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“RECENT SOCIAL TRENDS IN THE UNITED STATES”
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT’S RESEARCH COMMITTEE

I

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

*By Robert Cooley Angell**

I.

NEVER before has a particular civilization taken so complete an inventory of its own activities as that presented in the two-volume Report of the President’s Research Committee on Social Trends. Its more than 1600 pages are literally crammed with significant data regarding almost every conceivable aspect of American life, data gathered with great care and thoroughness by research men of unquestioned ability and scholarly standing. The easiest way to obtain an idea of the vastness of the undertaking is to scan the headings of the 29 chapters written by some 40 authors:

The Population of the Nation	Childhood and Youth
Utilization of Natural Wealth	Labor Groups in the Social Structure
The Influence of Invention and Discovery	The People as Consumers
The Agencies of Communication	Recreation and Leisure Time Activities
Trends in Economic Organization	The Arts in Social Life
Shifting Occupational Patterns	Changes in Religious Organizations
Education	Health and Medical Practice
Changing Social Attitudes and Interests	Crime and Punishment
The Rise of Metropolitan Communities	Privately Supported Social Work
Rural Life	Public Welfare Activities
The Status of Racial and Ethnic Groups	The Growth of Governmental Functions
The Vitality of the American People	Taxation and Public Finance
The Family and its Functions	Public Administration
The Activities of Women Outside the Home	Law and Legal Institutions
	Government and Society

A foreword by President Hoover explains that in the fall of 1929 he asked a group of scientists to examine into the feasibility of such a survey, and that in December of that year he appointed a committee composed of Wesley C. Mitchell, Chairman, Charles E. Merriam, Shelby M. Harrison, Alice Hamilton, Howard W. Odum, and William F. Ogburn to undertake the project. Professor Ogburn became

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the Director of Research, a post for which he was qualified by his own studies of cultural change and his close connection with the annual issues of *The American Journal of Sociology* devoted to the social changes which are occurring from year to year.

It is obviously impossible in the space available to give even a brief résumé of each chapter. Fortunately the Committee has prefaced the Report with a 65-page review of its findings, which we briefly summarize.

The Committee, impressed by the fact that our problems mainly arise from the dynamic character of American life, planned the study to be one of social trends, chiefly since 1900. Their hypothesis was that most of our troubles arise from the unequal rates of change in various aspects of our lives, that they are due in other words to cultural lag. Though not explicitly adopting an economic interpretation of history, the Committee seems to regard the economic changes as basic and to feel that the government, or the family, or any other institution that is not in harmony with economic forces is maladjusted. The expressed aim is "to look at recent trends in the United States as interrelated, to scrutinize the functioning of the social organization as a joint activity . . . to unite such problems as those of economics, government, religion, education, in a comprehensive study of social movements and tendencies, to direct attention to the importance of balance among the factors of change."

The Committee's review considers our problems under three heads: those of the physical heritage, those of the biological heritage, and those of the social heritage. Under the first we are shown that our mineral resources, though tremendous, are limited and exhaustible and that our competitive mining and oil production are wasting the resources needlessly. The problems connected with the erosion and degeneration of the soil are not so serious because of reserve areas available for crop production, increasing efficiency of agriculture, and the slowing up of population growth.

Both the quantity and quality of the population are touched upon in connection with the biological heritage. With regard to the former, two main trends appear: the surprising decline in the rate of population increase, which seems to foreshadow a much smaller ultimate population in the United States than had been anticipated — perhaps 150,000,000; and the tendency for our population, mainly because of the automobile, to form into the metropolitan communities — constellations of smaller groups dominated by metropolitan centers. More than

half our population now lives within daily access of a city of 100,000 or more. With respect to the quality of our biological heritage, the Committee points out the difficulties both in ascertaining the facts and in doing much more than we are doing once the facts have been ascertained. They seem to feel that conscious control of biological selection on a large scale is remote. In regard to racial and ethnic groups it appears that the Negroes constitute a smaller proportion of our population than formerly and that under our present immigration policy the foreign born are a rapidly declining element.

The most significant trends are to be found, however, not in the physical and biological heritages, but in the social heritage or culture. The Committee feels that changes in material culture (inventions and discoveries) are the most dynamic elements in our civilization and are the prime movers which bring about readjustments in all aspects of our life. Of particular importance are recent inventions in communication. These have changed the whole character of our life and have been important causes of the many shifts in social institutions with which we are all familiar.

Turning to industrial technique and economic organization, the Committee concludes that the main question is how "to make full use of the possibilities held out by the march of science, invention and engineering skill, without victimizing many of its workers, and without incurring such general disasters as the depression of 1930-32." The solution does not appear to be easy and the Committee feels that technological unemployment will remain a grave problem for years. Though they feel that a change in the distribution of income which would put more purchasing power in the hands of wage earners would enormously increase the market for many staples and go far toward providing places for all competent workers, they see little prospect in the near future of wage disbursements above the 1929 level. In the meantime the Committee favors unemployment insurance.

Concerning the much-discussed problem of economic planning, the Committee states that the difficulties involved are tremendous and that "to work out schemes which could be taken seriously as a guide to production and distribution would require the long collaboration of thousands of experts from thousands of places." Yet it is pointed out that during the World War we did remarkable things in the way of planning and the discussion is concluded with the pertinent question: "Is it beyond the range of men's capacity some day to take the enhancement

of social welfare as seriously as our generation took the winning of the war?"

One of the principal trends noted in economic institutions is that of greater and greater public control of economic enterprise. This takes a variety of forms and the Committee sees no reason to doubt that the trend will continue.

The Committee's findings are so ordered as to diverge further and further from the basic economic trends from this point. First, quite properly, labor is considered. It is shown that, though wages — even real wages — tended to rise up until 1929 and hours of work to decline, the standards of living of many labor groups were woefully inadequate even in boom times. And of course the ogre of unemployment is the greatest problem. The marked decline in the strength of labor unions since the World War is noted and the statement made that if the working people themselves can not meet these problems other resources of society will have to be drawn upon.

Though the Committee does not include in its review a section on occupations, a statement of the trends discovered in this field is pertinent. One thing that will surprise most people is that there was a larger percentage of the total population gainfully employed in 1930 than in 1890. The increasing employment of women has more than offset the decline in child labor and in the labor of older persons. The ebb-tide of employment in agriculture set in about 1910 and in manufacturing and mining about 1920. Nowadays only about half of the gainfully employed are working directly on production. The census categories that have shown astounding growth are trade, clerical service, transportation, and professional service.

Changes in consumption habits have been based on four underlying conditions: more money to spend, more leisure in which to enjoy goods, greater output and hence more goods to market, and new kinds of goods which the public has had to be taught to want. The result has been the forcing of goods through intensive advertising campaigns, with the purveyors of long familiar goods suffering in comparison with the purveyors of novelties. This has been partly because many of the novelties are suited to instalment selling, whereas such things as food and clothing are not. One of the most interesting points made by the Committee is that we worry much more about income than about prices; that we think, for instance, more about the tariff's effect upon employment and wages than we do about its effect upon the cost of living. We are not particularly intelligent as consumers either, and

there seems to be no evidence that we will organize in the near future on a scale sufficiently effective to promote our interests as consumers.

The rural areas of our country show many kinds of maladjustment due mainly to new relationships brought about by modern communication and to the spread into the country of city habits and standards of consumption. Educational and governmental institutions present difficult problems in a time when the center of interest is shifting from the hamlet to the village and from the village to the city. Recognition of the difficulties under which the poorer or more isolated rural communities labor has brought grants in aid, by means of which maternal mortality has been cut down, education of children has been bettered, and other worth while effects secured.

The changes in family life which the Committee finds are not startling and hardly need recounting here. It is pointed out that few cultures have ever had families which perform as few economic functions as do the American apartment dwelling families of today. We seemingly do not need to worry about marriage, for the married percentage of the population has been increasing, but we do need to develop means for strengthening the family ties if we wish to stem the rising tide of divorce. There are many evidences of increased interest in children and, with the falling birth rate, we should be able to care for their needs better in the future. The well-known trend of married women toward gainful employment is not altogether approved in some quarters and the social adjustments at this point are uncertain and shifting.

Trends in school and church are also dimly known, at least to most of us. About half the children of high school age are attending school, and the growth in enrolment still goes on. At the same time the traditional curriculum is being radically revised to meet the new needs brought about by our changing civilization and the changed character of the pupils attending. Church membership figures show neither startling gains nor startling losses. There is reason to think, however, that interest in religion, at least the traditional variety of it, is declining.

After rehearsing the tremendous changes in the organization of leisure time activities, the Committee asks: "How can the appeals made by churches, libraries, concerts, museums, and adult education for a goodly share in our growing leisure be made to compete effectively with the appeals of commercialized recreation?" They remark that these public institutions are greatly handicapped by the barrage of ad-

vertising laid down by their commercial rivals. Perhaps the most outstanding attempt toward improving the situation has been the development by the government of parks, playgrounds, and camping places.

It is encouraging to note that in our industrial civilization the number of artists of various kinds is increasing more rapidly than the population in general. Confirmation of a trend toward interest in the arts is furnished by museum attendance figures. Most Americans will be surprised to learn that the Metropolitan Museum in New York has a greater annual attendance than the Louvre.

Passing now to ameliorative institutions and government, the Committee first considers poverty, disease, and crime. In dealing with poverty the principal trend noted is that toward the transfer of private social work to governmental auspices, especially during the depression. The Committee stresses the importance of preventive measures and looks for constructive work in this field in the future. In the health field there is available sufficient knowledge and skill to provide service for all our people, but the problem is how to render this service at costs which the people can afford. The Committee seems to feel that group medicine of some kind, either under private or public auspices, offers the most feasible solution.

There have been many crime studies of recent years and the Committee findings in this field are therefore not unexpected. There has been a gradual increase in the number of serious offenses relative to the population, though it should not be exaggerated into a crime "wave." Perhaps the most serious phase of the problem is the highly organized character of crime today. In treatment of criminals, more emphasis is being placed upon accurate classification and provision of care which will refit them for a useful social life than upon punishment. The development of this policy will entail great changes in prison procedure. Of even greater importance is prevention, but this will require systematic work along many lines over a long period.

No subject in the whole report receives as much attention as government. The problem here is to adapt a system developed under one set of social conditions to meet the problems arising under the very different ways of life which we follow today. First, governments have been increasing in size and power. The very number of governmental functions today would shock our forefathers. To meet new demands the executive has increased in power, and many administrative boards and tribunals have been set up. Conflicting trends are at work: on the one hand graft and incompetence have been common at all levels of

government; on the other, movements toward efficiency and professionalization have gathered momentum. In discussing the relations of government and business, the Committee says: "The actual question is that of developing quasi-governmental agencies and quasi-industrial agencies on the borders of the older economic and governmental enterprises, and of the freer intermingling of organization and personnel, along with the recognition of their interdependence in many relations."

That the costs of government have doubled in proportion to population since 1913 has become well known since the depression led us to examine matters. About one-fourth of the increase has been due to war, one-fifth to education, one-sixth to good roads, and one-seventh to various municipal services peculiar to dense aggregations of people. The Committee feels that we would have been willing to forego few, if any, of these expenditures. The trend in taxation has been to rely more and more on the income tax, inheritance and estate taxes, and the gasoline tax. The general property tax, however, continues to yield about half the revenue. The chief opportunities for economy seem to lie in elimination of unnecessary units of government and in the establishment of efficient public administration.

Well-read lawyers will not be surprised either by the general findings concerning law, or at the chapter on law and legal institutions. This chapter picks out of the vast field of law the following points for discussion: the increase in social legislation, the trend toward procedural reform, the increasing use of administrative tribunals, and the trends in legal education and bar admission requirements. The Committee findings point out the dilemma of the law in striving to be at once reasonably fixed and adapted to contemporary social conditions. The Committee feels that the leaders of the bar are already alive to the changes that are needed but that the bulk of the profession are sadly indifferent.

In concluding its findings the Committee points out that its researches have pointed the way to many problems but have offered few solutions. This, it believes, is to be expected and shows the need of more continuous and more integrated study of, and experiment with, our social institutions than we have had heretofore. This can be achieved by present scientific workers, by government research bureaus, by The Social Science Research Council, and perhaps ultimately by "a National Advisory Council, including scientific, educational, governmental, economic (industrial, agricultural and labor) points of contact able to contribute to the consideration of the basic problems of the nation."

2.

At the outset it must be noted that the findings just summarized contain a considerable body of opinion as to the best ways of dealing with our problems. These opinions are presumably the collective judgments of the Committee and as such are quite proper. They are not, however, dictated by the research findings, since the individual chapters of the Report stay close to the facts and introduce little in the way of proposals for reform.

It seems to the writer that the Report can be criticized for incompleteness or omission in two respects. First, many will think that the causes of the present depression and the ramified social trends which have accompanied it should have come in for fuller treatment. The Committee specifically renounces any intention to do this, however. And it is probable that the exclusion was wise, since the Committee could thus deal with longer time trends, trends upon which some perspective may be had. The depression is still too much with us for strictly objective treatment.

The second type of omission is pointed out by Professor Henry Pratt Fairchild in the January, 1933, issue of the *Survey Graphic* when he calls attention to the Committee's failure to deal adequately with the trend of scientific knowledge, with the birth control movement, and with the eugenics movement. Perhaps the fault here springs from the insistence upon objectivity and measurement for which Professor Ogburn is well known. In any event, there is noticeable throughout the Report an unwillingness to deal with intangible intellectual movements unless they can be checked by the frequency of magazine articles concerning them or some other such test. It seems to the writer that this striving for strict objectivity is only pseudo-scientific in the social field and that we must be willing to use more imagination and insight in our search for the truth.

At this point one might wonder whether the Committee has really given us the synthesis of the trends which it set out to achieve. On the whole I think we must conclude that it has not. Under the circumstances it seems too much to ask. Valiant efforts are made, particularly by Professor Merriam in his summary chapter upon "Government and Society." But our life is too much in the making, too confused, for any group of experts to see it steadily and see it whole. What we have here are really excellent studies of individual trends with as much attention to interrelationships as seemed feasible. It seems to the writer that this

is not serious, for other scholars may now use these data to work out problems of interrelationship in the coming years.

A final criticism, and perhaps a very personal one, would be that too much stock seems to be taken in the economic interpretation of history by the Committee. As an immediate and practical matter this makes little difference, for the American people have been particularly concerned with material invention and economic development and have been prone to let everything else readjust itself to changes in this field. Yet we must remember that life is organic, that no one field has a monopoly on causation, and that the time may come when religious or family customs will actually hold out against a more efficient form of production!

After all such omissions and reservations are listed, however, it must be acknowledged that the Committee has accomplished a tremendous task very well. Each topic is expertly treated and as exhaustively as space limitations will permit. Thirteen supplementary monographs are about to appear enlarging upon those chapters in which these limitations were most keenly felt. When the complete product of the Committee's efforts is before us we shall certainly have a vastly better picture of the trends of our life than we have ever had before.

The uses that this voluminous Report will be put to are many. Probably very few people will read the whole, and yet it will be widely read. As a reference work for information in particular fields it will be invaluable. All institutions of higher education, all city libraries, all research groups working in the social field will need to have it on hand. In the next few years thousands of students all over the country will be listening to lectures sprinkled with facts from this Report, to say nothing of the texts which will soon be produced. Its influence indeed will be mainly indirect, a hundred being affected by it for every one that reads it. Perhaps one of its greatest services will be to give popularizers of social science something authoritative to go by. There will be no excuse any longer for many half-truths which have been spread so wide. The probability is that there will be a deluge of Sunday supplement and magazine articles, if not indeed books, taking advantage of this golden opportunity for popularization. In this connection, it is fortunate that the 65-page review of findings will be reprinted in pamphlet form. It is clear, concise, and easily understood. It is far better that one get the gist of the findings first hand than second or third hand through inaccurate hack writers.

But the Report's greatest service of all, as Professor Fairchild has

pointed out, may well be its service to posterity. What an accurate picture of our time they will get! What would not we give to have a similar study of any previous culture, for purposes of instruction and comparison!

II

COMMENT

*By C. F. Remer**

THE temptation is strong to turn at once to the "findings" of the Committee in the opening pages of the first volume and to that part of the findings which deals with theory and method in the social sciences. This temptation will, however, be resisted long enough to enable an examination to be made of the part which economics plays in the 1500 pages and 29 chapters which the Committee has brought together.

There is, of course, no way of separating chapters that deal with economic from those that deal with non-economic matters. Economics is a way of attacking problems rather than a body of knowledge, an aspect of social life rather than a section of it which may be marked off. But the economist has frequently expressed himself, whether mistakenly or not, as having to do with the more material side of human welfare. His practice has been to assemble, examine, and analyze facts in that part of social life which is the sphere of influence of the dollar.

With this indication of the field we may turn to the two volumes and, after the manner of the Committee itself, count the chapters which have to do with economics. The number is at least six, perhaps ten. The first impression is that the number is small, but an explanation is at hand. The Committee did not, we are told in a prefatory note, undertake to deal with the depression. What is more, the Committee relied upon the 1929 report, *Recent Economic Changes in the United States*, by a group of economists to provide a survey of this field. The 1929 report has now been supplemented by a volume, *Economic Tendencies in the United States*, from the pen of Frederick C. Mills, and the Committee on Recent Economic Changes plans to publish a further report "when the present economic cycle shall have run its course." In view of these recent publications in the field of economics, the relatively small amount of space devoted to this topic in the volumes now being considered is understandable.

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It is, nevertheless, worth while to ask how economic matters have been handled in the chapters in which they are important. Among them we find a chapter on the utilization of natural wealth, one on shifts in occupations, and others on labor, the consumer, and taxation. The most general chapter is that on trends in economic organization by Gay and Wolman. It presents a short but adequate account of the economic history of the United States since 1914 and a brief survey of recent writings on important American economic problems. We may set this and the other "economic" chapters over against the rest of the Report for purposes of comparison and contrast.

One discovers, in the first place, that the economists give much greater importance than do the other social scientists to the World War and to the changes which they trace directly to the World War. Gay and Wolman place first among their trends in economic organization what they call the "huge and uncalculated consequences" of the war. Heer points out in his discussion of taxation that war was the greatest cause of increased public expenditure between 1913 and 1930, accounting for no less than 28 per cent of the eight billion dollar increase in tax collections. But there were other effects as well. Banking and credit extension, we are told, "markedly affected by the necessities and policies of war finance, helped to produce that instability in our financial institutions which has played such havoc with our economic life since the beginning of the last depression." It is an interesting fact that there is little comment on the consequences of the war throughout the rest of the Report. The explanation may lie in the fact that the effects of the war are more difficult to trace in other fields or that its outstanding effects, up to the present time at least, have been in the economic field.

The international relations of the United States, especially the economic relations, are a second matter to which Gay and Wolman give much greater attention than do their fellow social scientists. Their conclusion is:

"So far as the near future is concerned, the discovery by the United States of its responsibilities and duties as a creditor nation and the fixing of sound policy to regulate the relation between foreign trade and foreign loans may be regarded as at least one of our most vital national economic problems."

Whether or not one agrees with this conclusion, the course of events since 1914 leads one to question the judgment of the Committee in giving so little attention to this subject. It is true that the Committee mentions in its "findings" the problems of peace and war, of imperial-

ism, and of international relations, but the reader looks in vain for an examination of our international relations since 1900 which may be compared with the account of other aspects of American life.

This criticism may be carried further. The whole Report fails to give attention to comparisons with other societies and with other forms of social organization. One looks for such comparisons, for contrasts, for the suggestion of alternatives from the social scientist. "They know not England, who only England know" carries a truth which we all feel. The Committee may well answer that it was American society which they were describing and analyzing and that this was task enough. Admitting the force of the answer one may still express regret that the world setting in which American society finds itself was not more clearly pictured.

In their insistence upon the importance of problems of public policy and governmental control, those who deal with the more distinctly economic problems are quite in agreement with their collaborators and with the members of the Committee. The business community of the United States, they point out, tends to look to consolidation and combination as the solution of the major problems of competitive business. There is among the public, they report, a more sympathetic attitude toward combination than during the earlier years of the century. "The problems of public control over business," we are told in conclusion, "are likely to be the most vexing of our immediate economic and political problems." This problem of public control is more likely, however, to be of immediate and insistent importance in relation to banking and credit than in relation to business combinations. The "appalling sequence of bank failures in the United States" and the other aspects of the depression have, we are told, "been described by sober commentators as marking the collapse of the modern credit system and the beginning of the end of competitive business."

We may turn from this statement to the general warning of the Committee in the closing pages of its "findings" that unless an effective solution is found we face the possibility of "dictatorial systems in which the factors of force and violence may loom large." No one may doubt the seriousness of the problems involved in the relation between government and business when it moves a group of American social scientists to express themselves in this direct fashion.

The Committee proposes, in the field of governmental and social control, further fact finding and research, a greater interest on the part of the government in planning for the future, the use of the Social

Science Research Council and possibly a National Advisory Council to consider "fundamental questions of the social order." Limits of space prevent more than a mention of Lynd's suggestion that a Department of the Consumer be set up in Washington, and the conviction of Wolman and Peck that social insurance is the chief hope for progress in the field of labor.

So far I have dealt with matters in the field of economics, strictly speaking; I turn now to the general problems of theory and method in the social sciences. In doing so I follow the example set in the "findings" of the Committee, for the Committee does not, as we might expect, end with a list of problems arranged in the order of their importance or urgency.

Nor does the Committee attempt in its closing pages to reduce the trends which have been studied to one grand trend. The various individual chapters, we are told in a prefatory note, are the result of "objective research." The writers have "been bound rather strictly by the limitations of the scientific method"; they have not been "free to pronounce upon social ills and to prescribe remedies." What is more, the researches have in general "been limited to fields where records are available." The results are what the Committee calls social "trends."¹

If, as I have pointed out, the Committee is not satisfied to end with objective generalizations or with a list of urgent practical problems, how does it bring its "findings" to a close? By a discussion in the field of theory and method. Here the attack is upon the most difficult questions

¹ The term "trend" seems to mean an observable series of changes which, if they can not always be expressed in a rate of change or exhibited on a chart, are at least visible to the inner eye. At times the imagination is taxed to follow the meaning, as in this sentence, "Recent trends show the United States alternating between isolation and independence, between sharply marked economic nationalism and notable international initiative in coöperation, moving in a highly unstable and zig-zag course." In general, however, the term "trend" is used consistently.

One may also fairly object that there are some social changes to which the term "trend" may hardly be fitted even by an effort of the imagination. To visualize changes in the "structure" of government as a trend is difficult. How shall we bring under this rubric the place of art in American life? One may object that some changes are a consequence of cumulation. A series of small changes may at a certain point produce a drastic alteration. That the annual income of a certain group has declined year by year may be represented as a downward trend. The fact may be that the early decreases in income produce adjustments which may be made with relative ease but that the final decreases produce a radical alteration in the whole plan of life of the group. How, to take an example from another field, is one to think of a trend toward fascism in Italy? Some changes proceed by cumulation and overturning, and one is forced to think of them in qualitative rather than quantitative terms.

in the whole field of the social sciences, upon questions in which every social scientist takes a lively interest.

At the heart of the problem of method lies the question as to how to get from descriptions of observed phenomena to the field of judgment and valuation. How is social policy to be reached by objective description? How are we to get forward to the world which we desire, to the world for which we hope, by a colorless examination of the world around us? If we were to take the position which the Committee seems to take in its prefatory note, that objective research is the whole of social science,² then we could put this central problem as a paradox, as *the* paradox of the social sciences. But the paradox can not be a real one, it can not entirely resist solution, for the whole history of social science attests that we do take the step from objective examination to valuation and action. The very Report which we are discussing is offered to the American people as a guide to better things.

One solution of the paradox is to point out that action is something altogether separate from scientific generalization. According to this view we get forward, if at all, by force applied from without, by pressure from outside the field of science. Generalizing from what one sees, one is a scientist; proposing action one is, as the Committee says, a "private citizen." This is a common device but it lets the social scientist off too easily. He thus wraps himself in the fair cloak of science and quits the scene as the battle is about to begin.

The opinion may be ventured that the very process of analysis or integration, the very steps of thinking by which generalizations are brought together and given meaning, involve the social scientist's scale of values. These steps imply a program of action. In other words, the social scientist is to be judged not merely by his objectivity (and he can never be one hundred per cent objective) but by his answer to what I have called the paradox of the social sciences.

Indeed, theory and method are the social scientist's chief contribution toward the "social control" which I venture to regard as an unavoidable part of his science. An illuminating theory and a useful method are his chief form of "social discovery," to use the Committee's term. It is not often that he is privileged to make this sort of contribution since life is short and science, as well as art, is long.

A contribution in this field may be more modest than a new theoretical formulation; it may be the provision of a new concept which

² The Committee does not, of course, hold to this position in its general chapter of findings.

directs attention to salient features of a phenomenon and carries suggestions as to action. A single example of this sort may be mentioned. The term "metropolitan community" or "super-city" is offered by McKenzie. It throws into relief certain maladjustments and indicates such possible action as the creation of "some sort of super-metropolitan government."

When this creation of concepts is of the broadest sort and when these concepts are logically interrelated we have the finest contribution which we may expect from the social scientist. The Committee in its general report undertakes such a statement of general principles which are at once tools of analysis and the community's "handle against fate."

Social problems, the Committee maintains, are the products of social change. Social changes are interrelated. They take place at varying rates in different fields. This means maladjustment. The objective of control is better adjustment, and the means is social discovery and the wider application of new knowledge. In this statement the Committee expands into a set of general principles Ogburn's concept of a "cultural lag."

The social scientist is likely to agree that this is an illuminating way to put many of our problems. So long as it is not maintained that it is the only way — and the Committee makes no such claim — the Committee's principles are likely to be accepted. The better adjustment which these principles involve may be called balance, or equilibrium, or stability. The balance is, in the Committee's thought, one which is being continuously achieved and not the "natural" equilibrium upon which the social scientist of the past has, at times, too complacently relied. The economist who has made frequent use of such a theoretical formulation will welcome its wider use in the social sciences.³

"We were not commissioned," the Committee tells us in their closing paragraph, "to lead the people into some new land of promise." This does not absolve the Committee or the rest of the community from the task of finding "some new land" which does promise the

³ Unanswered questions arise, however. There are problems to which this theory does not seem to apply, such as those of the relation between money and the price level. Differential rates of change in various fields do not enable us to list our problems according to the degree of their importance. The Committee seems inclined to give a primary place to economic changes, but this rests upon considerations not included in the theory. But my present purpose is not to engage in critical analysis; it is rather to point out the nature of the theory which a highly competent group of American social scientists finds to be of fundamental significance in understanding the social problems which we face.

American people greater stability in their social life and greater economic security. In discussions of international affairs we are familiar with the assertion that political security is a necessary condition of peace. In American society it may well be found that economic security is a necessary condition of domestic peace.

III

COMMENT

*By Henry M. Bates**

THE publication of the Report of the President's Research Committee on Social Trends is an event of outstanding importance. It makes available, at a most critical period in our history, a wealth of material regarding the life of the country, the intelligent study and use of which should go far to enable us to resolve the doubt and confusion, whose benumbing and paralyzing effects endanger our future. Opinions doubtless will vary as to the value of this or that part of the Report, and there will be those who would prefer greater or less emphasis upon some features of the life studied. But even a too rapid study of the text of the main Report is convincing that this immensely difficult and intricate task has been performed with brilliant mastery of the voluminous mass of materials examined. If an intelligent understanding of the trends here discussed could be attained by the nation, benefits of inestimable value would accrue within a few years. Especially it is highly desirable that every judge, every legislator, in short, every public official and every lawyer should thoroughly examine the entire Report.

To the lawyer, the chapters entitled "Law and Legal Institutions," "Government and Society," "Public Administration," "Taxation and Public Finance," "The Growth of Governmental Functions," "Public Welfare Activities," and "Trends in Economic Organization" will be of particular interest. But a proper understanding of these chapters will require a reading at least of the two volumes now published. That reading would be repaid by a realization of the interrelations of every function and every activity of our national life. The work is, moreover, one of absorbing interest, apart from any use to which its wealth of information may be put.

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To one lawyer, at least, the outstanding demonstration of the book is this necessary interplay of every part of our life upon almost every other aspect of it. We have been satisfied thus far to grow much as Topsy is said to have done, without general plan or without even a perception of the great objectives of social life. In consequence there have developed maladjustments, productive not merely of friction but of the opposition of forces to each other, the sterilization of what might have been a much richer existence, and today a confusion, depression, and consternation which are well-nigh overwhelming. As the introduction to the Report puts it,

“Along with this amazing mobility and complexity there has run a marked indifference to the interrelation among the parts of our huge social system. Powerful individuals and groups have gone their own way without realizing the meaning of the old phrase, ‘No man liveth unto himself.’

“The result has been that astonishing contrasts in organization and disorganization are to be found side by side in American life: splendid technical proficiency in some incredible skyscraper and monstrous backwardness in some equally incredible slum.”¹

To lawyers and legal scholars, the picture presented by this study of our social life offers both opportunity and challenge. The absolutely essential task of bringing about better correlation between government, industry, business, and agriculture should be in large part the work of the lawyer and legal scholar. Perhaps Professor Merriam's brilliant chapter on Government is not too severe when it declares,² “The massive irresponsiveness of the bar and the bench to the challenge of the present system of civil and criminal justice by modern social and economic conditions, and the indifference to the sweeping indictments of the drift by leading jurists,” is one of the obstacles to an improvement in our present day life. If any lawyer has doubted the necessity of very material modification of some of our political and legal institutions to meet the requirements of this age, so fundamentally different from the period in which our present structure was set up, an open-minded reading of this Report would convince him of his error. With the reaching of our last frontier, the distribution of the greater part of the public domain, and the almost incredibly great multiplication of the wants and the needs of a modern, complex, and populous

¹ P. xii.

² P. 1536.

nation, and the equally great multiplication of occupations and enterprises, we can no longer adequately, or even safely, control and coördinate our multifarious life with the simple political and legal set-ups established at the beginning of our national life. Life, then simple, has become intricate and complex. Mammoth commercial and industrial organizations have sprung into life and acquired irresistible power over individuals and over much of the wealth of the nation. Paths now cross each other oftener; the orbits of business and industry intersect more frequently. Collisions and conflicts have become far more numerous. No man can exercise complete personal liberty or use his own property with the old unregulated freedom, without danger of harm to others or to the general welfare.

Several months ago I ventured to express the belief that progress "must come chiefly through carefully thought-out and scientifically constructed legislation and through the wide development and scientific improvement of administrative law. We may curse the 'multiplication of laws' all we like. It has been done at least since Coke's time, who complained bitterly that English law already filled more than thirty volumes. But it is absolutely certain that in this period of unprecedentedly swift and comprehensive changes in every activity of life we shall and must have more and better, not fewer laws."³

Professor Merriam declares:⁴

"... we can not ignore the interpenetration of the large social and economic units with the more specifically political agencies. The whole delicate structure of modern industry is increasingly intertwined with governmental functions, and will continue to be so in the future, not as the result of any theory whatever, but as the inevitable consequence of the closer integration of social and political life. Currency and banking, shipping, international loans, taxation, tariffs, unemployment, are only a part of the great mass of relations which tend to come within the circle of governmental influence and control; and the inexorable trend continues. No theory or practice, individualism, collectivism, fascism, has yet shown a clear way to deal effectively with this new situation, and the future will call for wise but bold experimentation, looking forward rather than back. Nor will the problem be solved by one nation alone."

³ Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of The State Bar of California for 1932, p. 66.

⁴ P. 1540.

The necessity for some modification of existing legal institutions and methods will appear equally, whether we approach the problem from the point of view of government or from that of law itself. The chapter, "Law and Legal Institutions," by Clark and Douglas,⁵ though compressed within the narrow limits of fifty-nine pages, presents a comprehensive and well-proportioned view of the developments in legal fields, covering the period studied. Here, as in the entire Report, the Committee and its staff have confined themselves as nearly as possible to an objective statement of fact. With such compression it is difficult to establish general trends — yet those trends will appear to the careful reader. They indicate a striking increase in the volume of legislation by legislatures of high and low degree, a large (though still inadequate and uncharted) increase in social control, especially in the fields of sanitation, education, public utilities, securities, and other matters widely affecting the general welfare.

This chapter on Legal Institutions traces briefly not only the trends just indicated, but also the great development of administrative law as a method of control. It also shows clearly, without making the claim, that we must have still more social control and yet more administrative tribunals and officers and more administrative regulation. Perhaps this chapter indicates that if Professor Merriam's statement about "the massive irresponsiveness of the bar and the bench" is not a little severe, at least the beginnings of response are now apparent, and that there is ground for hope of increasing liberality of view by our bench. To this desirable development the philosophic and statesmanlike opinions of Justice Holmes, and the forward-looking and wise utterances of Justice Brandeis, Justice Cardozo, and of state judges like Justice Burch, of the Kansas Supreme Court, and of Justice Rosenberry, of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, have contributed much. Clark and Douglas, in their treatment of "Social Legislation and the Courts," say: "Any prophecy of the beginning of a new trend either toward broadening or restricting the concept becomes futile without knowledge of the philosophies of those who will sit on the bench during the next decade and, in addition, the probable drift of controlling public opinion on specific issues."

This is undoubtedly true, and yet it may be said, with some confidence, that while the forces of reaction are strident and vigorous, it can not be doubted that at the present moment the movement toward securing the public welfare by necessary regulations, legislative and

⁵ Chapter XXVIII of the Report.

administrative, is proceeding with a "massiveness" which can not be long resisted. We may have our income tax, minimum wage, child labor, and other decisions putting obstacles in the path but they will be overcome, and that rather speedily, unless public opinion veers in a manner which at present seems very unlikely to occur.

As the Report points out, many forces are contributing to the improvement and liberalizing of the legal institutions of the country. Not least among these are the training of lawyers by the better law schools in an enlightened attitude toward law, the researches of legal scholars, the recent vigorous and forward-looking activities of the American Bar Association, the American Judicature Society, the important contribution of discussions at American Law Institute meetings, and the nation-wide movement for raising standards of admission to the bar, and for improvements in court organization and procedure.

The chapter "Public Administration" is, for the most part, a condensed statement of the development of government through administrative methods.⁶ Of course, this means extension of social control over the use of property of all kinds and over many occupations which, in the earlier history of the country, were allowed to pursue their own ends, without supervision. Never was the outcry against government "interfering with business" more vigorous, not to say more ferocious, than just at the present time. This is due to some extent, certainly, to a narrow self-interest of many of those engaged in business. But the trouble lies even more in the fact that comparatively few business leaders have taken the slightest trouble to understand the nature of modern society. They misconceive many of the causes of our present wide-spread depression. Angrily, and not unnaturally, they strike at the first apparent obstacles in sight, and so taxation and administrative regulation are anathema to them. But their opposition is futile and will be brushed aside. It would be well if business men and their lawyers stop barking at the rising tide and try to decide how best to meet and wisely control this irresistible force. Fortunately, some of the ablest of them are attempting to do just this, realizing not only that the general welfare must be considered, but equally that the stabilization and security of all their own business affected with a public interest can be achieved only by application of some measure of governmental regulation. No serious and disinterested student of the contemporary scene can doubt that our old method of settling some classes of controversies between private individuals by private litiga-

⁶ Chapter XXVII of the Report.

tion in which the interests of the opposed private parties alone are submitted to a tribunal is entirely inadequate to present needs. The public insists, and ought to insist, that the public interest be properly represented. Herein lies one of the invincible arguments for the administrative regulation of transportation, public utilities of all kinds, other businesses affected with a public interest, education, sanitation, the issuance and sale of corporate and other securities, and in short all the activities vitally affecting social life.

There was a period in American life when administrative regulation seemed an exotic of dangerous tendencies. It was vaguely thought of as a scheme of European law, designed to protect the crown and its modern successors. As a matter of fact, administrative control is old in England, and we have never been without it in this country. We may, therefore, properly say that the administrative tribunal and administrative regulations are wholly in harmony with American institutions and the American spirit of today. It is a method which definitely and demonstrably is permissible under our Constitution.

The facts and conditions which the Report of President Hoover's Committee reveals call for a determined, constructive program, for the careful, yet bold and planned, progressive development of our legal order along American constitutional lines, for continuing to fill in the framework of government stated only in bare outline in the Constitution, and for freely (though only after careful study) adding to, or withdrawing from, modifying and developing our machinery for social control, as the constantly changing life-stream of the nation may require.

This is not a mere middle course, or a compromise in any sense, between the certainly revolutionary road to the left and the unintended but almost certainly revolutionary end of the road to the conservative right. It is an independent, distinctive, and engineered program. It calls for more ingenuity in adapting means to ends, more resourcefulness in finding new social solutions, more courage in experimentation than we have hitherto shown. It requires less cramped definitions and applications of some of our general standards such as "due process of law" and "the equal protection of the laws," greater freedom and more constructive imagination in dealing with political concepts and legal materials than our legislatures have generally exercised. It will require that our courts be more careful, in reviewing legislation, to stay within the proper limits of the judicial function as defined by Chief Justice Marshall and as restated and applied to modern conditions with brilliant mastery and profound statesmanship by Justice Holmes.