



11. *The Domestication of Socialism*

CLARENCE B. CARSON

The ship of reform will gather most headway from the association of certain very moderate practical proposals with the issue of a deliberate, persistent, and far more radical challenge to popular political prejudices and errors. It will be sufficient . . . in case they occupy some sort of family relation to plans of the same kind with which American public opinion is already more or less familiar.

— HERBERT CROLY, 1909

Our social revolution must be consummated with a minimum of shock to our delicate industrial, political, and social machinery. . . . Our social reconstruction must be effected during business hours. It must be accompanied by preliminary plans, specifications, and estimates of cost. It must be gradual and quiet, though rapid.

— WALTER E. WEYL, 1912

And yet, as Oscar Wilde said, no map of the world is worth a glance that hasn't Utopia on it. Our business is not to lay aside the dream, but to make it plausible. We have to aim at visions of the possible by subjecting fancy to criticism. . . . For modern civilization . . . calls for a dream that suffuses the actual with a sense of the possible.

— WALTER LIPPMANN, 1914

BY THE EARLY twentieth century the stage was set for the entry of reformism into the stream of American political life. The intellectual ground had been thoroughly prepared for such a move.

Dr. Carson is Professor of American History at Grove City College, Pennsylvania. Among his earlier writings in THE FREEMAN were his series on *The Fateful Turn* and *The American Tradition*, both of which are now available as books.

The flight from reality had proceeded far enough that many men could begin to take seriously visions which their counterparts in other times would have readily recognized as impractical fancies. But the intellectual position from which such recognition would occur had largely been cut away. The disciplinary role of philoso-

phy had been lost, in the main, with the break from metaphysics, the downgrading of reason, and the attempt to root philosophy in empirical data. The vision of utopia provided a destination for man in the future. For many thinkers, time had been cut loose from its framework in eternity, cause disjoined from effect, man severed from his past experience, and a widening gulf separated thought from the wisdom of the past. A new pseudo philosophy — pragmatism — had been set forth to provide a method of operation into a future which was to be wholly different from the past. A new conception of reality had emerged to replace the old, a "reality" made up of change, society, and psyche. A new conception of creativity held out the promise that man could and did create his own reality.

These developments had implications for all of life, but, above all, they made ameliorative reform appear to be possible and provided the intellectual framework for the concerted and persistent efforts of reformers to make over man and society with the power of the state. The notion that society can be so reconstructed is called meliorism. But there is more to the matter than that. The belief that society, and men, can be reconstructed does not, of

itself, imply any particular direction that should be taken in accomplishing this transformation. Yet anyone familiar with melioristic efforts in this century should be able to see that there has been one direction to reform. Meliorism and reform have not been neutral concepts; they have been loaded with ideas which have bent the thoughts of the men who held them in a particular direction. Reform has been informed by ideology.

Indeed, one ideology has dominated reformist thought in this century. That ideology should be known by its generic name, socialism, though a variety of names are frequently employed. There have been attempts to restrict the meaning of socialism to the description of those programs for public (i. e. governmental) ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods. For example, the *American College Dictionary* defines socialism as "a theory or system of social organization which advocates the vesting of the ownership and control of the means of production, capital, land, etc. in the community as a whole." But such a definition is far too restrictive. It sacrifices accuracy for precision and hampers rather than enables in the identification of actual socialists. It conforms neither to the etymol-

ogy of the word nor to the origin of the ideas nor to the facts of socialist advocacy.

More accurately, then, socialism should be used to describe the doctrines of those who, according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "were seeking a complete transformation of the economic and moral basis of society by the substitution of the social for individual control and of social for individualistic forces in the organization of life and work." Richard T. Ely claimed that socialism is "a principle which regulates social and economic life according to the needs of society as a whole. . . ."¹ This gets much closer to the heart of the matter. Socialists conceive of society as an organism, as a being in and of itself, capable of acting to bring about certain ends. The aim of the socialists is to bring about the control by society of the economic and social life, and their claim is that this will result in greatly improved well-being for all. The key word is *control*. There are, and have been, dogmatic socialists who insist that this must be effected by the vesting of ownership in the "public." But many others have professed not to care who holds the title to prop-

erty so long as society has the control of it.

Evolution or Revolution?

The only distinction among socialists which has much empirical content is that between *evolutionary* and *revolutionary* socialism. And this is a distinction as to the *means* to be employed, not as to the *ends* to be achieved. Virtually all socialists, at least the earlier ones, have been aware that socialism would bring about a revolution in the lives of the people who adopted it. Some have thought, however, that this change could be brought about gradually, that it would not have to be achieved by violent means. Others have believed that a violent takeover would be necessary, and they are known as revolutionary socialists. Those socialists who are known as communists, and who claim discipleship to Karl Marx, have been the most vociferous advocates of revolutionary socialism, though there have been other revolutionary movements. It seems to me, however, that all of modern socialism stems more or less from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. At any rate, they advanced most of the notions which later socialists, of all varieties, have advocated.

Socialism acquired a bad reputation early in its career, if it ever

¹ Richard T. Ely, *Socialism* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1894), p. 5.

had a good one. After the abortive revolutions of 1848, advocates of socialism lived on the fringes of society. The workers of the world did not rush to unite behind them. The dire predictions of Marx did not come about, except in the heated imaginations of such men as accepted his words as a kind of gospel. Socialist parties made very poor showings in elections. Many of the ideas of socialists could be, and were, readily refuted. Electorates in the latter part of the nineteenth century usually rejected socialist programs with great alacrity. This was emphatically so in the United States.

Yet by the 1960's socialist ideas had come to prevail, to a greater or lesser extent, almost everywhere in the world, including the United States. How had this turn of events come about? In two ways mainly (and they correspond to the revolutionary-evolutionary approach): one way may be summarized as the *conspiracy-coup d'etat-violence* method of gaining political power; the other has been by the propagation of ideas by intellectuals and the gradual intrusion of the attendant programs into the political action of communities. The *conspiracy-coup d'etat-violence* approach has generally been used in the East, the other in the West.

In the early twentieth century,

the flight from reality became, or began to become, very nearly identical with the advancement of socialism. Much of the rest of the story will deal with how socialism was intruded into American political activities. The first step in this process was the domestication of socialism. It must be kept in mind that no avowedly socialist party has ever got more than a small fraction of the vote in the United States. To the extent that socialism has gained sway, then, it has been by the adoption of socialist programs by the older parties and the championing of these reforms by intellectuals and politicians who avoided the socialist label. It will be my task to show that this is precisely what happened.

Laying the Groundwork

Most people in the United States, so far as such things can be determined, have never accepted the bizarre formulations of the thought leaders in the nineteenth century of the flight from reality or of socialism. It is likely most men would consider Nietzsche's conception of creativity by a Superman as so much nonsense, and Marx's fulminations as the product of a demented mind. At least, they would, and did, until they were acclimated to them in much milder formulations.

A part of the task of acclimatizing people to these ideas was accomplished by the domestication of socialism, the making of it more palatable by sloughing off the name, by particularizing it, by "moderate" statements of premises, and so on. A goodly number of people undoubtedly contributed to this work. Reform was made to appear much more desirable, even necessary, by the efforts of the muckrakers. Various and sundry theorists had begun to make some impact with their ideas. There is a considerable body of literature which could be categorized as the domestication of socialism in the United States. But for the sake of brevity and unity this account will be largely restricted to three books by three men. They are Herbert Croly's *The Promise of American Life* (1909), Walter E. Weyl's *The New Democracy* (1912), and Walter Lippmann's *Drift and Mastery* (1914). They were all Americans, were believed to have been somewhat influential, founded *The New Republic* as a joint venture, and shared some common presuppositions and aims.

Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann

Croly's book was much more influential than the others, by all accounts. It is supposed to have influenced Theodore Roosevelt in

the formulation of the New Nationalism and to have been a major seminal work for progressivism. A recent writer has noted:

Croly's reputation, however, rested on more than his purported impact on Roosevelt. Men whose own thought first took shape during the progressive period have strongly praised the publicist's contribution. Lippmann called his former associate "the first important political philosopher who appeared in America in the twentieth century"; Alvin Johnson grants Croly "the palm of the leadership in the philosophy of the progressive movement" . . . , while Felix Frankfurter credits him with "the most powerful single contribution to progressive thinking."²

Croly's work is both the most lengthy and the most thorough of the three books. It may well be that *The Promise of American Life* should be ranked as the most thorough "Fabian tract" ever written. Weyl's book is much blunter, less polished, and somewhat more to the point. Lippmann had already developed his ponderous style of presenting a combination of urbanities and inanities as if they were profound. He had already developed the ability, too, to roll with the punch, to apparently accept the devastating criticisms of his position, even to

² Charles Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 5-6.

joining in with the chorus of the critics, all the while maintaining the substance of his position intact. He was a pragmatist, along with the other two men, and this made it easy for him to pursue his goal by a new path when he found the course he was following blocked.

The Art of Persuasion

There is one difficulty in my thesis that these three men were domesticating socialism, and there is no reason why it should not be made explicit. The difficulty is this. In order for them to have been domesticating socialism, they must have been socialists. Yet it was essential to their task that they not be avowed socialists. At any rate, Croly and Weyl were not avowed socialists, and by 1914 Lippmann had abandoned his connection with socialist parties. Thus, there appears to be a problem of proving that they were socialists.

Actually, however, the above overstates the problem. Whether they were socialists or not, these men were advancing socialist ideas and programs. Whether they were intending to "domesticate socialism" or not is irrelevant; my point is that the way in which they were presenting the ideas had that effect. It should be made clear that this is not an examination into

the motives of these men. There is no concern here with whether they were sincere or not, whether they were surreptitiously advancing a movement or not, or whether they were good or evil men or not. This is not an attempt to judge them; it is an effort to describe what they did.

The point is that Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann were advocating ideas and programs drawn from the socialist ideology, and that they presented them in a light so that they would be least disturbing to the accepted beliefs of Americans. Let us first examine a few quotations which indicate the socialistic tenor of the proposals of these men. The first is from Herbert Croly, and the context from which it comes is a discussion of the necessity of restricting freedom:

Efficient regulation there must be; and it must be regulation which will strike, not at the symptoms of the evil, but at its roots. The existing concentration of wealth and financial power in the hands of a few irresponsible men is the inevitable outcome of the chaotic individualism of our political and economic organization. . . . The inference which follows may be disagreeable, but it is not to be escaped. In becoming responsible for the subordination of the individual to the demand of a dominant and constructive national

purpose, the American state will in effect be making itself responsible for a morally and socially desirable distribution of wealth."³

At one point, Croly candidly admits that in certain senses his program is socialistic. He says that it is socialistic "in case socialism cannot be divorced from the use, wherever necessary, of the political organization in all its forms to realize the proposed democratic purpose."⁴

Weyl said, "To-day no democracy is possible in America except a socialized democracy, which conceives of society as a whole and not as a more or less adventitious assemblage of myriads of individuals."⁵ Moreover,

In the socialized democracy towards which we are moving . . . taxes [will] conform more or less to the ability of each to pay; but the engine of taxation . . . will be used to accomplish great social ends, among which will be the more equal distribution of wealth and income. The state will tax to improve education, health, recreation, communication. . . . The government of the nation, in the hands of the people, will establish its unquestioned sovereignty over the industry of the

nation, so largely in the hands of individuals.⁶

Walter Lippmann is not easy to pin down, yet the socialist ideas are there. Quite often he obscures them as prediction, as in the following: "Now the time may come, I am inclined to think it is sure to come, when the government will be operating the basic industries, railroads, mines, and so forth. It will be possible then to finance government enterprise out of the profits of its industries, to eliminate interest, and substitute collective saving."⁷ Sometimes, however, he prescribes directly, as in the following call for all-out planning:

It means that you have to do a great variety of things to industry, invent new ones to do, and keep on doing them. You have to make a survey of the natural resources of the country. On the basis of that survey you must draw up a national plan for their development. You must eliminate waste in mining, you must conserve the forests so that their fertility is not impaired, so that stream flow is regulated, and the waterpower of the country made available.⁸

³ Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, Cushing Strout, intro. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1964), p. 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁵ Walter E. Weyl, *The New Democracy* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), p. 162.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-64.

⁷ Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mast-ery*, William E. Leuchtenburg, intro. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, A Spectrum Book, 1961), p. 70.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

These quotations, however their authors hedged them about, do indicate that the books in question were informed by socialism. They are, however, among the more radical statements to be found in the books. In the main, the writers stick to the task of domesticating socialism, rather than to setting forth their assumptions. Let us examine now some of the means by which this is done.

Gradualism

First, the authors of these books were devotees of gradualism, and were themselves proposing the next steps in a movement toward what can be discerned as the goal of socialism. In their gradualism, they were following the path of the English Fabians who had been at work some years already. The Fabian Society, named after the Roman general, Fabius, who fought indirectly by harassment rather than directly, was organized in 1884. Sidney Webb, a leading figure in the Society and movement, explained their conclusions this way:

In the present Socialist movement these two streams are united: advocates of social reconstruction have learnt the lesson of Democracy, and know that it is through the slow and gradual turning of the popular mind to new principles that social reorganization bit by bit comes. . . . So-

cialists . . . realize that important organic changes can only be (1) democratic . . . ; (2) gradual . . . ; (3) not regarded as immoral by the mass of the people . . . ; and (4) in this country at any rate, constitutional and peaceful.⁹

Whether Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann were consciously socialists or not, they were certainly consciously gradualists. Croly makes his gradualism explicit in the following prescription for taking over the railroads (all the while adopting a pose of objectivity about it which relieves him of responsibility for advocating it):

In the existing condition of economic development and of public opinion, the man who believes in the ultimate necessity of government ownership of railroad road-beds and terminals must be content to wait and to watch. The most that he can do for the present is to use any opening which the course of railroad development affords, for the assertion of his ideas; and if he is right, he will gradually be able to work out, in relation to the economic situation of the railroads, some practical method of realizing the ultimate purpose.¹⁰

He suggests that the end might be

⁹ Sidney Webb, "Socialism, Fusion of Democracy and Cooperation" in J. Salwyn Schapiro, *Movements of Social Dis-sent in Modern Europe* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1962), p. 161.

¹⁰ Croly, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

achieved by the extension of government credit to the railroads, followed by a "gradual system of appropriation."

Weyl left no doubt about his gradualism either. He declared "that the surest method of progress is to take one step after another. The first step, often uncontested (*because* it is only one step), leads inevitably to others."¹¹ He gives an example of what he means, in connection with governmental acquisition of rich mineral lands. "If the nation could approach the owners of these lands with the sword of a gentle tax in the one hand and the olive branch of a fair purchase price in the other, there would soon be no fear of any monopoly of our mineral resources."¹²

Although Lippmann substituted prediction for outright prescription, he envisioned a gradual transformation in America. "Private property will melt away; its functions will be taken over by the salaried men who direct them, by government commissions, by developing labor unions. The stockholders deprived of their property rights are being transformed into money-lenders."¹³

¹¹ Weyl, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-66.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 266. Apparently, he meant by monopoly the private ownership of mineral resources.

¹³ Lippmann, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

A Façade of Conservatism

The gradual approach to social transformation, these writers saw, had the advantages of lessening resistance, of avoiding shock, and of giving the appearance of continuity within the society. The latter two advantages take on the added gloss of appearing to be conservative. That is, they indicate a concern with conserving much within the existing framework while the framework itself is being fundamentally altered. Indeed, one of the least understood of the methods of Fabian socialism, if the term may be used generically, is the façade of conservatism which socialists frequently adopt. On the face of it, conservatism and the radical alteration of society are at opposite poles of the political spectrum. Yet gradualists have quite often not only reduced the distance between them, so far as could be readily discerned, but also have managed actually to convince some people that theirs is the conservative position. It turns out upon examination, of course, that what they want to do is to preserve the material achievements of modern civilization while destroying or replacing the spiritual base, knowledge, and arrangements upon which they are built. But then, that is why socialists can be described as on a flight from reality.

"The Great Society"

One of the best examples of a socialist book which embodied the conservative façade was written not by an American but an Englishman. Graham Wallas was the author, and the book was *The Great Society* (1914), a name which has cropped up lately. There is no difficulty in placing Wallas ideologically; he was one of the original founders of the Fabian Society. Moreover, some slight discussion of the method of the book in the present discussion is in order because Wallas influenced Lippmann when he was at Harvard in 1910 as a visiting lecturer, and dedicated *The Great Society* to Lippmann.

One might suppose from the title of the book that it is utopian, that it is a prescription for something to be achieved in the future. Yet such is not the case. The Great Society already existed (in 1914), according to Wallas, at least in the highly industrialized countries of the West. The Great Society, Wallas said, had resulted from technological innovations. The developments from these had drawn people together in interdependence upon one another, not only nationally but internationally.

But — and this was the problem with which he purported to deal — there were centripetal as well as centrifugal forces within the

Great Society. The centripetal forces threatened to dissolve the society. Wallas said, "But even if the forces of cohesion and dissolution remain as evenly balanced as they are now, our prospects are dark enough. The human material of our social machinery will continue to disintegrate just at the points where strength is most urgently required." To support this statement he supplied a catalogue of the evils within society which any socialist might be expected to give. In order to preserve the Great Society he held that a great reorganization would have to occur. In short, he had made it appear that social transformation was necessary for conservative reasons.

This theme crops up in the works under consideration. Writing before Wallas's book appeared, Croly said: "In its deepest aspect... the social problem is the problem of preventing such divisions [the divisions supposedly caused by specialization] from dissolving the society into which they enter — of keeping such a highly differentiated society fundamentally sound and whole."¹⁴ Lippmann argued from similar premises for the development of powerful labor unions. He maintained that industrial peace would be a by-product of powerful unions. "You will

¹⁴ Croly, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

meet in... powerful unions," he said, "what radical labor leaders call conservatism." On the other hand, "It is the weak unions, the unorganized and shifting workers, who talk sabotage and flare up into a hundred little popgun rebellions."¹⁵ The moral is clear: Support the growth of strong unions in order to maintain peace and conserve social stability.

Giving Historical Setting to the Need for Reform

A considerable portion of Croly's work was devoted to fitting the need for reform into the American tradition. A part of his book is historical in character. His position is that there was an implicit promise in American development over the years, that Americans had developed democratic institutions, that they had developed a national spirit, that they had at one time effected unity among the peoples. However, "the changes which have been taking place in industrial and political and social conditions have all tended to impair the consistency of feeling characteristic of the first phase of American national democracy."¹⁶ That is, according to him, industrialism had produced deep divisions within society. "Grave inequalities of power

and deep-lying differences of purpose have developed in relation of the several primary American activities. The millionaire, the 'Boss,' the union laborer, and the lawyer, have all taken advantage of the loose American political organization to promote somewhat unscrupulously their own interests..."¹⁷ This situation was unwholesome, he thought. "But a democracy cannot dispense with the solidarity which it imparted to American life, and in one way or another such solidarity must be restored."¹⁸

Some clues to the means for the restoration of "solidarity" could be found in American history. Alexander Hamilton had a vision of using the government to advance national well-being. But Hamilton had been antidemocratic, and had promulgated too narrow a program, at least for twentieth century conditions. Thomas Jefferson had contributed to the development of democratic sentiment, but he had been individualistic, not nationalistic. Croly drew his conclusion: "The best that can be said on behalf of this traditional American system of political ideas is that it contained the germ of better things. The combination of Federalism and Republicanism . . .

¹⁵ Lippmann, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁶ Croly, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

pointed in the direction of a constructive formula.”¹⁹ So too, the Whigs had a national vision, but they were unable fully to articulate it.

Croly was setting the stage with this historical exposition for offering his solution, and at the same time making it appear that he was joining his solution to a course which Americans had been groping toward for a long time. The solution was for Americans to “restore” their lost or threatened unity by the acceptance of a social ideal. They were to find a national purpose, and they were to move toward the fulfillment of that purpose, or “promise,” democratically. Thus, Croly was able to associate two ideas—nationalism and democracy—which had good connotations to Americans with his program for social reconstruction. It should be noted that all three writers salted down their social programs with liberal sprinklings of references to “democracy” throughout, a practice which has long since become habitual, if not compulsive, with reformers.

Alterations Proposed

But the attempt to make their programs appear conservative and traditional by these writers should not be overemphasized. Croly went

much further in this regard than did the others. All of them, however, were fairly explicit in pointing out that they were proposing alterations in the American system. Even Croly said, .

The better future which Americans propose to build is nothing if not an idea which must in certain essential respects emancipate them from their past. American history contains much matter for pride and congratulation, and much matter for regret and humiliation. On the whole . . . , it has throughout been made better than it was by the vision of a better future; and the American of to-day and to-morrow must remain true to that traditional vision. He must be prepared to sacrifice to that traditional vision even the traditional American ways of realizing it.²⁰

Weyl left no doubt about his view of the centerpiece of the American tradition, the Constitution. He said, “Our newer democracy demands, not that the people forever conform to a rigid, hard-changing Constitution, but that the Constitution change to conform to the people. The Constitution of the United States is the political wisdom of a dead America.”²¹ Lippmann was even more emphatic, and much more general, in his repudiation of tra-

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²¹ Weyl, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

dition. He subscribed to the view "that we should live not for our fatherland but for our children's land."

To do this men have to substitute purpose for tradition: and that is, I believe, the profoundest change that has ever taken place in human history. We can no longer treat life as something that has trickled down to us. We have to deal with it deliberately, devise its social organization, alter its tools, formulate its method, educate and control it. In endless ways we put intention where custom has reigned.²²

Necessary Adjustments to Changing Conditions

The major justification for social reconstruction, then, was not that it was in keeping with the American tradition to do so but that it made necessary by changing conditions. Thus, these writers domesticated socialism by making its measures appear to be necessary adjustments to changed conditions. These men argued that technological developments, new industrial organizations, the development of a nation-wide market, the appearance of class divisions, the existence of poverty, made necessary the alteration of political action to deal with these changes. Perhaps the other two would have agreed wholeheartedly with Weyl, when he said, "It is

ideas, born of conditions, which rule the world."²³ Indeed, Lippmann took the position that many of the changes were already occurring which were reconstructing America, whether it would or not. Croly emphasized the method of the reformer as one in which he grasped the tendencies and reinforced them.

These positions indicate a rather mystifying, or illogical, penchant of melioristic reformers in the twentieth century. They vacillate between the poles of economic determinism on the one hand and a radical view of "freedom" which allows them to create at will, on the other. Generally speaking, Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann got maximum use from ideas drawn from contradictory positions. The determinist position allows its holder to claim that he is describing an inevitable evolution, to assume a position as a scholar and possibly a scientist rather than an advocate, to avoid responsibility for his advocacy, and to leave the reader with no choice but to adjust to the predicted course of development. On the other hand, the meliorist position allows its holder to talk of social invention, of imagination, of creativity, of a new way which has been discerned, and to appeal subtly to the reader's desire to join him in being

²² Lippmann, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

²³ Weyl, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

in the forefront of momentous developments. In the real world, these are inconsistencies, but on the flight from reality you can have it both ways.

**Pragmatic Approach Requires
No Consistent Principles**

Finally, the pragmatism of these writers permitted them to offer every sort of reformist idea that has ever been advanced without dogmatically subscribing to any of them. Some indication of the range of ideas which they subscribed to or advanced should be given. Many of them have since become the assumptions of intellectuals and some goodly number have been put into practice. In general, Croly, Weyl, and Lippmann subscribed to the notion that the problem of production had been largely mastered, that the major task ahead was one of distribution. They spoke confidently of "unearned increments," of "social surpluses," and of the "need" to distribute the wealth more equitably. None of these men, however, was an opponent of bigness in business. They considered trustbusting an anachronistic and destructive undertaking. The problem, as they saw it, was not to break up huge industries but to assure that they were operated in the interest of society. To assure this, they advocated gov-

ernmental regulation, discriminatory taxation, and outright ownership, if necessary.

These writers used slightly different verbiage to describe their broad programs of reconstruction, but Weyl gives the gist of their recommendations in the following:

With a government ownership of some industries, with a government regulation of others, with publicity for all (to the extent that publicity is socially desirable), with an enlarged power of the community in industry, and with an increased appropriation by the community of the increasing social surplus and of the growing unearned increment, the progressive socialization of industry will take place. To accomplish these ends the democracy will rely upon the trade-union, the association of consumers, and other industrial agencies. It will, above all, rely upon the state.²⁴

Many Reforms Have Been Tried

Some of the means to these ends are interesting because they have been employed, but they are no longer so openly avowed. For example, these writers favored the alteration of the Constitution by interpretation. Croly declared that, on the whole, the Constitution was an admirable document, "and in most respects it should be left to the ordinary process of

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

gradual amendment by legal construction. . . .”²⁵ Weyl said, “For the time being, the Constitution will probably change, as it has changed during the last century, by process of interpretation. . . . It is possible for them [the Supreme Court] by a few progressive judicial decisions to democratize the Constitution.”²⁶

In various forms, one or more of these writers proposed socialized medicine, consumer regulation, inheritance taxes, graduated income taxes, state insurance programs, socialized education, executive leadership, centralization of government, excess profits taxes, national planning, and a government guaranteed minimum standard of living. Croly even argued explicitly that government should discriminate in favor of certain groups in order to assure equality. He said, “The national government must step in and discriminate; but it must discriminate, not on behalf of liberty and the

special individual, but on behalf of equality and the average man.”²⁷

In general, though, their particular programs were not dogmatically advocated. They were pragmatic about the particulars. Pragmatism is not, of course, a test of the ultimate end to be achieved; it is a test of the methods to be used. If one method does not work, then another one is tried, and so on. The end remains the same, and inaccessible to pragmatic demonstrations. As Weyl said, “The democracy [for which one may accurately substitute “socialism”], though compromising in action, must be uncompromising in principle. Though conciliatory towards opponents, it must be constant to its fixed ideals. Though it tack with the wind, it must keep always in sight its general destination.”²⁸

This was one of the ways, then, by which socialism was domesticated in America. ♦

²⁵ Croly, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

²⁶ Weyl, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

²⁷ Croly, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

²⁸ Weyl, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

The next article in this series will pertain to “The Democratic Illusion.”

Self--GOVERNMENT

ROBERT K. NEWELL

SINCE the dawn of history man has vainly sought to ordain order and advance social justice through political legalism. Liberty, equality, brotherhood, justice, security, freedom — and especially self-government — have long enjoyed stature in political clichés.

On the surface, democracy seems to encompass all social ideals and appears to be the epitome of political government. The motivating principle asserts the inherent right of all to participate in government and determine public policy. But with unquestioned power invested in popular opinion, democratic idealism deteriorates rapidly into government by organized majorities.

Even the authoritarian majorities who imagine themselves self-governed have no real understand-

ing of political subterfuge and simply endorse whatever their leaders are pleased to tell them. And since it is easier to subjugate and manipulate those who believe themselves free, the grand illusion of freedom and self-government is carefully preserved by the strategists who constantly maneuver behind the democratic stage.

Since democracy is not of itself a stable form of government, but rather a method of ordaining social change, all forms of political tyranny can easily win the endorsement of the majority. The irresponsible elements of any society are readily persuaded to state-sponsored beggary on the assurance their personal problems will be miraculously solved by some political nostrum a clever candidate advises them to try. To exercise control over an apparently self-governed democracy is only to understand and utilize the prin-

Mr. Newell operates a farm near Marcellus, Michigan, one of his "crops" being an occasional article.