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## *The Inevitable Rarely Happens*

By ALBERT JAY NOCK

LIBERALISM AND SOCIAL ACTION, by John Dewey. \$1.50. 8½ x 5½; 93 pp. New York: *Minton, Balch*.

THE NEW IMPERATIVE, by Walter Lippmann. \$1.25. 7½ x 5¼; 52 pp. New York: *Macmillan*.

GOVERNMENT IN BUSINESS, by Stuart Chase. \$2. 8 x 5¾; 296 pp. New York: *Macmillan*.

MARXISM AND MODERN THOUGHT. A Symposium. \$3. 9 x 6; 342 pp. New York: *Harcourt, Brace*.

WHAT DOES AMERICA MEAN? by Alexander Meiklejohn. \$3. 8¼ x 5½; 271 pp. New York: *Norton*.

STUMBLING INTO SOCIALISM, by David Lawrence. \$1.50. 7 x 5¼; 196 pp. New York: *Appleton-Century*.

THIS group of books furnishes a fairly complete index to the general progress towards collectivism, both here and in Europe. With the exception of Mr. Lawrence, the authors are all favorable to some degree of collectivism, so if the reader takes them as a group, they will probably give him everything that can be usefully said in behalf of the collectivist principle, and nothing against it. Their work may be recommended accordingly. As Lincoln said, "for those who like that sort of thing it is probably about the sort of thing they like". If the reader wishes to go further on the road to collectivism than Mr. Meiklejohn takes him, Mr. Dewey and Mr. Lippmann will give him a lift. If they do not carry him far enough, he may hitch-hike with Mr. Chase. If he wishes to go the full dis-

tance, the Russian symposiasts will gladly give him a through ticket.

This is all that can be said for the affirmative group as a whole, and in justice one should say no less. The lone dissenter, Mr. Lawrence, on the other hand, views the collectivist tendency in America with alarm. His brief against it, however, which might be, and ought to be, very strong and thorough-going, is very weak and fragmentary. He does not go into the philosophy or history of his position, but takes his stand on the old slippery ground of "Constitutional principles", which any competent historian could blast from under him with no effort whatever. It should be said that Mr. Lawrence may think his book is well enough substantiated for the kind of public that it is apparently meant to reach, since he obviously writes as a journalist or publicist, intent on getting the ear of the masses. This is all very well, but an informed person must nevertheless feel a little sorry that since Mr. Lawrence could so easily sift in some good reasons for opposing progressive State intervention, he should choose exclusively to make so much of a bad one.

His main object in writing is to propose a new political alignment. Since the so-called left wing of both major parties is in his view collectivist, he would have them practically forced into coalescence with the Socialists and the present third parties, by "a fusion or coalition of all the elements of

the electorate who believe in a written Constitution, to be changed and amended only as provided therein". His plan for organizing these elements is interesting and apparently practicable, and it may therefore be highly recommended to the many who believe that the problems of public affairs can be solved or simplified by such means.

The great merit of Mr. Dewey's and Mr. Lippmann's books is that they are small and well written. The others suffer from being heavily overwritten and badly written, and the reader suffers with them. Mr. Dewey believes that "we should through organized endeavor institute the socialized economy of material security and plenty that will release human energy for pursuit of higher values", and he sees the State as the instrument of that endeavor. Thus, like Mr. Lippmann and all other liberals in good and regular standing, he seems to assume that the State is essentially a social, rather than an anti-social institution — that the State's interests are identical with society's interests, or at least, that the two sets of interests can somehow be conjured into some sort of correspondence, and that it is the function of liberalism to find and apply the best method of bringing about this correspondence. Those who share this belief should be strongly urged to read Mr. Dewey's book, for from that point of view nothing could be better. Those who do not share it will find the book pervaded by the air of fictitiousness and naïveté which a fundamental false assumption always generates. While Mr. Dewey is cordial to collectivization, he is against the Marxian doctrine of violent revolution in order to bring it in, and he is equally against trying to bring it in through a policy of sheer improvisation and experiment, like the policy which is now in force at Washington — a policy of fits and starts. He is for an alternative policy of depending on what he

calls "socially-organized intelligence". His advocacy of this is extremely fine, and those who are not troubled by doubts about his primary assumptions will find it quite to their liking.

Mr. Lippmann's new imperative is that the State "must hold itself consciously responsible for the maintenance of the standard of life prevailing among the people"; or, in less pretentious language, that the State owes its citizens a living. He draws a parallel between Mr. Hoover's moves toward recovery and Mr. Roosevelt's, showing that both policies were equally the expression of this new principle. Thus Mr. Roosevelt is not at all a New Dealer, but a faithful continuator of the policy initiated by Mr. Hoover in 1929. Indeed this Hoover-Roosevelt policy is in the full current of "a movement in American politics which goes back at least fifty years, and there is little if anything in the New Deal reforms which was not implicit in the New Nationalism of Theodore Roosevelt or the New Freedom of Woodrow Wilson".

Quite so. But when Mr. Lippmann asks if it would not be reasonable to assume that "where we find a new principle and a new function of government common to both Mr. Hoover and Mr. Roosevelt, there is a strong presumption that we are in the presence of a change due to historical forces that transcend individuals and parties and their articulate programmes" — when Mr. Lippmann asks this question, one may reply: Not necessarily or even probably. The change may be due to forces which have been in play long enough perhaps to be called historical, but which transcend neither individuals nor parties — the forces of State interest. When he asks whether there is "any other criterion . . . which conforms more closely to ordinary experience", one must reply that there is

one which conforms to it much more closely. Ordinary experience shows that it is to any politician's interest to push for the enhancement and centralization of State power, and that he will always push for it as strongly as political circumstances permit. He will instantly take advantage of any condition of the public mind that can be turned to this purpose. In 1794, James Madison said that a certain proposal made by Theodore Sedgwick was merely "the old trick of turning every contingency into a resource for accumulating force in the government". Ordinary experience, nay, invariable experience, nay, the plainest common sense, makes it competent for any one to say that just this is what Mr. Hoover did, what Mr. Roosevelt did, and what any politician in his right mind would do under similar circumstances. If Mr. Roosevelt has gone farther than Mr. Hoover, obviously the contingency was such as permitted him to do so. Each went as far as he judged the current of the contingency would carry him in safety, and so would any politician. The old maxim, *Est boni iudicis ampliare jurisdictionem*, applies to any jobholder, for reasons which are surely so obvious as to need no particularizing. If Mr. Roosevelt is repudiated at the polls this year, it means that his successor must more or less mark time on the job of making any further increase of State power, but the one sure thing is that he will do what he can.

Mr. Lippmann's questions appear to be rhetorical. When they are taken seriously, however, and answered seriously, the answers take a good deal of starch out of the substance of his book, and they also prepare the reader for a fundamental understanding of Mr. Chase's first four chapters, which treat of the general advance towards collectivism and, in particular, the collectivism of the New Deal. Here Mr. Chase

analyzes Mr. Lippmann's "change due to historical forces", and documents its progress with a prodigious wealth of statistical material. Mr. Chase's book ought to be the most popular of the group, because it so abundantly meets and gratifies the supreme American passion for statistics. It has long been a current saying that the American makes statistics do duty for philosophy, romance, poetry, even for religion. Mr. Chase's work fills this bill so admirably that the American devotee should roll in it like a cat in a bed of valerian. Mr. Chase exudes statistics as naturally and effortlessly as a rose exudes its scent. I say this with no disrespect for Mr. Chase, but quite the opposite. His book is excellent, it is useful, and even to a person who does not share the overwrought national passion for statistics it is extremely interesting. This work, indeed, and the work of the Russian symposiasts, are the two books out of the lot that one may recommend as not only to be read but to be kept at hand.

Mr. Chase deals with the distinction between public and private business, the *agenda* and *non-agenda* of Jeremy Bentham—a distinction which he finds shifting and variable according to immediate circumstances. He is something of a Benthamite in his philosophy, a Benthamite tempered by a great deal of Yankee good sense, humor, and sound humanity, thus presenting a very attractive combination of gifts. The Western nations, he says, are facing nothing less than a problem of survival, and he backs up this statement by an impressive array of statistics. "Their populations are undergoing progressive degeneration through unemployment, malnutrition and hopelessness"—statistics again. Of course as long as a country can support a population it will have one, but these populations "cannot maintain themselves as healthy communities unless and until their

economic arrangements are vastly bettered".

In the face of this dismal situation, "the function of public business today is to do whatever must be done to insure the healthy survival of the whole community". The bulk of Mr. Chase's book is occupied with drawing up certain categories of production, distribution, and service which in his view constitute the present inventory of public business, and certain other categories which constitute a more or less provisional inventory of private business. The first inventory defines what he calls a survival-budget, and he says that by his definition, "it leaves plenty of room for private business and individual enterprise" to spread over the categories in the second inventory. His demand is that some such budget of public business as he has constructed shall be officially established as a working program. He makes it clear that in order to secure this, what he calls Big Business, which is now marginal to both of his inventories, must be controlled. "Unless Big Business plays ball," he concludes, "there will be no budget, no economic security, no assurance of community survival."

From this, therefore, Mr. Chase goes on to consider practical methods of putting teeth in his budget. They come down to three: State regulation, State control with private ownership, and finally, State ownership, either with State management or with management by an "independent corporation administered by accounting control, using all the efficiency-devices of contemporary capitalism". This last, he says, is the preferred model among all those available for examination in cases where outright State ownership exists.

Mr. Chase's last two chapters show an attractive breadth of view and warmth of spirit. His mind is not hopelessly State-

ridden. If the public business could be done better and cheaper without State intervention, I infer that he would not be heart-broken. At the same time, he does not believe that State enterprise always turns out a worse job — worse for the communal interest — than private enterprise. He makes out a fair case for all the advantages which in the nature of things he thinks State enterprise has over private enterprise, and *vice versa*. He believes that human nature is not unchangeable, that the profit-motive is not invariably supreme in industry, that there is not much to choose between State regimentation and industrial regimentation now effected under private enterprise, or even the social regimentation effected by various forms of propaganda. He ends his book with an agenda-paper or program of procedure, worked out in orderly detail to show precisely what we must do to be saved. From first to last, one could say a good deal against Mr. Chase's main positions, for they are quite vulnerable, but his integrity, sincerity, and fairness disincline one from taking him to task, even if it were a reviewer's business to do so, which it is not.

The Russian symposium is a matter of six long essays. They make a disagreeable impression on account of the strong papal flavor that pervades them, and even more on account of their spirited reviling of all the brute mass of us who are not Marxists. They make one think at first that Marxian truth must be a weak-kneed affair to need so much propping up by this kind of advocacy. One reflects, however, that the essays were probably written for the family rather than for general propagandist circulation among outsiders, and that their crabbed tone is merely the usual matter of domestic privilege.

At that, it would seem that the children of the covenant must have their work cut

out to understand much of the metaphysical language that bristles in these essays, especially in Mr. Bukharin's summary of revolutionary Marxist philosophy "as it appears in its developed and enriched form as Marxism-Leninism". Perhaps it may come easier in the original Russian. Turgenev said it was impossible that such a mighty language should not be the tongue of a great people, and Mr. Bukharin's essay, even when filtered through the medium of an English translation, gives ground for thinking he must have been right. An English-speaking reviewer, however, can make but little of what is put before him in the English version. There is an aggravating plausibility about whole pages of it; they seem to mean something, but with the best will in the world one can not be sure what it is, and one can only throw up one's hands and say with Homer that "the range of words is wide; words may tend this way or that way".

For instance, we learn from Mr. Bukharin that materialistic dialectic, which he says is the basis of the whole doctrine of Marx, "is the logic of contradictory processes and universal connexions in which abstractions are concrete, analysis and synthesis indivisible, boundaries conditioned and conceptions flexible to the maximum degree". Or again, it appears that Marx succeeded in lifting materialism to unparalleled heights "because he made a synthesis of materialism and dialectics. . . . The movement of conceptions which formed the essence of the historical process with Hegel has been transformed by Marx into the ideological reflex of the history of real human life, the dialectic of thought into the reflex of the dialectic of material social development". Now really, just what does that mean? Similarly whole paragraphs and sections of this essay as they stand in English — however they may stand in Rus-

sian — are wholly incomprehensible; they mean simply nothing. Homer's poor little saying seems very insignificant when put beside Mr. Bukharin's imposing sentences, yet it is perhaps the best criticism of them that could be made. Their grandiloquence, however, may bring some satisfaction to the English-speaking Marxist neophyte; if so, no one could begrudge it to him. Pantagruel's judgment in the case of the two lords gave great satisfaction to all who heard it.

The other essays are in the main somewhat simpler. Mr. Deborin deals with Marxism in its relation to fascism, social-democracy, and in a general way to "the contemporary crisis of capitalism". Mr. Uranovsky writes on its relation to natural science, Mr. Vavilov supplying a short paper on its relation to physics, and Mr. Komarov one on its relation to biology. Mr. Tiumeniev concludes the series with a paper on its relation to "bourgeois historical science". I have already said that the volume is one to be kept at hand for re-reading and reference, as it is the only treatise, as far as I know, which exhibits the latest authentic pronouncements of Marxism on all these subjects.

The book that most interested me is Mr. Meiklejohn's, notwithstanding it is the most overwritten and worst written of the lot, and in general the most superficial. When the reader voids it of its great store of windiness and brings it down to something like fair proportions, he sees that Mr. Meiklejohn has a firm grasp on one fact that the others seem to think irrelevant to their general scheme of things. This fact is, in a word, that man has by nature something more than an economic quality, that he is something more than a labor-motor whose god is his belly. The other authors no doubt are aware of this fact, but there is little in the evidence offered to show that

they think it counts for much in any program of collectivism or in any specifications for economic planning. Mr. Dewey gives it the tribute of a respectful word, and one can read a sort of acknowledgment here and there between Mr. Chase's lines, but these allusions seem to be fired off in a perfunctory way, much as Mr. John Browdie said grace over his luncheon with Nicholas Nickleby. Mr. Meiklejohn, on the other hand, thinks this fact counts for a great deal. I gather from his book that he even thinks we shall not have a better society unless and until we raise better folks, and that they can not be raised by the unaided machinery of State intervention and a planned economy. It was an agreeable surprise to meet the suggestion that when all this machinery gets to working at the top-notch of efficiency, there is still a little something left up to the individual; something in the way of integrity, decency, pride, self-respect, dignity, force of intellect, force of character—qualities which there seems to be at the moment no way of inculcating *en masse* or by machinery. On this point I am afraid Mr. Meiklejohn's book savors a little of heresy. I am uneasy about its getting by the Holy Inquisition at Washington. Nevertheless Mr. Meiklejohn may comfort himself with the reflection that the heresy of one generation is the next generation's orthodoxy, and that when our rampant little sophistries have run their course, it may be more or less generally acknowledged that there is something in what he says.

When one lays this batch of books aside, one finds great consolation in the hope-inspiring thought that the inevitable is the one thing that almost never happens. Collateral factors that no wisdom is large enough to count on, come in unforeseen, and the result is something wholly different. Sometimes, indeed, the thing we do to

bring about the inevitable is the very thing that releases those factors and knocks the inevitable into a cocked hat. Our ardent brethren at Washington, for example, found this out when they let the gold-clause case go to the Supreme Court. They apparently reckoned on the Court having no backbone, and they were right—but they were right for that once only. Their action released the collateral factors that put a backbone in the Court in double-quick time; that is to say, it caused the Court to hear from the country. I dare say Mr. Justice McReynolds got enough fan mail in the two weeks following the gold-clause decision to make him think he had mistaken his profession and ought to be in Hollywood; and when the next case came on—the NRA case—the Court rattled on the New Dealers unanimously and savagely, as there is every reason to believe it will continue to do.

Thus where human beings are concerned, prophecy is a most uncertain business. I agree with our group of authors that we are in for a brisk run of collectivism, though my reasons are not the same as theirs. Yet we all may be quite wrong. Possibly in another year all that will be left of the New Deal is a crushing burden of debt and a derelict job-lot of erstwhile payrollers trying to make out why it was that the inevitable did not happen. I do not think so, but it is possible. Possibly, too, Mr. Lawrence may see his desires realized by quite different ways than those he proposes. I have known stranger things to happen than that dissenting Democrats should walk out on the New Deal next year, hold a rump convention, and that “the saber-toothed tigers of the Republican boorjui”, as our Russian symposiasts might call them in their neighborly way, should quietly put a shoulder to their wheel. Again I do not think so, but it may

be. It is in the power of collateral factors to stand Mr. Chase's analysis on end, deflate Mr. Lippmann's vaticanism to nullity, make my own most trusted expectations ridiculous, and even perhaps—if one can imagine such sacrilege—eviscerate the whole Marxist-Leninist prognosis. Moreover, no one now knows or can know what those factors are, or if any such exist, or whether or when they will be released, or what will release them. Therefore reading these books need give no one the blues. Their tone of certainty, their more or less gentle dogmatism about the inevitable, throws the reader back at once upon the reassuring testimony of experience that the inevitable seldom, almost never, actually happens, and his spirits rise accordingly.



### *Romance and the Novel*

BY BRANCH CABELL

MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES, by E. R. Eddison. \$3.50. 5¾ x 8¾; 463 pp. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

THIS book I esteem to be a romance composed by a very gifted dramatic poet who writes here, as he writes habitually, in prose. It will find, I am certain, no large number of readers. And it prompts me in this place to urge a distinction through not making which the most of us are beguiled into prattling considerable nonsense when we discuss fiction.

For *Mistress of Mistresses*, as I have said, is a romance. Now, in approaching fiction it is needful, I would suggest, to distinguish between the romance and the novel. Does the proposal seem trite? Then your verdict (as I can but very gently assure you, O reader more or less gentle) is but a by-product of ignorance. You can-

not possibly know what I am talking about, for the distinction which I suggest has not ever yet been put into practice. None the less does it seem to me the part of rationality to distinguish with precision between the novel and the romance. I take it that a novel is a fictitious narrative, by ordinary in prose, aiming to present the life of human beings among circumstances such as actually exist or else once existed. And a romance is a fictitious narrative, either in prose or in verse, aiming to present the life of human beings in a world contrived by the author of that narrative.

The distinction appears obvious: beyond question, it is as simple as it is fundamental. Yet this distinction has not been faithfully observed by literary critics or—so far as that goes—by authors. Any number of quite so-so romance writers have died under the delusion that they, who had not ever produced a novel, had given over a reasonably long lifetime to the writing of novels. To the other side, one grieves to think of how many dozens upon dozens of similarly so-so reviewers, at this very instant, must be dismissing this or the other lately-published romance as a negligible novel so deeply tainted with frivolousness (with the frivolousness, let us say, of Aeschylus or of Dante) as to present no grave consideration of lower-class life in the more uncourtly corners of America—to do which, as every properly cultured American well knows, is the sole end of ponderable fiction. So does this widespread confusion of two differing forms of art force me here to suggest that all fiction should be divided, rigorously, into two classes: the fiction of the novelist, who, almost always in prose, reproduces human life as it is, or as it has been lived in some actual era; and the fiction of the romancer, who, whether it