one of them has ever succeeded. In that field, indeed, such radicals as Ramsay MacDonald have failed even more miserably than such

defenders of the existing order as Chamberlain and Disraeli. One and all, they have come croppers at the principal aim and purpose of their trade, which is to secure the safety, prosperity and happiness of the people. The English would probably be better off today, taking one with another, if, for a hundred years past, they had had no government at all. They are an orderly and industrious people, and carry themselves very decently when left to their own devices. All that their so-called government has achieved for them is to make them poor and to expose them to serious risks of disaster. The realm is plainly wobbling today, and despite the natural advantages which have saved it so often in the past, it may go down to wreck and ruin tomorrow. No sensible insurance man would care to write a policy on the English state.

I have said that it is one of the worst governed countries of modern times. This is only too obvious, but it does not follow that the other great nations are substantially better off. All of them are run extravagantly and idiotically, and by men who appear to be as lacking in good sense as they are in common honesty. In none of them is the government in the hands of the superior minority of the people. Here I do not confuse superiority with social dignity, nor even with education. I mean simply superiority in the common talents and virtues, universally recognized as such—superiority in intelligence, in tastes and habits of mind, in disinterested patriotism, in honor. Everywhere one sees governments operated by men wholly lacking in

such attributes—an endless procession of cheap vest-busters and crude self-seekers in France, an ignoble and preposterous Socialist turned Caesar in Italy, a gang of verminous agitators in Russia, a series of military ignoramuses in Spain, and a motley gang of professional job-seekers in Austria, Scandinavia, the Balkans and South America. Perhaps Hungary, Turkey and Switzerland are exceptions—but certainly the United States and the British dominions are not. Of Germany, more anon.

Contemplating the United States, I pass over the case of Dr. Hoover as a matter too painful to be discussed quite frankly, and point once more, as I have often pointed in the past, to the roll of State Governors. There are forty-eight of them—and perhaps eight or ten are genuinely competent and decent men. The rest shade down from blatant Rotarians and unconscionable demagogues to fellows who distinguish themselves from criminals only by a hair. No sensible person could frequent their society for an hour without being nauseated. Far from being the best citizens of their States, or the best local exponents of whatever trades or professions they practise secularly, they are only too often nearly the worst. If a Babbitt reigns, then he is the most stupid and venomous Babbitt immediately at large. If a lawyer, then he commonly belongs to the lowest quarter of the State bar. If a professional job-holder, then he is one willing to resort to any infamy to hold his job. At the top float the eight or ten worthy and competent men, mainly accidents. Below is rubbish.

Yet out of precisely such rubbish issue the policies and fortunes of nearly all the great modern states. Now and then, as happened in Germany when Hindenburg became *Reichspräsident*, an honest if not

too intelligent man finds himself at the helm, but he never lasts long, and he is usually desperately badgered while he lasts. Nitti, if he survives in Italy, is probably under police surveillance; the dreadful inountebank Mussolini gyrates and postures in his place. Some grisly and abhorrent natural law, at odds with all rational logic, seems to operate in favor of such charlatans. They gravitate to the top as inevitably as Iowans gravitate to Los Angeles. They acquire a complete monopoly of the trade of statecraft, and every man, woman and child in Christendom pays the penalty of their venality and imbecility—in taxes, in wars, in economic insecurity, in misery without end. Their incompetence is visible on every hand. Not a civilized people of today is at ease to do its work and seek its happiness. Everywhere there is waste and folly, injustice and terror. And no way out is in sight. After MacDonald is disposed of England will only get a worse. What Italy will get after Mussolini, and Russia after the soap-boxers, and the United States after Harding, Coolidge and Hoover I hate to think.

It is truly amazing that the human race, in managing this, its principal business on earth, has managed it so badly. Even religion is measurably better ordered. It fails, of course, in its central function, which is to save men from fear, but, at least in modern times, it is far less costly than government, and far less a nuisance. Government, as it is run by the incompetents I have described, becomes the common enemy of all honest and well-disposed persons. Instead of protecting them against outrage and oppression, it becomes the chief agent of outrage and oppression upon them. They cannot trust their property to it, and they cannot trust their lives to it. The more diligent and admirable they are, and hence the more valuable to the race, the

more cruelly it exploits them and grinds them down. That they have devised no way to make it decenter is surely one of the marvels of human history. In all other fields, man is the most inventive and ingenious of animals, but here he is left far behind by the anthropoid apes, and shamed beyond measure by the bees and ants.



Less Noise Than Formerly

The late pious bellowing against the crimes and carnalities of Flaming Youth seems to be dying out: one hears a great deal less talk than aforetime about gintoting in the colleges and necking in shady lanes. This is a welcome relief, and perhaps shows that there is such a thing, after all, as human progress. It would be curious and instructive to examine the business historically, and find out who set up the first alarums. My guess is that they came from oldsters, male and female, whose own youthful conduct was anything but chemically pure. Find me an active moralist and I'll point out for you a fraud who has something to conceal and forget. Most of the more violent Prohibitionists know only too well the horrendous magnetism of the jug, and have for it, in consequence, the Devil's nervous, indignant feeling for holy water. And practically all of the literary censors, when they allege solemnly, to the astonishment of the rest of us, that a single reading of a naughty book can establish life-long habits of a secret and unsanitary character are simply publishing incautious autobiography.

The truth is that the moral divagations of the youth of today probably do not differ three percent from those of the youth of yesterday. When I was a youngster, which was very long ago, with Victoria

in full blast upon her throne, great numbers of college boys were diligent lushers, just as they are now: the only difference I can make out is that they then drank beer, which was relatively harmless, whereas they now have to put up with bootleg gin, which often makes them sick. There was necking, too, in my early days, and all of it that the traffic would bear. Who will forget, indeed, the protests that used to ascend to God against kissing games, then so immensely popular? Didn't every Wesleyan divine preach upon them lubriciously at least once a year, and were they not denounced violently by Edward W. Bok in the *Ladies' Home Journal*? Yet they went on, day in and night out. There were, to be sure, boys who refrained and gals who escaped, but they were just as rare and singular as non-neckers are today. The vast majority were quite as willing in the dim, gas-lighted parlors of that remote era as their heirs and assigns are in parked roadsters now. Perhaps they had a shade less opportunity, but that was surely not their fault.

A little necking, I am convinced, does no normal and healthy girl any appreciable harm. On the contrary, it tends to improve her, if only by ridding her of groundless fears. Those fears, when they appear in her bosom, are probably planted there by her mother, and it is a good thing for her to discover that her mother's ideas are not always reliable. In case the business goes further than mere necking there is some ground, of course, for sociologists to intervene, but I doubt that it goes further today any oftener than it did yesterday. The notion that it does is simply a delusion spread by two classes of nuisances: parents who forget what they did themselves when they were young, and professional moralists who live by unearthing and denouncing sins which

do not exist. Such moralists are always reckless pornographers. A few years back they were filling the papers with filthy and incredible tales about virgins stabbed with hypodermic needles in movie parlors and sold into white slavery. Yesterday they were alleging that half the young girls of America were carrying on *à la* Greenwich Village. Tomorrow, with this buncombe played out, they will probably switch from fornication to adultery, and begin charging that every married woman has a lover.

In the department of drink they are equally unreliable. On the one hand, they grossly exaggerate the amount of guzzling among the young that is going on today, and on the other hand they grossly underestimate the amount that went on twenty or thirty years ago. There has been, under Prohibition, an undoubted increase in drinking in certain circles, but it is not serious in amount, and it is by no means confined to the young. My own impression is that the chief speeders are married women above thirty-five—in other words, not youngsters but the mothers of youngsters. These baggages, having taken to liquor somewhat imprudently, fall into the error of assuming that everyone else is going the same route. I doubt it. The movement toward sobriety that began with the turn of the century was halted by the Methodist millennium, but it is now under way again. Most American men, I believe, drink less today than they did ten years ago, and a great deal less than they drank in 1900. So with college boys. They may go on occasional gaudy toots, but the steady boozing of thirty years ago is now out of fashion. Even women, I believe, will soon return to more decorous habits. They are not fitted by nature for really voluptuous drinking, just as they are not fitted for voluptuous eat-

ing. They always choose their cocktails by the looks thereof, and no one ever heard of one who could distinguish between two wines without looking at the labels.



Psychological Hypothesis

One of the errors that all of us make is to judge the conduct of other men by our own standards. It is, perhaps, the human weakness *par excellence*, and at times it can be as misleading and dangerous as judging the gin, wives or epistemologies of other men by our own standards.

I am reminded of this too often forgotten fact by certain recent moral onslaughts, made by so-called Liberals, upon the Hon. David Aiken Reed, LL.D., D.S.M., senior Senator from the great State of Pennsylvania. The gravamen of these onslaughts is that the hon. gentleman is a mere intellectual jackal (*Canis aureus sapiens*), ready and willing to bark and bite for any patron who can make it worth his while. In substantiation thereof, some of his operations in the Senate are cited, and especially his voluptuous championship of the Hon. William S. Vare and his tender solicitude for the Hon. Andy Mellon. One never hears of Dr. Reed speaking out bravely for liberty, social justice or any of the other great boons that Liberals cherish. When he unchains his Wagnerian eloquence, it is almost always in defense of money. His god, it appears, is the glittering Mazuma, by Mammon out of the Queen of Sheba.

These allegations, it must be confessed, have no little plausibility. No doubt many a reflective American, himself neither a Liberal or the son of a Liberal, has wondered that a man so favored by Providence as Dr. Reed should waste himself upon such sordid causes. The cadet of a rich

house of the Allegheny marches, dowered with a good head and a vibrant tongue, an eminent figure in the highest court circles of both Pittsburgh and Washington, and with a safe-deposit box full of high-grade securities, it seems odd and even a bit pathetic that he should show so little imagination. One somehow expects a man so fortunate, when fate throws him into public office, to fight more romantic battles. One looks for him to bust out heroically, now and then, in the interest of the downtrodden. But Dr. Reed seems to regard only the interest of the downtreaders.

The Liberals, of course, being mainly Calvinists defectively deloused, put it down to congenital depravity, and try to save the hon. gentleman by calling him evil names. But it is really hard to think of so amiable a man as depraved, whether congenitally or otherwise. He is, indeed, too palpably respectable for that—too respectable and too well-intending. He fought gallantly, in his day, to save the world from rapine, pillage and relativity, Goethe, Wagner and Nietzsche; he is president of a hospital board and trustee of a great university; he is a chevalier of the Legion of Honor; he is an A.B. of Princeton; he is a dutiful husband and father. To hint that such a man is not what he ought to be is to stand the science of morals on its head. If he is wicked, then George Washington was also wicked.

My own view is that the peculiar attitudes of the gentleman are to be accounted for precisely as the peculiar attitudes of other and lesser men are to be accounted for, to wit, by scrutinizing his environment. His good is not a metaphysical generalization; it is a good of a concrete and definite kind, with limits both temporal and spatial. In brief, it is a *Pittsburgh* good; yet more briefly, it is the good of a Pittsburgh *lawyer*; yet more, it is the good

of a lawyer fit for the honor and dignity of membership in the Duquesne Club. Remember so much, and the whole mystery vanishes. For at once Dr. Reed ceases to be a guinea pig under the scalpel of Liberals, and becomes a natural and authentic human being, inhabiting a clearly defined circle, surrounded by friends who love him, and susceptible to their praise and their policing. What he permits himself to do and say in this world is what they approve; what he avoids is what they frown on. It is not the good-will of Liberals that moves him, nor even the applause of the Senate, nor yet the adoration of Pennsylvania and the country, but simply the approbation of the little world which surrounds him—the world of well-heeled Pittsburgh lawyers, fed from the troughs of Mellon and company, and consecrated to the Mellon evangel.

Well, we are all just like that—though most of us, of course, are not Pittsburgh lawyers and do not belong to the Duquesne Club. Every man, high or low, sets more store by the opinion of his fellow craftsmen than he sets by the opinion of all the rest of the world. A bootlegger does not value the praise of Methodist bishops; he wants to be esteemed and respected, envied and imitated by other bootleggers. Contrariwise, a Methodist bishop does not solicit the encomiums of the Pope; he solicits the encomiums of his brethren of the Wesleyan rite. When Brahms wrote "*Leider, nicht von Johannes Brahms*" upon a waltz by Johann Strauss, the words were more precious to Strauss than ten thousand huzzahs from the massed archdukes of Austria, for Brahms was a great musician, even greater than Strauss was himself, and archdukes were only archdukes. Even Liberals, I dare say, are like the rest of us here. Find one who has a laudatory letter from Dr. Reed, and you will be a week

inducing him to show it to you, but find one with a certificate from Sacco and Vanzetti and it is hanging on his parlor wall.

The learned advocate from Pittsburgh, viewed in this light, becomes at once less mysterious than he was, and more virtuous. Human juices begin to drip from him; he ceases to be *Canis aureus*. I believe that, within the limits of his vision, he is really a notably moral and conscientious man. The one thing to remember is that the ideal before him is not that of a Per-

fect Liberal, hobnobbing with blackamoors and hunting for atrocities; it is that of a Perfect Pittsburgh Lawyer, fat, prudent, correct in every thought, and a pious votary of the god Mazuma. If I am right, then he deserves to be praised for his close approximation to his goal. There has never been, in all the history of Pittsburgh, a more magnificent incarnation of the legal, economic, political and sociological concepts which prevail in that great city.

H. L. M.

SKYSCRAPERS

BY CLAUDE BRAGDON

EUROPEAN architects visiting these shores are most interested in our skyscrapers, for of all of our architectural flora they alone are truly indigenous to the American soil. Our churches, court-houses, libraries, museums, banks, are for the most part uninspired adaptations of forms with which these men are familiar—forms which they themselves are even now in process of abandoning in favor of others more rational, more economical, and more eloquently expressive of the spirit of a mechanical age. In the skyscraper they discover these same qualities, and they also see in it a symbol of our uniqueness—that ruthless, tireless, assured energism, delightedly proclaiming, “What a great boy am I!”

The skyscraper is important both as an architectural and as a social manifestation. Let us therefore seek to discover and define those forces and those influences which have shaped and are in process of shaping it as it exists today.

Of the social and economic forces I shall not treat other than to remove a few prevalent misconceptions. It is popularly supposed that the skyscraper arose as the result of the impossibility of lateral expansion; lower Manhattan, with its confining rivers and the Chicago Loop—districts where these buildings first shot skyward—being often cited in proof of this. But the so-called Loop is not a nature-made, but a man-made barrier—metaphysical, not physical—and an aerial view of New York

reveals at a glance large tracts of low buildings in and around the Wall Street district which if built up to the height of a few more stories would accommodate a population larger than is housed there now; and it is a fact that the average height of buildings on Manhattan island is lower than those of European capitals where the skyscraper is a thing unknown.

The *raison d'être* of the skyscraper is therefore not physical but rather psychological: it arose in answer to the desire of the herd to become a super-herd; to the ambition of the spot cards to become face cards. Skyscrapers appear always and only on those sacred acres which for some mysterious reason have become the blue heaven of the business man. High buildings in preferred areas owe their existence to the same cause as high prices for front-row seats at a show.

But from another point of view the skyscraper came into being as a result of an effort to get the better of the real estate agent and the tax collector by expanding in the free dimension, and capturing and turning to profit more than an equitable share of air and sunlight. Ugly as the word may sound, the skyscraper is a product of human greed, thus standing in ideal symbolic relation to the country and to the times. I hasten to add, however, that this motive is no more ignoble than those which inspired architectural masterpieces canonized by universal acclamation and sanctified by time. Motives—even one's