

The New Paternalism

THE vast scale upon which affairs go on once seemed enough to make men despair of the possibility of their orderly control. They seemed too big to be got in hand. Men felt dwarfed, shrivelled in the face of the vastness of economic and political conditions. The war put the immensity of things in a new light. It became evident that the very size of things had brought with it a centralization already inchoate in private hands, so that about all that was required to consolidate the centralized control was to give it explicit governmental sanction. The economists and business men called to the industrial front accomplished more in a few months to demonstrate the practicable possibilities of governmental regulation of private business than professional Socialists had effected in a generation. They proved that a few fortresses in our day absolutely command the whole industrial field. When they were taken possession of, public direction of industry followed almost automatically. Production could be controlled by taking over the agencies of shipping and transportation, foreign and domestic; by regulating the giving of credit and the issuing of securities; by administering the labor market, through the government becoming itself a wholesale bidder and conscriptor of men. The centralized mechanisms of industrial and economic control built up in modern business are so definite that when these three things were taken over by the government, public control was shown to be almost ridiculously easy. With sufficient experience to make methods of taxation scientific enough to control profiteering, the simplicity of some form of state capitalism (generally called state socialism) would have been demonstrated.

Reaction against the paternalism of this control now that the war is over is prompt, widespread and highly organized. There are too many interests concerned with maintaining a private paternalistic regulation of other men's affairs, known as personal initiative, to permit this state of things to go unchallenged. But strangely enough there is one form of paternalism stimulated by the war for the continuation of which these same interests are anxiously eager, namely, intellectual paternalism.

The censorship will be relaxed; officially it will be abandoned. Letters will not be so freely opened. Secret service agents of our own and a foreign government will not be so generously encouraged to exercise a kindly supervision of telegraph and telephone lines. The lapse of the Espionage act will make it less easy for governmental officials, big and petty, to regulate the press by threatening its

mailing privileges. The still more efficacious domination of the agencies of discussion by the Pulp and Paper Division of the War Industries Board will presumably be relaxed. But one thing will not be forgotten. There has been a remarkable demonstration of the possibilities of guidance of the news upon which the formation of public opinion depends. There has been an equally convincing demonstration of the effect upon collective action of opinion when directed systematically along certain channels. One almost wonders whether the word "news" is not destined to be replaced by the word "propaganda"—though of course words linger after things have been transformed.

The world has come to a curious juncture of events. The development of political democracy has made necessary the semblance at least of consultation of public opinion. The beliefs of the masses cannot be openly ignored. The immense size of a democracy like our own would make the development of community of sentiment and persuasion impossible unless there were definite and centralized agencies for communication and propagation of facts and ideas. Consequently just at the time when shaping public opinion has become an essential industry, there also exist the instrumentalities for news gathering and distributing on a large scale. Not only so, but business conditions almost automatically force these agencies into highly concentrated forms easily manageable from the centre. The small operator in news and "facts" can hardly exist. Comprehensive undertakings with large capital are required. Capital in one form is naturally friendly to capital in other forms. Aside from conscious and unconscious affiliations and combinations, there is the always influential fact that reflecting the views of the powers that be gives access to important sources of information, while lack of subserviency shuts off such access. And in the background unremittingly works the fact that democracies are controlled through their opinions, that opinions are formed by the material upon which they feed, and that propaganda disguised as the distribution of news is the cheapest and most effective way of developing the required tone of public sentiment.

The governmental control demanded by the exigencies of war has in part merely revealed the scope of influential forces previously operative in private hands. But the war has also increased the prior centralization, and created an atmosphere favorable to feeding the people with just those

things and only those things which the authorities believe that it is good for them to know. The tensions of uncertainty and fear produced by the war have developed an extraordinary sensitiveness which works toward strengthening this benevolent paternalism. On the day when the armistice was signed, an article written by a university professor was published in a daily paper solemnly warning the American people that the reports which stated that the Germans were in revolt and were sincerely seeking peace were in all probability more instances of clever German propaganda designed to undermine American morale. The only thing unusual about this warning was the fact that it happened to be printed a few hours after the revolt and the establishment of peace were accomplished facts. When a few scattering and timid voices were raised in this country in behalf of tempering justice with mercy in the case of the economic conditions of the armistice which had to do with feeding Germany, a semi-official warning was sent out from Washington against the new activities of German agents in this country. One's only embarrassment would be in selecting from the multitude of instances of this sort. When the belief of Germans as supermen in other respects began to wane, the persuasion that they were supermen in propaganda only increased.

Most of the persons who shared such beliefs were neither stupid nor sinister. The dread of the enemy provoked by war tends like all emotions to spread like a cloud and envelop everything in any way associated with the foe. There was enough obnoxious German propaganda to create legitimate fear. Gradually it covered everything, and men saw facts like the collapse of Germany through the fog of fear of German propaganda. Students of human nature also tell us that one may judge of a man's own activities by the charges which he most repeatedly brings against others. Accusations blend with unconscious confessions. It is quite conceivable that some of the reiterated charges of propaganda covered another propaganda; and that, for example, Lord Northcliffe or the advocates of Siberian intervention had little to learn from Germany about the technique of creating opinion.

But in any event there has been stirred up a vast anxiety about the kind of facts and opinions which are brought to public attention. There is uneasiness and solicitude about what men hear and learn. This paternalistic care for the sources of men's beliefs, once generated by war, carries over into the troubles of peace. What we do not see in the news cables from Europe is even more significant than what we do see. Who knows just what is happening in Europe? Have the revolutionary Socialists

in Italy been calmed into absolute quiet by the revolutionary occurrences all about them? What are the old minority Socialists in France, who became the majority, doing and saying? Nothing? Compare the scanty amount of news received even about the British Labor party with the amount that reaches us concerning Lloyd George, Carson, Milner, et al., and one might almost think that Americans had a vote to help decide the election. The most striking example of course is the surveillance of what issues as to Russian happenings.

No one can well say how much of this new paternalism is a designedly sinister thing and how much is due to a sincere fear that men's minds will be corrupted by hearing of social changes abroad. The fact which stands out is that the war has generated an atmosphere of safety first regarding all facts knowledge of which stimulates social change. No one can tell just how disturbing here an explicit unbiased report of foreign disturbances may be. The times are still troubled. Let us take no chances. Let the masses be benevolently protected against a knowledge which might not be good for them nor for society. The social and economic woods are full of traps; let us walk gingerly and keep out of harm and risk. This is the psychological factor which cooperates with the physical centralization of the agencies of news gathering and distribution to develop the new paternalistic solicitude for the masses who cannot yet be trusted to think for themselves. Let us make democracy safe for the world by a careful editing and expurgation of the facts upon which it bases the opinions which in the end decide social action. The men most active in urging that state paternalism be surrendered in exchange for private initiative in transportation, banking, investments and manufacturing (barring of course benevolence to the poor working man through a protective tariff) will be most vigorous in solicitude to safeguard against private initiative in belief. Heresy is proverbially a contagious disease. To learn anything about the Bolsheviki except their excesses would corrupt an otherwise staid and respectable America. Consequently men who sincerely wonder how, say, the Roman Emperors could have been so cruel and stupid as to try to prevent the spread of Christianity by oppressive means are sincerely anxious to prevent men's minds and morals from being undermined today by the spread of knowledge of heretical social activities. And it must be admitted that the means formerly at command were clumsy and brutal in comparison with those now available.

JOHN DEWEY.

Self-Imposed Handicaps

THE Young Men's Christian Association emerges from the war the dominant religious force in American society. It has met a great emergency magnificently. Its history, its tried capacity, the unexpected event—all combined to impose upon it a tremendous responsibility. It has made good. It is entitled to the honor and prestige and widening influence which will certainly accrue from its splendid success.

A great multitude, long outraged by the confusions and pettinesses of American religious sectarianism are looking to this agency to assume a determined leadership in achieving the larger religious unity which all except the hopelessly prejudiced are fully assured must come. A great majority would welcome even drastic measures on the part of the Y. M. C. A. in asserting this leadership. The Association has it in its power to overwhelm and completely sweep aside numerous petty religious factions which have up to now assumed the right to preen themselves in their mischief-making institutions among all of our communities. It will not only be loyally followed and cordially supported in such leadership by the great mass of the American people, but its prestige will be seriously impaired if it does not promptly assert such leadership as soon as the strain of its war task is relieved.

With all this supplying a background in the reader's mind, consider what is implied in the title of this article. The Y. M. C. A. will encounter no serious handicaps in its vast new task of reconstruction except those of its own imposition. These are two, with a third capable of becoming serious if leaders lose their present sensitiveness to public opinion.

The first is that which has given the Association its unique opportunity in the war. It is a young men's institution, and the army and navy which it has magnificently served are composed of young men. But society is not made up solely of young men. There are women and children and old men. There is family life to be fostered. The home is to be rebuilt as the security of our civilization. The task of reconstruction presents a vitally different social problem from that of efficient ministry to millions of homeless male youths, cut off temporarily from the ministry of the ordinary social institutions. The Association has conducted this latter service with consummate skill, and in a devotion which the American people will never forget. But the new ministry is radically different. New arts must be employed. New objectives must be set forth. A new social science must be learned. Will

a "young men's" association be equal to the new demands? Certainly it will not if it shall presume to employ the old arts, maintain the old objectives and be content with the formulas of the old science.

Being a young men's movement the Association was compelled even before the war to accept the consequences of its self-imposed limitations. It made necessary the organization of the independent Young Women's Christian Association. And the two have not worked in complete harmony. Their leaders have fallen into dispute. The two organizations have developed different ideals. One has criticised the other for being different from itself. This has never broken out into open conflict. But differences have not always been confined to those gentle frictions by which kindred souls generate a genial glow of mutual affection. There is no prospect that these differences, under a divided directorate, will be eliminated in the reconstruction period now opening.

Furthermore, the Y. M. C. A. has no programme for the community. Any agency which leads out and on in the new day must have one, and a thoroughly seasoned one. The Association has not been in the community-building business, certainly not during the exceptional conditions it has so efficiently met under the military programme, nor was it engaged largely or successfully in that business before the war. The Association has not been a home builder. It has been charged with being a home-destroyer. Of course it has never been wilfully that. It has always rendered at least lip-homage to the home. But it has builded magnificent club-houses for the accommodation of bachelor young men, and has often been censured for having delayed the setting up of the necessarily humbler home by the luxurious beguilements of bachelorhood. Much of this criticism has been little more than amusing. The Association has permitted itself to engage in no positive measures tending to weaken our holiest social institutions. But neither has it advanced a positive and statesman-like programme in support of the home and the community life. Perhaps it could not and cannot. It would seem that it cannot so long as it holds consistently to the self-imposed organic limitation written into its name.

It is true that the Association, long before the war crisis came on, had grown restive under this limitation. It was almost feverishly pressing forms of community service here and there which it had assumed more or less inconsistently with its genius. However that may be, the issue must be met within