THE POLITICAL THOUGHT

OF

HAROLD J. LASKI

BY

NIZAM SHARABI

1940 - 1941

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INTRODUCTION

Owing to circumstances which have prevailed since the outbreak of war, this work on the political thought of Professor Harold J. Laski stops with the year 1938. What change, if any, in his position has come about because of recent development is not dealt with here. Moreover, nothing is said about his family and earlier surroundings; and only little about the first contacts and influences that make a young man begin to think about political phenomena. More important still, there is nothing in this work about Harold Laski as a member of the Labour Party and one of its leading intellectuals. It is obvious that a study of his political activity would have thrown much light on his political thought.

Mr. Laski is not only a Socialist. He is a political thinker of recognised ability and brilliance. In particular, the history of political ideas, or, as he wrote, what men have thought about the state, is his special line of interest. His method is historical. In fact, he has expressed his concern to see all political work a study of history. That alone can reveal the fullest truth about political problems. "I stand here," he said to his audience when he was given the chair of political science in the London School of Economics, "to plead for the study of politics in the terms of history. To know how our traditions and institutions have been moulded, to grasp the evolution of the forces by which their destiny has been shaped -- that, I am anxious to persuade you is above all the key to their understanding".[1] This approach is distinct in his own works. His political thought is largely an

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1. On the study of Politics, 1926, p. 8.

analysis of actual facts and developments, past and present. It stands in sharp contrast to the idealistic approach, which, Mr. Laski argues, is defective because it deals with the "pure instance" and not with real life.

In a very general sense, the central theme of Mr. Laski's political thought is the uniqueness of the individual personality, and the necessity of reshaping our institutions to give ample room to individual creativeness and development. This has been the basis of his attack on the Sovereignty of the State, and his insistence that functional as well as territorial devices should be introduced to allow the individual man to express himself and develop his faculties. This also, together with the Marxian lesson which history has taught him, is the basis of his socialism.

It is not to be understood that Mr. Laski starts with the individual as a divine being, for whose sake he builds an abstract political edifice. He is, in fact, fully aware of the individuals defects and shortcomings. Yet he finds in him the only centre of general welfare and the ultimate judge of what is good and bad. His object, therefore, is to build, with this conviction as a basis, a new socialist order in which, in so far as possible, equal opportunities would be open to all and in which man would not be the slave of economic necessity. Political developments, he believes, may lead us in this direction. But the way, he has become more fully convinced, is full of grave dangers. The forces of reaction are still very powerful; many men would resort to force rather than abandon the present order peacefully,

and the working classes are divided and relatively weak. The day of almost inevitable conflict which Mr. Laski believes is to come may be postponed or brought nearer by the present war and its outcome.

Nizam Sharabi.

May 1st, 1941.

PART ONE

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE STATE

Chapter I

ATTACK AGAINST STATE SOVEREIGNTY AND SUPREMACY

There are some people who call upon us to regard the state a unity. It is supreme over all individuals and groups whithin its limits. These, we are told, have no real existence outside it; they live so that its life may be enriched. It alone, unlike all other associations, is an embracing whole which does not tolerate any division or challenge to its will. Rights mean nothing more than what it has freely chosen to confer upon those that enjoy them. Fruitful life is best attained through its guidance, for it is the embodiment of Reason and Freedom, and the experience of past ages. Nor have its worshippers been less lavish in bestowing upon it attributes of divinity. Heavenly support was made the sanction for its acts, and it was, in the words of Hegel, the march of God upon earth.

Today, we feel the power of such wild claims as effectively as they were ever felt ever before. We see around us states that have announced to the world that they are living organisms that do not recognise any division in their bodies. They alone, these states have often declared, are omnipotent and supreme. Other groups and other associations have no life except that which the state defines for them. Their interests vanish before the overwhelming interest of the state. In fact they should not recognise any interest except the interest of the state; there is no life except its own.

To us, these present assumptions, are different from the old ones. We cannot dismiss them as some antiquated or

empty boasts which some usurpers of power have made use of in order to exterminate opposition and consolidate their gains. They do not only carry with them the convincing weight of achievement, no matter how much we differ in its value and character, but have also in their possession the crushing force of a military power which has proved itself, to the great amazement of many of us, to be of immense magnitude. And no one can reasonably underestimate the inescapable conviction which force carries with it. The temptation to attribute power and success to principles alone, even when other important factors could be found, is no doubt great, and the triumph which the totalitarian states have won has shaken to their foundation the democratic ways of life thus giving strength to those whom we consider the enemies of liberty and reason. There is involved in what I have said alone, (though not identical with it), the supreme power of the state.

State Sovereignty: The state has to achieve its aims. Hence it should possess the means whereby achievement is made possible. That means has been Sovereign Power. It is against the theory of sovereignty that Laski, at least in his early works, concentrates his attack.

The modern doctrine of territorial sovereignty appears after the middle ages. In fact it was not conceivable to the thinkers of that period. To them the ideal was a Christian unity which they had to discover underneath all the apparent diversity. It was the oneness of humanity in God, and society was a great all-inclusive world church. Even when they were

confronted with the two entities of State and Church, they sought the solution in terms of unity. Their sovereign was one, subject to no territorial limits, superior to the Emperor and identical with the Vicar of Christ on earth - the Pope.

The idea of unity, though in a different form, was inherited by the state. When Luther challenged the majesty of Rome, he appealed to the Prince, and, as the church was divine, he had to attribute to him divine power to allow him to meet its claims. The state now had divine support distinct from that she used to obtain through the Pope. It could, through its Prince, choose its religion, and when the Prince was confronted with the challenge of a reviving church, he insisted upon his sovereignty and the undivided allegiance implied in it. We cannot, of course neglect the influence of the rise of nationalism which transformed the former general Christian society into a group of distinct societies conscious of their separateness from each other and of their distinct wills and fate. When the regulation of relations between states became desirable, it had to be recognized, for lack of a common superior to which the different societies owed allegiance, that the state stood as complete master of itself in relation to other states.

It is worthwhile to observe, Laski points out, that the theory of Sovereignty and the repeated emphasis that it has received, were born during a time of crises when the life of the state was in danger. "That has been always, from Bodin to Hegel, a period of crises in which the state seemed likely

to perish unless it could secure the unified allegiance of its members."[1] The wars of Religion, for example, put the states in a condition of danger. As external danger forces a community to require undivided allegiance to it, complete allegiance to the state became inevitable, and when the power of the state assumed such dimensions, ethical right limiting its power, was superseded by unlimited legal power. This position was expressed by Bodin, the father of the modern doctrine of sovereignity. According to the legal theory of the state which he formulated, sovereignty meant the possession of power to make laws binding upon all and everyone of the subjects, while receiving none from any. This theory, which has been opposed by many to whom it was an instrument of oppression, has come down to us in different forms through Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Austin.

Definition of Sovereignty - Austin: According to Austin, the most famous exponent of the legal theory, there exists in each state a determinate body, supreme above all, that receives habitual obedience from the people, but obeys no one. The will of this superior is law; law is a command which it issues to the subjects. The sovereign is a determinate body in the sense that it may be accurately identified. Habitual obedience to it is not a rare and transient acquiescence to its demands, but the general and accepted mode of behaviour. Moreover, the authority of the sovereign is unlimited, for if it were, it would cease to be sovereign. The only limitations possible are the rules

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1. A Grammar of Politics, p. 46.

of morality and explicit self-imposed agreements, but, legally, no limitation can be imposed upon him. He may issue a command which we deem unconstitutional, but that will not exceed a deviation from tradition and custom, for it cannot be declared illegal.

Criticism of Austinian Theory: To Laski, this theory may be accepted as a narrow legal analysis, but it is worthless as an explanation of the political aspect of the state. In the first place he rejects the idea of law as a command. "To think of law as simply a command is, even for the jurist, to strain definition to the verge of decency"[1] "When a Franchise Act conferred the vote on women, it is an exceedingly circuitous way of explaining its nature to resolve it into terms of command." In the same way, it seems to me, an act granting independence to one of the colonies of a state, is in no way a command issued by its sovereign, nor is a law providing medical service for the people, to be regarded as such by those who may avail themselves of its provisions. The religious laws that are enforced in Palestine and Syria, for example, are obviously not the commands of the sovereign colonial powers. In the second place, he regards unlimited authority as an absurdity. The King in Parliament, which he regards as the most perfect example of the Austinian view, cannot in any real sense be regarded of unlimited power. There are many things which it would dare not do. Such acts as the abolition of the Trade Unions, or the disfranchising of the Roman Catholics, it would not possibly attempt."If it made the attempt, it would cease to be a Parliament."[2] The

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1. A Grammar of Politics, p. 51.
2. Ibid. p. 52.

change which a series of by-elections, produces on will of the sovereign, is an indication of how the sovereign parliament obeys its constituents. He goes even so far as to say that, "as the community becomes organised into associations with the end of bringing pressure to bear on government the sovereign organ becomes, as a general process, little more than a machine for registering decisions arrived at elsewhere".[1] That there is much truth in this argument is, no doubt, true. The belief in unlimited authority except in a purely legal sense, cannot reasonably be maintained. That has been the experience of democratic states, and even of authoritarian ones. King John of England needed a Magna Carta to know that; the Stuarts, despite their theory of Divine Right of Kings, lost the English throne after Charles I had lost his life at the scaffold. That, again, was the experience of the Russian tsars who had to yield in the 19th century, though little at the beginning, but everything at the end when Nicholas II and his family were put to death. Yet this is not to say that the sovereign did not wield at times universe power which was subject to negligible hindrances. The power which some of the present dictators exercise seems to be very great.

In the third place, he denies that the sovereign could always be a determinate body. He agrees with those who believe that the discovery of the sovereign in a federal state is impossible. In addition, he claims that, even in unitary states, the sovereign may not be easy to identify. When the constitution

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1. A Grammar of Politics, p. 53.

of a state reserves to the citizens rights which the legal sovereign may not alter, it might be asserted that the electorate which has power over those rights, is the sovereign. But that is to say the sovereign is indeterminate, and as the electorate is bound to act according to certain legal stipulations, also limited in authority. In short, the relation between the representative organs and the electorate cannot be satisfactorily explained on the basis of the Austinian Theory. Nor is the problem solved by claiming that sovereignty resides in the nation or the people for these are as indeterminate as any other group. We may even say that the real rulers of society are undiscoverable.

Dangers of the Theory of Sovereignty: Laski does not only regard the theory of sovereignty unsound, but also considers it unnecessary and dangerous. His attack, however, includes within its ambit all attributes that make the state unquestionably supreme and not open to attack, and give its acts and claims a priori rightness and validity. To him, it has been very easy to transform the legal supremacy of the state into moral supremacy; for from the legal to the moral there is no more than a short inevitable step. That, he argues, has been the import of historical fact. We have seen how groups within the state have been violently pressed into accepting the view that they have no life of their own; that their allegiance, comple and undivided, belongs to the state; and that their interests are only of a secondary importance if of any at all, compared with its interests which alone are to receive full consideration. For, it has been argued, is not the

state legally supreme? Is it not a unity greater and more powerful than any other which is part of it? Nor is this all. The unity of the state should be maintained, perhaps at any cost. We have been warned against threatening that unity. Our full support, our entire obedience should go to our state. Other organizations were viewed suspiciously, and were persecuted when they showed any signs of diluting allegiance to it. The mere examination of its claims was not permissible lest it produce doubt and anarchy where unity and traditional order were to reign. Even liberty was to be sacrificed to that end. That was the attitude of Bismarck and his German successor, of Italians and of old and new French authoritarians. De Maistre, the outstanding representative of the early 19th century French authoritarians, insisted that the grave error of the French Revolution was that it did not accept society as it found it. Men are not to build on reason a new order, but are to hold to faith and traditions, and to obey blindly. He claimed that government was, by its very nature, unlimited and absolute. We are asked to accept beyond any doubt that, "There can be no human society without government, no government without sovereignty, no sovereignty without infallability".[1] Liberty is chaos; the remedy is complete surrender to sovereign authority. Democracy is of course, condemned. That is why he declares, "The executioner is both the terror of human society and that which holds it together. Remove that mysterious power and at the very moment order is superseded by chaos, thrones fall and states disappear. He is the very corner stone of society".[2] Nor was

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1. Soltau, French Political thought in the 19th century, p. 19
2. Ibid., p. 21

Bonald, the other outstanding French authoritarian, different in this respect. In fact he declared his thoughts to be identtical with those of De Maistre, and like him condemned revolt against order and authority, and even new ideas.

These two writers had the ghost of the French Revolution living before their eyes. That revolution meant the destruction of practically all that was dear to their hearts. It was sufficient for them that it mocked religion, insulted the church, and executed the king. Hence their vehement reaction against, and violent hate for all the principles for which it stood. In fact their hatred was so great that they seem to have completely neglected the duty of proving their case. All that they offered in this respect was to ask men to believe in the order they wished to restore from the dust of the past, just because they attributed to it an inherent rightness of their own. Professor Soltau was referring to them when he said, "The world has never been without people who thought the clock of time could be put back, who saw in the rejected past the true goal of mankind and ..... thought that change could never be for the better."[1]

Challenge to its Claims, to Unity and Complete Allegiance: But, Laski rightly points out, the state has not enjoyed its claims without challenge and defeat. Uniformity has not been a feature of human society, and sovereigns have not always received complete and uninterrupted obedience to their will. Bismarck's final concessions to the Catholics marks, he says, the failure of a state to enforce a scheme of unity which requires undivided

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1. Soltau, French Political thought in the 19th century, p. 15.

allegiance to itself. Nor has the British State, he adds, when it chose to test its claims against churches and religious sects, been more successful. The Presbyterians of 1843 resisted the interference of the secular state in what they considered their independent sphere of life. This was a rejection of the claim that "Parliament is the temporal head of the church, from whose acts and from whose acts alone, it exists as the national church, and from which alone it derives all its powers"[1]. They insisted, in the words of Chalmers, that, "the free jurisdiction of the church in things spiritual, the Headship of Christ, the authority of His Bible as the great statute book not to be lorded over by any authority on earth, a deference to our own standards in all that is ecclesiastical..... These are our principles"[2]. In other words, they claimed that their church was a perfect society, completely independent in a certain sphere where she would not recognize any secular superior. The state, it was admitted, was a sovereign in secular matters, but sovereignty ended there.

In the case of the English Catholics, Laski again points out that their emancipation was a recognition of the fact that the theory of sovereignty which demands of men their entire allegiance is far from representing the true facts of life.

Such challenge to the unlimited sovereignty of the state has not been confined to the religious field. The French and Russian Revolutions are convincing illustrations of how men will accept no sovereign when the order it seeks to maintain becomes extremely unsatisfactory to them. For ultimately, Laski believes,

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1. Problem of Sovereignty, 1917, p. 53
2. Ibid., p. 54.

it is men's consent and not the sovereign will, that prevails. Nothing is gained by saying that the demands of the state are supreme. The determined will of the Unionists in Ulster and the militant suffragists were enough to make the state yield. Such occasions, though rare, have proved to us that sometimes, when the will of certain groups contradicted the will of the state, the formers will proved more intense in their demands. Laski, of course, does not deny that it was only in a minority of cases that the state had to yield, and that generally the effectiveness of its will is supported by historical experience. But that the marginal instances, when the will of the state was resisted, have a special meaning for him. He can draw upon these to show that the state should not be permitted to justify its acts simply by ascribing to them attributes of sovereignty, but should be forced to prove her case like any other association. It has to accept to undergo a searching test before its acts receive our approval. In plain words, Laski does not see anything sacred or infallible about it. It must be judged like any person or association that may be right or wrong. " It is no answer to assert the theoretical infallibility of the state to us who possess the record of history. To acquiesce in its sin, to judge it by criteria other than those of individual action, is to place authority before truth."[1] "The power of the government is the right of the government in the degree to which it is exercised for the end of social life. There is a note of interrogation at the end of every governmental pronouncement. It is for the citizen to decide in what manner the question shall be answered."[2] In fact, its power, the wide range of its function,

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1. Problem of Sovereignty, p. 209.
2. Grammar of Politics, p. 36.

and its inclusiveness, make judgment of its acts imperative upon us. The power of other associations over me is limited, their membership is not compulsory. In contrast, I must be a member of the state; its power over me includes its ability to deprive me of freedom and of life. This ought to make us realize that judgment is not only a right, but a duty.

To protest by insisting that the state must be supreme because it represents the wider range of interests is not a convincing argument. The common interests which the state claims to stand for, might not be more than the interests of a certain section and not those of the community as a whole. Again, to say that the state needs supremacy, is to forget that supremacy tends to produce uniformity, and that uniformity is fatal to progress. As history has shown, the advance men have made has been the result of disagreement and free discussion.

Personality and Diverse: An explanation of Laski's attitude towards the claims of the state to supremacy and sovereignty, is, in part, to be found in his understanding of human personality. Its essence, he argues, is diversity; it cannot be reduced to a common factor. Men are different and consequently it cannot be shown satisfactorily that they fit into a well balanced universal scheme in which each finds his true being. At the centre, so to speak, stands the individual. He may be related to others under any number of associations. He is a member of a state. He may speak of belonging to England, France, or Germany. These may be real entities to him. He may be willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of his state. Yet each of these may be no more real than any other group which brings him into relations with others for

the fulfilment of purposes they consider desirable. A city, like New York, an establishment like Lloyds, an association like a Trade-Union may be no less unities of living importance to him than the state itself. They satisfy in him certain wants which he deems vital. He owes them alliegiance in the same way he owes it to his state. These bodies do not receive a definition of their lives from the state. Their ultimate right is not conferred upon them by the state, but is inherent in them because they serve to satisfy certain human wants. When their wills conflict with the will of the state, the latter should not have any preeminence. Each has to prove its case on equal basis. In itself the sovereignty of the state should not make it formidable; for, according to Laski, it does not differ in kind from power exercised by a Church or a Trade-Union. It is the resistance which their commands receive, that determines the obedience they will get.

The essence of this attitude is the belief that the acts of the state possess no inherent wisdom; and the individual no matter how wrong he may be, has nothing to rely upon except his own judgment. "Some, as Hobbes, may argue that the price of resistance is always greater than the value it obtains. Others, as T.H. Green, may urge that we confront the state in fear and awe because the presumption in resistance is always against us. Others again, as Bosanquet, may give the state unquestioned right upon the ground that, ultimately, it will come to summarize the best of ourselves."[1] But to Laski it is no use arguing that the state represents a unity which enfolds each and all individuals, for, first, this is far from being true and second, even that

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1. Foundation of Sovereignty, p. 87.

unity, which can only dwell in the minds of philosophers, is not one for the simple reason that different men hold different ideals of its character. In reality, the state contains within its boundaries many varied conflicting interests which have often refused to acknowledge the possibility of compromise. The state as one unity in a world of conflicting states, is different to its members when they turn their attention to the internal aspect of its life. And even where a similarity of aims is assumed, there is no guarantee of similarity of method of achievement. In plain terms the orthodox theory of sovereignty allows the group in power to dominate the whole life of the community in its own interests for which it claims universal character.

State to be Responsible for its Acts: These are the reasons why Laski wants us to discard the notion that the sovereign is exempt from suit on the basis that no legal right can be brought against the authority which creates it. He would make the state responsible for its acts - government officials, high and low, acting as its agents would have to answer for any misconduct. He points approvingly, in this connection to developments in both England and United States. "What emerges, whether in England or the United States, is the fact that an Austinian State is incompatible with the substance of democracy. For the latter implies responsibility by its very definition; and the Austinian system is, at bottom, simply a method by which the fallibility of men is concealed imposingly from the public view."[1]

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1. Foundations of Sovereignty, 1931, pp. 129-130.

Dangers of Obedience: The same reasons explain to us his emphasis on the dangers of obedience.

"To keep an open mind, to be dubious about whatever tradition may insist upon as absolute, to insist that our private experience is of importance in determining social values - These are qualities upon which the prospect of a full life depends. Once men suspect the value of originality they suppress it; and the consequence of suppression is the stationary society, with its dull uniformity, in which all sense of individuality is lost"[1] That is a message which Laski wishes to convey to us. He finds that we are characterized by our habit of looking with doubt upon any deviation from traditional highways, and are to a large degree the slaves of certain expectations which we dare not challenge. We set limits to the life which a poor man may live, and every millionaire will be charged with avarice unless he buys Rembrandts or endows universities. Novelty shocks us out of what we have long considered as right and natural. The consequence has been that we exchanged medieval religious intolerance for political and economic substitutes. Certain political norms, we may not deny. Many acts of the state go unquestioned though they may not win our approval. He refers to such cases as lynching in the South America, the massacre at Amritsar, and the martyrdom of Money. Our silence means acquiescence; and the less vigilant we are in our protest, the more daring authority becomes in the invasion of our liberties. For there is no guarantee that it always is right because it cannot be infallible. And when men discard their own judgment and become mere recipients of orders, governments become more despotic because they learn that

resistance to their commands is unlikely to occur. Under such conditions freedom cannot possible survive, for the eternal vigilance which is its necessary price is then wanting.

The decline of liberty which the world witnesses has been the inevitable result of the acquiescence of citizens.[1] It seems that Laski thought that it was such a marked feature of our society that he declares that a citizen who protests against injustice is notable. 'We are either amazed at his courage or indignant at his intrusion.' A price has been paid for this. "Our acquiescence in an 18 century view of freedom of contract enables American courts to deprive of essential leisure thousands of working men who might, otherwise, share in the gain as well as in the toil of living. Our refusal to believe that foreign affairs are our business not less than that of the men who sit in Washington and Westminister may well send the next generation, as it sent the last, to die on the battlefield."[2]

To evade the issue by insisting on the helplessness of the individual before authority is not acceptable to Laski. He points to the supreme example of Luther who challenged the very majety of Rome herself. He tells how Francis Place, in the face of an antagonistic government and an indifferent House of Commons, won for the English workers the right to combine for self-protection Nor is he without words of encouragement to the individual whom he calls upon to resist. He reminds him that his sense of injustice might be shared by others who would combine their efforts with his when they find one to take the lead. Moreover, he assures us that

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1. Dangers of Obedience, pp. 12-13
2. This seems to have been written with Spanish, Italian and Russian dictatorships in view.

that, though modern governments may be stronger than ever before, yet they ultimately depend upon the opinion of their subjects. The coercion they can use has a limit when used against a group of citizens who are struggling for a cause they believe in. The exemption of the Quakers in England and America is a 'tacit admission that where the state conflicts with another groups there are occasions when the state will find it wise to forego the claim of paramountcy.'.[1]

The claim of the state that its intentions are good should not have any influence on our judgment. What it is doing is more relevant than what it intends to do. For intentions alone do not make of an ideal an actual fact. The inquisition was driven by the noblest motives when it sent Galileo into prison.

Is this a doctrine of anarchy? Social peace will cease to exist when men are free to disobey when they disbelieve; and justice itself will not triumph where violence prevails.

Laski's answer implies, first, that revolution might be inevitable, and second, that the consequence of his plea will not cause chaos and disorder. Men will not normally resort to violent action on the slightest occasion. "We need not march out with machine guns because the income-tax inspector has assessed us wrongly." When they do, we may safely assume in most cases, that their action was the result of injustice. For to him, order and peace are not desirable in themselves, and what the individual owes to his state, as to any other association is the best judgment he is capable of. If the state fails to receive the import

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1. Dangers of Obedience, p. 15.

of our experience and judgment, its own will not be built on all the material available for it. Nor can the state substitute her own scheme of things for ours, and claim for it exclusive truth. In the social field, the exactness of the physical sciences is absent. Hence it is impossible to prove beyond doubt that a certain given creed is true and all others untrue. It simply follows that tolerance is fundamental. This view becomes more convincing if we try not to forget that much of what the past held, we consider inadequate. Is it not safe to presume that much of what we hold will be discarded in the future?

Basis of Federal Society: Laski, we have seen, condemns the supreme and omnipotent state with its theory of sovereignty as both unrepresentative of real society, and dangerous. In what direction, we are entitled to ask, does he find the basis of social reorganization? The answer to this question may be given in a few words. He is driven by the sheer logic of facts to the individual. This unit which cannot be completely fused with others is the basis of his reorganization scheme. It is, despite all its limitations of which he is fully aware, his supreme judge, and no authority that he could think of, is generally and inherently better qualified to assume that character. This, it seems to me, is the kernel of his pluralist society. This does not mean that the individual is an isolated being who is incapable of real social existence. It only means that it is in men as separate and distinct as well as men members of various groups through which they satisfy their wants, that the character of society is to be found.

That is the basis of his great desire to create a society for the individual channels of self-expression both as a separate unite and as a member in any association to which he may belong. That society has to be a federal society, not only in its territorial aspect, but also functionally. In it the individual as well as the group, will possess vital space necessary for self development free from the impositions and restrictions of a common superior whose decision they must ultimately accept. In it, again, no one group may enjoy preeminence over others. Each has to prove its case before its point of view is allowed to prevail.

Democracy did not Solve the Problem: It may be asked: Does not Democracy meet these conditions? Has it not secured freedom and equality for the individual? Has it not provided him with the means of making his will effective?

Laski denies that, save in a partial and limited sense, it has. He believes that democracy marked a protest against privilege, for those who were denied it found themselves excluded from benefit. It also represented the realization that a government representing one section of the community cannot fail to govern in its own interest and identify that interest with public good It was a simple conclusion that it was necessary to establish public control if the realization of common well being was to be attained.

What were the results of the movement? First, it brought the middle-class business men to power. Second, it abolished political privilege. Third, it brought about the major political freedoms generally enjoyed by men - universal suffrage, relatively wide liberty of speech, greater opportunities of political power for ordinary person.

But it did not go beyond that. Even these results are not as real as they impress us to be. Democracy answers that the ordinary citizen is interested in politics in which he is to take an active part. Actually, he is not interested, nor can he be so when he is confronted with the complex modern questions which characterize our society. These are of such a nature that renders him unfit to pass a valid judgment on them.

Neither should we be less aware of the defects of the parliamentary system. If we agree that it was originally meant to be a government of free discussion, we can easily come to the conclusion that it has not fully accomplished its task.

1. With the increase in the rigidity of party lives, the private member has lost his independence.
2. Debate has been subjected to limitation because business had to be done.
3. In addition to that the assemblies have been conjested with the great amount of work they have to do.

Reforms of these defects have not really proved successful. Direct government which has been put to the test largely in Switzerland, has no chance of being effective in large modern societies.

<u>No Social and Economic Equality</u>: Nor is this all. The freedom, and possibility of self-expression which democracy provides, is confined to the political aspect of life. In social spheres, primarily in its economic life, our institutions have remained oligarchic. Even the least searching examination, would reveal the great gaps which divide society; unequality is so powerfully enthroned that not all forms of slavery could be said to have

disappeared. And, we ought to keep in mind, that, to Laski, the absence of equality is interchangeable with the absence of liberty, and where liberty is not secure, civilization and a noble life become impossible to attain.

The main argument which he puts forward is that our present economic structure produces three evils which leave little space for individual creative freedom. First the ordinary man is not provided with enough education which is essential for an interested and enlightened judgment. Second the amount of work he is forced to do in order to earn a living is of such proportions that no leisure is left to him. Without that leisure he will not be free to distract himself from the depressing attachments of his immediate concerns to a wider and more elevated level, nor will it be possible for him to enjoy the fruits of the good life which we claim we want him to live. Third, the oligarchic control of industry by the owners of the means of production, which leaves to the men employed by them no share in management, helps to make these men mere routine workers void of any spirit of initiative and creative energy.

The truth is that the notorious inequality in the distribution of wealth, the bitter social differences, and the lack of mobility from class to class (perhaps not exactly true of U.S.A.) combine to prevent the liberation of individuality. For when men are struck with poverty and ignorance, their faculties lose their sharpness and their energies find no proper direction. Nor can we expect of men, under such conditions, to appreciate objects of high value for they will be satisfied with the crude in art and letters,

the brutal in sensual pleasures, the material and the vulgar in objects of desire. Such degradation is not only calamitous in itself, but it tends to make us believe that men, whose inferiority is caused by external forces and limitations, are inherently incapable of improvement. That, at least, has been the view of Aristocracies who saw in it their title to supremacy and the safeguard to their security.

Evils of Concentration of Power: The foregoing discussions throw light on his hatred of the concentration of power. Since the policy of laissez-faire was discarded, he observes, the state has increasingly taken upon herself functions which it formerly intrusted to private individual management. This fact has made worse the evil of the concentration of power. That evil is not confined, he wrote sometime before 1930, to the political field, but also to the economic and social. Even responsibility for thought had become concentrated. Not only does machine technology reduce craftsmen to a routine worker, but our press, education, and political parties have tended to deprive us of originality and initiative in work and thought. He observed how, in Russia, one creed is being inculcated into its people, and that the same process was true of Spain and Italy. The result of all this has been the destruction of the spirit of individual responsibility. Its dangers, he insisted, is not merely negative, but of a definitely positive character as well. "It 'corrodes the conscience, hardens the heart, and confounds the understanding' of those who hold power; it deadens in any state the impulses which make for the greatness of a civilization."[1]

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1. Foundations of Sovereignty, p. 86.

The foregoing, as we have seen, has been a repudiation of the supremacy of the state and its theory of sovereignty. But it is also the basis of an attack on the concentration of power and responsibility, and a plea for the reorganization of society in accordance with the federalism, territorially and functionally that is its essence. It will be my task, therefore, to set here the principles of the social organization which Laski believes is better fitted to our society, and more conductive to a better life and to progress.

The starting point is that the state, for practical purposes, is not more than a group of men who have its sovereign power in their hands. What we call the policy of the state is their policy, and its will, their will. We have no assurance that these men will represent the interests of the community as a whole. They may be biased. In fact, as history has shown, they have stood for the welfare of a certain class, and ruled in its interest. Moreover, their experience is limited. We cannot trust them with power that affects our lives, when our experiences have no weight on public decisions. No one can translate our experiences for us; they are personal and intimate. And because we cannot hope to find the infallible ruler, we have to depend on them and attempt to make them articulate to those who hold the power of decision. When our experiences find an enterpretation in the rules we have to follow, our life becomes more creative and our personalities of more value.

General Co-ordinating Authority: That is why Laski is anxious to deprive the state of its sovereign power. In exchange he permits it to possess a limited coordinating power. The point is

that he does not wish to destroy all authority in the state. Actually he admits the necessity of some ultimate power that nature of which will be revealed in the following discussion. Citizens, he maintains, have needs as citizens regardless of the group or association to which they belong. That is to say, they have common needs which must be provided for and satisfied. These needs do not belong to them as members of a club, or a church, or a trade-union, but as a general public. It is over this sphere that the state may preside. Education, for instance, falls in this category. The number of hours a man works decides whether he can remain a human being or not; and the income he receives, if allowed to fall below a certain minimum, will not permit him to live as a decent citizen. Of such matters the state may be in charge.

State Responsibility: But the government must also be responsible. That is an essential fact, for power tends to corrupt the noblest men and make them consciously or unconsciously, identify a narrow interest with public interest. This responsibility may be attained in three ways. First there should exist the means of dismissing it from power at stated convenient intervals. Second, responsibility is made effective by surrounding authority with as large a number of sources of organized consultation as possible. This will be able to use for the adopting of decisions effecting the groups concerned. In other words, various functions in society will be creatively conveying to the seat of coordinating authority their expert knowledge of which, otherwise, it would not have availed itself unless it chose to do so. In this way its policies and acts will not be autocratic in their basis and in the scope of

knowledge and wants on which they are built, but will tend to be the product of widest sources of induction open to the state. Third, to make responsibility real, it is fundamental that those who are to pass judgment upon the state should possess the means of making their judgment intelligent and effective. That requires, first, a certain minimum level of education below which citizens are not allowed to fall. Laski even goes to length of saying that no great difference in educational power ought to exist in society if people and not only one section of it, are to make their wills intelligent and articulate. Second, no vast disparity in economic power should be allowed to exist. Such power will enable its possessors to make their wills more effective than those who are deprived of it. The result is that the decisions of the state will be governed by only a small limited range of experience and wants whereas the vaster sources of knowledge and desire will go unrecognized. That, of course, is self-apparent. The man who has to worry about earning his living, who works most of his time, and who has a meager income, cannot hope to come into possession of the education and the mastery of the means of influencing the authority of the state in his favor. At least he cannot, in this context, compete with another man who is in a better economic position. Here it may be appropriate to point out that Laski is anxious to limit state power by certain individual rights. These rights appertain to the individual, not because he was endowed with them in a previous state of nature, but because experience has shown that without them it becomes impossible for him to reach the full stature of his personality, freedom of speech, education, and a minimum wage is essential if a man is not to degenerate to a level below that of an average human being

capable of appreciating and enjoying what is good and noble in life. That is why Laski says, "Any state which hope for permanency must at least abrogate the struggle for bread".[1]

Powers of other Associations: Yet other limitations are involved in this type of social organization. In our society a great variety of associations exist. These are not only territorial, but also functional. In addition to spatial units like New York, London, Berlin, there are other units built on different basis like the different churches, a legal profession, or a cotton industry. These have lives of their own, and men owe them allegiance in so far as they satisfy certain wants which they share in common. They are independent of the state; their title to existence is that they serve a purpose just as the state, in its own sphere, does In short, society is federal. Men are not only members of a state but also of a locality, or a club, or a church. Their interests are not only general, but also particular and different. The general interests and the effects of particular interests on them belong to the sphere of state authority, while the specific interests belong to the variety of organizations that have arisen to promote them. "No state" as Laski says, " in such a background, has the right to interfere with the dogmas of churches. The Roman Catholic Church, for example, may deny that all outside of its communion are deprived of their title to external salvation, but unless it acts, as with the Inquisition, upon the thesis that they are damned also in an earthly existence, that belief is outside the power of the state to alter."[2] Or again, it may mean

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 87.
2. Ibid., pp. 59-60.

that a town like Manchester can build and operate a local theater without the sanction of parliament. Or it may mean that the governing body of a mining industry, may impose on its constituents a pension scheme for miners even if a national scheme is in existence. That is to say, in matters that are a private concern to the particular association, the state may not interfere unless and in so far as it can show that general interests are involved.

We may ask now: How much power does Laski demand for such associations? It is not intended that they should possess the right to inflict corporal punishment upon their members. That is the feature which distinguishes them from the state. Yet "in their own sphere", they are "not less sovereign than the state itself with, of course, the implication that their sovereignty is similarly limited by the refusal or willingness of the individual member to accept their decision".[1] They may order their members to pay fines, they may inflict upon them spiritual penalties, and they may even deprive them of their membership, "Herein their power is, and ought to be, as original and complete as that of the state itself".[2]

Implied in what we have said above is the fact that social and industrial groups which we encounter in society should be organized for consultation. This will ensure that the government will be compelled to consult all those whose interests are affected, and not only those whose protest it chooses to deem important. The benefits of such a practice are more than one. The consulted group will become more familiar with the working of the government and its purposes. It will thus be in a better position to oppose or

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 60.
2. Ibid., p. 60.

support governmental measures affecting its life. Their expert knowledge of the facts pertaining to their sphere, and their better understanding of government work, will give its opinion more weight before the legislature and public opinion. It will of course be able to offer the government with expert knowledge pertaining to a particular measure and its probable working. As a result of all this government responsibility and sensitiveness to all legitimate demands are enchanced.

It is obvious that if experience and desires of associations are to have any weight, they must be consulted before decisions are made. In this way active consent becomes possible. The groups affected will find their opinions and judgment at least partly embodied in the decisions that effect them. They come to feel that they are taking an active part in finding solutions to problems that concern them. Their experience will have more meaning to them. Authority will cease to seem external but will become the instrument of transforming the widest range of knowledge and interest into action. They will not feel, as Laski said, what the Germans felt towards the Versaille agreement from the reaching of which these were barred, but will look upon decisions as solutions in the formulating of which they took part. This feeling will be enhanced considerably if decisions reached by the coordinating authority are of a general nature. For in this way the various associations will (and the assumption is that they are in a better position to do so) apply such decisions in the best way suited to their peculiar conditions. To give more clarity to what I have said I will quote Laski: "That means, I have urged, giving to those groups the means of prior

and organic influence with government before it pronounces upon the problems of coordination. It means weighing their opinions, seeking their criticisms, meeting their special needs. It means, further, allowing them responsibility in their own life, the responsibility which comes from power over their intimate affairs."[1]

In all the preceding arguments, the problem of consent is involved. They, it is apparent, do not imply a consent which is identical with mere acquiescence. Silence might be the result of fear behind which lurks force and coercion. Again silence might be the product, not of fear, but of indifference, or ignorance. That, according to Laski, is not true consent. My consent should be active in the sense that it must be the product of interest, intelligence, and the power to make my judgment articulate. If I have no interest, or if I do not take an active part in affairs that affect my life, my consent will fail to be of the proper type. If I do not have free access to educational sources and true information my judgment will not be intelligent. Again, if I am powerless to make my judgment known, if I cannot make it entitled to the same proportion of consideration as any other, then my consent will be empty. The new social organization as envisaged by Laski, will make active consent possible. It will give the individual the interest, the education, and the power, which are essential for its existence. If that is attained, authority will tend to seem less oppressive, less intrusive, less external. As our experience becomes more important, our interest will become greater, and the feeling of frustration which is prevailing over many of us will tend to disappear

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 280.

Chapter II

THE THEORY OF THE STATE

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Historically, the state has been, with the possible exception of the church, the greatest organization which has moulded the lives of men. For many hundreds of years, they have been subject to one or another of its forms. They have bent their necks under its yoke, or received its commands without much reflection, or, at times, were so deeply offended, that they chose violent resistance to its will rather than accept to be mere receipients of its orders. Yet that is simply an indication of its influence and power over their lives. For, even more than the church, the state has invariably extended its domain to include the greatest number of men, and has, not infrequently, refused to be content with theoretical lordship and general supervision over their lives, but shown how its interference could be minutely detailed and extensive. To use different words, it may be virtually regarded as a leviathan before whom the individual seems helplessly weak; and even great organizations look small and impotent.

That is why a study of the nature of the state is essential. Yet there is another reason. In the field of political science, the students are confronted with a variety of topics which they have to examine. The young student, like many other people, is brought into contact with such subjects as forms of governments, constitutions, dictatorship, and democracy. He must drew his conclusions and form his opinion. But that will be premature before he proceeds to an examinations of the nature of the state. That alone will make it possible to see the various problems brought together in a common perspective which is essential if they are to be adequately understood.

The problem of representation, to choose one example, cannot be properly comprehended without an understanding of the basis of democracy. That would mean an examination of the character of the state. Nor can dictatorship, to choose another example, be adequately judged before it is related to the theory of the state. This might be a common-place observation, yet it is a big discovery to the young student of political science.

An examination of the various concepts of the state reveals how deeply men differ on important issues. There has been, as a certain writer points out, as many concepts as thinkers. Some of these, no doubt, have been minor variations on a common theme, but there are others that defy any compromise. We cannot, for instance, work out into a harmonious system, the claim that the state is a welfare organization and the counter claim that it is only a power organization, by pointing out that these are different sides of the same picture, unless we introduce a third personal interpretation which, we must admit, is different from the first two. Nor can we indicate an important common bond between those who regard the state as a narrow class instrument of power and those who insist that it is the agent of the whole community, though that could be done, with some degree of success, in the case of such theories as the juridical, contract, and organismic which are not valuable in themselves except in so far as they throw light on certain aspects of the state and reveal certain aspirations as to what it should be.

Certainly, the difference has been partly the product of the impact of the state upon different men at different periods

of historical development, and partly of the various attempts to define the state as men actually saw it, on the one hand, and as it ought to be, on the other. Together with this, there is involved different methods of approach. An ethical or religious approach must lead to conclusions different from those to which a Machiavellan approach would. Nor is it likely that the historical method would produce a concept identical with a juridical or a philosophical outlook.

The test, which any concept of the state must undergo, is history. For any theory which claims to be more than a formula of what the state ought to be, has to be proved by historical facts. Any analysis that fails to reveal how the state has actually behaved and why, must remain defective. Aristotle, for instance, with all the authority behind him may tell us that the state is a union of families and villages whose purpose is a self-sufficient, happy and honorable life. Yet we will be entitled to draw upon historical knowledge to examine his claim. In similar manner, Hegel, with all his claims to greatness, could ascribe divinity to his state, yet we are free to test his assertions against practical experience, past and present. Nor are definitions by less famous authorities adequately revealing unless interpreted in the light of history. The Supreme Court of the United States may proclaim the state as "a political community of free citizens occupying a territory of defined boundaries, and organized under a government sanctioned and limited by a written constitution and established by the consent of the governed",[1] but that will not represent more than what certain men, at a certain period of its history, wanted

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1. Wilson, p. 52.

their American State to be. In similar fashion, those who tell us that the state is an organized community in which the will of a certain section of the people prevails over the wills of other sections, have to interpret to us their statement in terms that are historically revealing.

I am not attempting to show that the application of the historical test will ultimately reduce our competing concepts to one to which all men would hold. That would be a vain endeavour. It is a characteristic of human beings that even when given the same facts, they may draw different conclusions. Yet, it seems to me, history must be made the judge though different men will ascribe to him dissimilar and, at times, contradictory verdicts.

Laski's theory of the state is a philosophy of history. It is an attempt to describe the state as it has manifested itself from one period to another, to indicate the source of the various systems which men adopted and the general principles which they embodied, and to define the causes of change which have made society dynamic rather than a static. But before proceeding with its presentation, a brief discussion of the Idealistic Theory of the State, against which Laski's theory is a reaction, will probably furnish an appropriate setting in the light of which its various aspects will have a fuller meaning.

<u>The Idealistic[1] Theory of the State</u>: The state, the Idealists urge us to believe, is the embodiment of freedom and common good. Only by belonging to it, may we hope to realize what is best in life. In fact, the development of our capacities as human beings will be

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1. Idealistic here does not imply a Utopia, but a general political theory that can be traced back to Plato and which was expounded by Hegel, Bosanquet, and Green.

incomplete, vulgar, and brutish if we remain isolated individuals not bound together by a common existence of which the state is a final manifestation. In the same way that the family directs the impulses of men into fruitful channels in some aspects of their lives, so does that state provide the means whereby the wants and desires of men may be absorbed in what is real and noble. That is the basis of Bosanquets statement: "If you start with a human being as he is in fact and try to devise what will furnish him with an outlet and a stable purpose capable of doing justice to his capacities, you will be driven on by the necessity of the facts at least as far as the state."

The background to all this may be found in the doctrine of real will. The individual, roughly speaking, has an actual will and a real will. The former is variable, momentary, and selfish, whereas the latter conforms to a definite plan which is conductive to a real good in harmony with the recognized rights and wants of others. When the individual indulges in drinking or follows a line of conduct harmful to himself or to others, he is not obeying his real will, but a momentary and an unbalanced desire. For only those acts which conform to a certain permanent plan, which harmoniously weds the interest of one individual to the interests of others, could be ascribed to the real will. In this sense, the real will is identical with a good which is to be common to all. Only when we make ourselves its slaves are we free. Hence freedom is not the absence of external control, but submission to real will and common good. Liberty, that is to say, is not the freedom to do and act without limitations on impulses and desires, but to be ones real self as represented by the real will.

Nor is this all. By some queer magic, the common good is made identical with the state. In the same way that the family, for example, creates channels which provide men with noble objects of desire, and thus make them nearer their real selves, so does the state make it possible for them to find the path conductive to the fuller and richer development of their personalities. It alone can transform their apparently conflicting interests into a universal system of harmony - through which common good can be realized. When that is established everything else easily follows. The conflict between liberty and authority is rendered meaningless. When we obey the state, our freedom is not invaded, but, on the contrary, realized. Its laws & its orders, set the direction in which our real good lies. That, we are told, is the root of political obligation. The state is regarded as the incarnation of freedom and reason. This of course, presupposes the unity of society, but that, as we have seen, is one of the corner stones of the theory. Conflicts and disharmony are not real and perhaps, should be neglected. It is to the real unity in life that we are instructed to turn our attention if we are to grasp the essence of the state. That would be the basis of the answer which we would get if we stated the difficulties in the way of seeing that unity which T.H. Green, himself an idealist, indicates: "To an Athenian slave, who might be used to gratify a master's lust, it would have been a mockery to speak of the state as a realization of freedom; and perhaps it would not be much less to speak of it as such to an untaught and underfed denizen of a London yard with gin shops on the right and on the left." In other words, to the argument that the state has acted out of selfish motives, we simply receive the answer that men are capable of seeing the common good and common life which binds them together.

That is the back ground to the suggestion that we should approach the state with fear and trembling; for it is the store house of the experience of ages, and the keeper of the social order through which alone life could remain bearable and fruitful. Yet one strange concession is made. The individual may revolt. But this apparently contradictory admission, is bound by a number of qualifications. The individual should not be driven to act by selfish ends, and should be honestly and completely convinced that he represents the real and permanent interests of society better than those who happen to be its legal representatives. Moreover, he should be fully aware of the possibility of being in the wrong, and of the danger to the permanent values of social organization which his action would create.

That, in brief, is an outline of the theory. Laski's answer to it is a definite rejection. The mere admission, he points out, that the individual has the right to revolt, implies his duty to examine its acts and, ultimately, to pass judgment on them. Actually, the state as depicted by the idealists does not exist except in the realm of concepts. In the first place the real self is not only the real will. All desires and personal limitations of an individual, no matter how momentary and imperfect, are no less part of himself than any that make him the sharer of a universal plan which finds expression in the state. Nor is the unity on which the idealistic theory builds its claims accepted as true, for even when men share in the same experience they may emerge with different conclusions. From this follows the repudiation of the idealistic conception of liberty. The commands of the state, or its use of force, are not accepted as

leading to the freedom of the individual. To the revolutionist, as well as to many other people, compulsion is a denial of his liberty for the simple reason that he cannot see in it conformity to his real good or to the common good. In the second place, the idea of common good is fallacious. The idealist theory, Laski tells us, "grounds its defence of political obligation on the notion of a common good shared by all members of the community and realised through the state because in the latter is the institutional embodiment of the real will of all those members".[1] This notion really belongs to the realm of what the state ought to be and in no way represents states as they have actually existed He emphasises the fact that the state no matter what its announced intentions are, nor how influential it is, is not the judge of what is the common good, but it is what men, through their different or similar experience, find it to be. Common good, that is, is what the individual alone and in isolation, believes it to be. He, and not the state, is the interpreter of its nature.

The idealist theory uses another line of defence to support its claims. It asserts that the whole is more impotant than the part; national interest is superior to any other; and consequently those who represent it have a better claim to be obeyed than the representatives of other smaller interests. The negation of this argument is simple. It is admitted that the interest of all the members is superior to the demands of a few. Yet it has to be shown that the actions of the state are really in the interest of all. That cannot be proved by asserting that the intentions of the government are good, or just because they are government

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 60.

actions, for no matter how good its intentions are, no one can rightly claim that, 'government action is legitimate, because it is government action.' To do so would be to confuse the ideal purposes of the state and the actual policy of governments. And there is no reason why their policy or judgment should necessarily be superior to ours.

The actual state has ~~not~~ never represented a unity. The mere fact that revolutions have repeatedly occurred proves this contention. Those who revolted, no matter how cruel and bloodthirsty they are pictured to us, found that the power of the state was used to maintain a system which denied them the gain to which they felt entitled. The state, to them, was not an organization which stood for the welfare of the whole community, but only for a certain section of it. They failed to see the unity which the idealist theory claims to be the essence of society, and were forced to follow the verdict of their own judgment. In fact, even if we admit that there exists a universal system of common good, our problem will not be solved. Unless we claim infallibility to ourselves, how could we impose our concept of common good on others who have a different concept from the one we hold? And how could it be shown that the real interest of society is manifested in the acts and policies of successive governments through whom we encounter the state? These are question to which the idealists do not give a satisfactory answer.

<u>Laski's Theory of the State</u>: It is in sharp contrast to the idealist theory that an understanding of Laski may be found. On all essential points, he holds opposite views which are beyond any compromise with its doctrines. Hence, it is with this in mind that we approach the analysis of his thought.

To avoid misunderstanding, a definition of the basic notions with which he is dealing will be first attempted. To begin with, society and state are made two distinct conceptions. The former is "a group of human beings living together, and working together for the satisfaction of their mutual wants".[1] These wants are primarily economic, but they are also cultural, religious and domestic. In this sense, society may include the people of the whole world, but for a number of reasons, historical and geographic[2] the societies with which Laski is concerned, in this context, are such as France, England, and Russia[3] each of which is seperated from the other by political, psychological, and linguistic traditions. To him, then, the idea of society does not involve power and organized coercion. In society, the people live and work together; they have common wants which they cooperate to satisfy. Yet, so far, the idea of the state does not come in. It is only when such a society "is integrated by possessing a coercive authority legally supreme over any individual or group which is part of the society" that the state emerges. This definition of the state makes it synonymous with final coercive authority which the state employs to regulate the activity of individuals and groups belonging to it. That authority is what we term Sovereignty. It is the attribute which distinguishes the state from other associations. These may have an organization which divides them into a group that issues orders and another that receives them, yet such a power to issue orders is not sovereign power because it does not extend to other individuals or groups outside the particular organization. Such a description

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 20
2. Ibid. p. 20.
3. Because for political purposes, the world is divided into states which divide it into many politically organized societies.

of the sovereign power of the state is simply formal. In the words of Laski himself, "It says nothing of the wisdom or the justice that may or may not be inherent in the will of the state; it only says that the state is supreme over all other forms of association because it is formally competent to bind them to obedience; but neither unwisdom nor injustice makes any difference to the formal legal right of the state to exact and enforce obedience to its orders".[1] This statement might not sound natural to those who have read Laski's insistant demand that we should allow our society to be federal and discard the forms of unreal unity together with the unnecessary notion of legal sovereignty. But the explanation to it is to be found in the fact that he is, for the present, concerned with the state as it has existed.

The next question to be asked is how does the state use its sovereign power? In other words how does the citizen encounter the state in its capacity as sovereign? The answer to this question involves a body of men who acts as the agent of the state, namely, the government. In political science we are told to distinguish between state and government, between the master and the agent. Sovereign power is an attribute of the former; the latter wields it in its name and receives a definition of its sphere of action from it. Once the agent oversteps the limits, he may be called to account by the state. Hence the government is distinct from and responsible to the state. The idea of a responsible government is the offspring of a desire to replace arbitrary discretion by the rule of law, or it may be regarded as an attempt to limit the actions of government channels that are

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1. State in Theory and Practice,. p. 22.

conductive to the achievement of the purposes of the state. But, to Laski, the distinction is, for practical purposes, only theoretical. The acts of the state that affect us are in reality government acts. Even the laws which are supposed to be the expression of the will of the state, receive their substance and effect from the government, and to say that the government itself gets its authority from the law, is a denial of the fact that "law after all, is only a body of words until men give it the substantiality of enforcement". Again, to claim that the government gets its power from consent, is not to state the whole truth. There are states the governments of which no one could seriously maintain to rest on the consent of the subjects.

Therefore, in true revolutionary fashion, Laski believes that, in the last analysis, 'the state is built upon the ability of its government to operate successfully its supreme coercive power.' Such a contention is apparently conflicting with the facts of life. The state or the government, it will certainly be claimed, does not make a daily display of its physical power to force people into submission, nor do citizens obey the commands of the state for the sole reason that they are constantly aware of its possession of that power and its ability to use it. There are many who obey the government without the slightest feeling of the impact of force on their behavior, and others who find in the orders of the government and identity with their interest and the interest of society as a whole. Yet actually, Laski is here concerned with critical moments when the will of a group comes into open conflict with the will of the state. Whereas its supreme power

may normally fall into the background, and in some cases be of minor importance, at such moments upon it depends the outcome of the issue. In his words the argument receives a forceful clarity. "...at any critical moment in the history of a state the fact that its authority depends upon the power to coerce the opponents of the government, to break their wills, to compel them to submission, emerges as the central fact in its nature".[1] That is to say, the power of the state ultimately, depends upon its armed forces. Hence, those who control these armed forces are the virtual sovereigns of society. That, in the history of England has been the cause of the jealousy of a standing army, and the effort of the conservatives, during the Home Rule Bill crises, to undermine the loyalty of officers to the liberal government. That, again, explains why, in June 1934, Hitler was compelled to purchase the support of the Reichswehr at its own price; He new that his sovereign power has no meaning if the force of the army was not harnessed to its service.

The foregoing analysis creates the impression that Laski makes of the state a purely power system. Yet that is not what he wants to make it. He does not mean to say that the state deliberately stands for narrow interests nor to pass any ethical judgment on it. It is just a statement of the ultimate force which the state has behind its will. That, whether consent is habitually operative or not, is, at a time of major conflict, is physical force. And, strange enough, Laski even tolerates that force. "I should even agree that the possession of this power is at once the condition of the states survival on the one hand, and the guaranteedof law and order upon the other."[2]

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1. State in Theory and Practice, pp. 26-27
2. Ibid., p. 30

The evils of the anarchy of the Wars of the Roses and the religious wars in France, were in his mind when he said so. We should not, however, regard that as representative of Laski's thought for, as we shall see later, it is only an indication of his realizations of the necessity of the concentration of power for the maintenance of peace and class domination as contrasted with his deep distrust of that very concentration of power which, to him, is a denial of freedom.

Many theories have been formulated to explain the history of mankind; why men lived as they did, and moved from one stage of development to another. They endeavoured to reveal the cause of historical change and the force behind events. According to one theory, we should turn to the will of God to find the motive behind every thing; the lines of men, the struggles of nations, their distress and triumph. In that will is formulated the decision as to what course events have taken and will take. It alone is the possessor of the secret of why men lived in different societies ranging from simplicity and brutality of stone age society to our own complex, but no less brutish and fierce age of 20th century civilization; of why nations rose to the heights of glory, declined, perished and gave way to others. And of course, that will, being the will of God, is no less ostensible and explorable than Hegel's interpretation of history as the March of the Absolute which, though it might be a revelation of the truth about historical development, yet keeps us in the dark unable to discern the dynamic factor precipitating the struggle between the thesis and its antithesis. Nor is the theory of climatic changes more useful or more convincing. Its mere failure

to explain the drastic differences which manifest themselves under the same or similar climatic conditions, is enough for its repudiation. The history of European states since the early struggle for democracy to the present day, is a glaring illustration of its grave shortcomings. A third theory seems to be more convincing than the one I have already alluded to. It postulates that history may be read as the biography of great men. Their ambitions, their deeds, their successes and failures, have given the world its present shape. The power of this argument is felt by any one who has examined the influence of great men on the lives of people. A man like Napoleon has certainly left the marks of his powerful personality on the face of Europe, and there are ~~certainly~~ those who would unhesitatingly say that the future of the world depends upon the wills of a few men like Hitler, Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. Yet further examination might show how, even these men, with their undeniable contributions for good or evil, have been themselves governed by more powerful forces which, in a general sense, have regulated their lives and set the limits within which their activity may find expression. At times one cannot but feel the driving force of fate which seems to be imposingly pointing the way which we are doomed to follow. The prophets, to take one example, with all the divine power that many of us may ascribe to them, have most undoubtedly failed to make men live in the spirit they preached to them; and no power of any man, no matter how great will, will successfully keep a nation convinced of its unity indefinitely where that society is divided into those who receive its benefits and those who are denied them.

To none of these theories does Laski hold; it is to a statement of Marx that we may turn to find the basis of his position.

In the communist manifesto, Marx states, "That in every historical epoch the prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which is built up, and from which alone can be explained, the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently the whole history of mankind..... has been a history of class struggles, contests between exploiting and exploited, ruling and oppressed classes;..."[1] If we add to that, as marxists do, that the state is the instrument by which the dominant class maintains its own order of things, we will have a general outline of Laski's theory of history and the state. In his own words we have a concised statement of what Marx said: "The basic factor in any given society is the way in which it earns its living; all social relations are built upon provision for those primary material appetites without satisfying which life cannot continue."[2] The culture, beliefs, and institutions of any society are simply a reflection of how wants are satisfied. Education,established laws, forms of architecture and literature, the character of our sciences, in fact the basis of every thing that is part of our civilization, are the offspring of productive relationships. And when there occurs a change in the mode of production and economic positions a readjustment of the social structure becomes inevitable. Our beliefs, our organizations, even our religious outlook, are accordingly modified. In fact it is the alteration in the economic mode of living that marks the historical development from one level of existance to another; from a slave owning society to a serf society, and finally, to a labor exploiting society. It is the cause of thdifference between the life

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1. Communist Manifesto
2. State in Theory and Practice, p. 100.

of men before the industrial revolution and after the industrial revolution. To it we should turn for an explanation of why men acclaimed democracy and built great hopes on it at one period, and why, at a later period, they began to doubt its adequacy to solve the vital problems of their day. By the use of its magic we are able to determine the cause of the fall of Tsarist Russia and the establishment of a Soviet régime that frankly avows itself to the interests of the proletariat, and the impetus behind the rising tide of Fascism which is built on a completely antagonistic theory.

That such an interpretation of history is repugnant to many, is certain. It, these claims, reduces the human personality to a little more than a slave to material forces that shape the lives men have to live. It has been described as a philosophy which makes "belly loyalty" the only basis of human achievement. All that is noble, becomes ugly. Morality, religion, sacrifice and love, are profaned and mutilated by the mere assertion that they emanate from material necessities. The discovery and the invention are made the masters of life. Human effort, the search of men for a better life tend to become hollow and empty. The hope and the conviction that men are capable of rising above material interests and narrow class antagonisms are destroyed. The portrait of a society in which men are seeking to find the means of a reasonable existence and of a fair distribution of the fruits of society; a society where sacrifice of private interests is possible and where men control their destinies, is torn to pieces. To say the least, man is belittled and his achievement is made irrelevant.

We certainly feel offended by all these implications. Our human pride is deeply touched when we are reminded that materialism is our master and that all human values obtain their substance, if not their origin, from the vulgar formula of earning a living. In protest, we may point out that other social and religious factors have immensely influenced the world. A Christian will certainly claim that the spread of Christianity cannot be explained on the basis of how we produce our necessities. A Moslem cannot ascribe to material forces the wonderous achievement of transforming the Arabs from a group of divided and relatively humble tribes, to the proud masters of a great empire. We may also argue that nationalism, and the different developments of nations in terms of time, their rise and fall, cannot be fully accounted by resorting to materialism. Any one living in this part of the world, can see that different sects have different customs, different beliefs, and different ideals; in fact they live, it may be asserted, different lives. Yet they live in one country and have been governed by the same economic forces. That is a forceful denial of the exclusiveness of the economic factor in history.

But Laski does not deny the existence of other factors. What he claims is that they find their limitations and effect in a framework set by the economic basis of society. It is on this basis that they are built and colored. Their meaning and shape are determined by its superior force. That truth of that, it seems to me, is undeniable. Our beliefs and ideals will remain irrelevant until they are applied to our actual life; and actual life is directly related to our material achievement. Our notions about noble sacrifice, about service, and morality have to be re-

lated to material objects from which they actually get their character. Religion may emphatically assert that all men are equals and brothers, yet there will never exist the possibility of their ever becoming so until the material conditions required for that realization become available.

A society in order to live as a society, must attempt to maintain a certain order. In order to do that force is needed. The will of individuals is irrelavent to the order maintained. In fact very little change within that order takes place. Studies in social mobility (Laski claims) have definitely proved that men of one class, like slaves, wage earners, employers, remain in the same class from one generation to another. When a shift from one class to another take place, it is individual and not general in character. The only way to bring about change on a large scale is through a revolution or a drastic transformation of the life of society at a certain time. It is against such a threat that society needs an instrument. "This instrument, historically has been the state."[1] Its function is to make possible the peaceful working of the processes of the life of society, namely, the process of production. Hence it has to maintain and protect the existing system of economic relationships involved in it. The result is the building up of a legal system, sanctioned by force, which embodies the implications and requirements of those relationships.

But when a state functions, it does so through its agent, the government. This latter body, exercises the sovereign power

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 110

of the state to determine how the fruits of the productive forces are to be distributed. When any alteration of the process of distribution is to be affected, the sovereign power of the state has to be acquired either peacefully or by violence.

How does the group in possession of sovereign power use it? We may say that its aim will be the maximum satisfaction of wants. But what determines the method it uses for the realization of that aim? The answer is its economic position. "In a slave owning society, slave-owners will think that slavery is for the good of the whole society and they will use the state to enforce the relations which a slave-system necessitates."[1] The different economic positions of men, create different conceptions of good; and these in turn determine in what direction state power will be used. This is the basis of the struggle of groups with different concepts. Each economic group has its own outlook relative to its economic standing in society. Whenever we have a number of such groups, we have a relative number of contending principles. That in the words of Laski is inevitable. "In any society, therefore, in which there are groups whose relation to the productive process is fundamentally different, conflict is inherent in the foundations of that society."[2]

Such an analysis is objectionable to some of us. It makes men's thoughts and ideals the automatic product of their economic class. Their systems of values become incidental to their selfish interests. It implies that men are incapable of sacrifice

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1. State in Theory and Practice, pp. 111-112
2. Ibid., p. 112.

for common objects of good; that they are unable to see beyond their class boundaries and reasonably share in the constructive work of building up and maintaining a life of common good to all classes.

Yet, if that is the truth about us, we should accept it despite all the bitterness it contains. Men are not united when they simply declare that they stand for common good and the interest of society as a whole. They are not one when they utter their deep concern for all human beings regardless of creed, race, or class. The test of their unity should lie in an examination of their respective interpretations of what constitutes common-good, and in their various programmes for its realization. Even that might not be adequate. Their announced intentions and aims do not always uncover their real aims and the true implications of their attitude. It is characteristic of men that they do not honestly or dishonestly stop short of identifying their own interests with common interests and proclaim them to the world as such.

That is the import of Laski's thought. To him the value system that finds actual expression, is that of the group which controls the state. He does not mean that such a group consciously identifies its own private interest with common good, nor that it is dishonest in attempting to express its idea of what the state should do, in universal terms. The English revolution claimed itself to be the struggle for the defence of constitutional principle and protestant religion; but under the cover afforded by such claims was the fact that a semi-feudal state founded upon divine right of kings was not compatible with the insistance of the trading classes to get a share in the exercise of state power.

Nor did the French Revolution of 1789, though stamped as a fight for universal principles of right, achieve more than the freedom of the owners of property against a system of privileged landed aristocracy. The simple truth is that the ideals of a man are strongly colored by his environment. It is from there that he obtains his experience. The principles and beliefs which he comes to hold are moulded by emotions, fears, and hopes which pertain to his environment and influence him without being conscious of the process. To a Moslem of Mecca, as to a child brought up in Catholic traditions, their respective values and dogmas are honestly not the subject of the slightest examination. A boy brought up in Russia or Germany is in no different position. When any one transcends the limits of his environment, he is a rarity.

But the limits of traditions are transcended. Slavery was natural in one age; it became inhuman in another. Women were inferior to men, but now such a position is not acceptable. In the 17th century state interference was the normal practice, in the 18th it was attacked. What is the explanation? "The thesis for which I am arguing here is that they are caused by changes in social relationships which, in their turn, are caused by changes in the material forces of production."[1] This is Laski's answer. When by means of slavery those forces cannot be adequately exploited, men cease to find it natural. Rights of women are recognized when such recognition helps to use them for further production. Even education formerly a private concern, becomes a matter of state concern as soon as industry demands workers who know how to read and write."[2] That, incidentally, is the basis of the coincidence bet-

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 114.
2. Ibid., p. 118

ween periods of rapid change in the method of production and periods of rapid change in the social structure of society. When no change occurs in the method of production, the period involved is one of relative stability.

When a change in the method of production occurs, the existing relations of productions become inadequate. The legal structure built on them hinders the emergence of new ones. Some group in society becomes convinced that the old social structure which was once considered natural, is no longer acceptable. But behind the old order stands a group of men with sovereign power. Unless it, for some reason, is willing to allow the change, the group calling for it will have first to attain control of the state in order to use its coercive power. That may, if changed is denied, take the form of revolution; the group standing for social reconstruction would assume a revolutionary character to attain, if it can, its goal.

That is a picture of a society divided into contending economic classes. The unity of which the idealistic theory speaks, is replaced by the unities of group against group. Their separate interests are the guiding forces in their demands and expectations. Compromise seems to be impossible, for each will refuse to recognize any claims except its own. Points of conflict loom larger than points of agreement, and collusion is inevitable. Yet some may call upon the state to put an end to this intolerable situation. They would argue that it represents the whole community and stands for its peaceful working and the promotion of its common interests. The state, in other words, is to be the judge of the various claims; it is its duty to discern the common elements of good and discard the conflicting elements of discord. Its verdict will uphold the

justifiable points on each side, thus unity and the peaceful functioning of society are restored.

This argument presupposes the neutrality of the state. It raises it above the heat of the struggle. But is this a valid presupposition? Laski emphatically denies it. The state is never neutral; it does not stand above the contending groups, nor can it pass an impartial judgment. "By its very nature, it is simply coercive power used to protect the system of rights and duties of one process of economic relationships from invasion by another class which seeks to change them in the interests of another process".[1] For what is a state after all? It is a body of men attempting to keep in existence a certain order which they deem good. In their choice of that order, they are biased by the position they occupy in the society. To permit a change, they have to give up their hold upon the power of the state. This, if not actually impossible, has rarely occurred in history.

There are inferences, we are reminded, that do not follow from the preceeding line of arguments. In the first place, technical development, though important, is not the only impetus to social change. In fact it is largely governed, in a society like ours, by social needs. The only inventions that are exploited are those, which bring profit, an essential motive in our economic system. In the second place, it is not to be understood that the state is always subordinated to private advantage. Some statesmen have been as sincere as their critics who accused them of every crime and evil intention, yet the essence of the problem is the competition between ideals for survival. Their strength depends upon their power to exploit the productive potentialities at a

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 118.

given time. But their source is the difference between classes. Whenever the expectations of one class and the rewards it is receiving from the existing system become very wide apart from each other, that class will inevitably demand an alteration of the system. In the third place, it is very important to note that it is not claimed by Laski that the economic factor is the only factor affecting our lives. Personality, tradition, and logic, have their marked effects upon society. "The English habits of freedom, for example, make resistance to dictatorship much more feasible than resistance in Russia where there were not such habits."[1] A capitalist dictatorship in America, which may arise out of the threat of the working classes to capitalist ownership, would suffer from the deep seated American democratic tradition. Men like Luther, Napoleon, and Lenin have certainly caused a difference in our lives. Moreover, there is no doubt that, in the realm of law, jurists have followed the requirements of consistency independently of economic imperations. In fact there is a reciprocity of influence between the factors of change.

The pluralism of historical causation is not a denial of primacy of the economic forces. The part that other factors play depends upon the environment the nature of which is the product of its system of economic relations. The possibilities of what great men may achieve and the major premises upon which legal systems are built are defined by these relations. "Any one can see", Laski points out, "how the requirements of the new economic relationships of Russia have broken the tradition of the dreamy, mystic, pessimistic slav who was our 'stereotype' from the previous century of its history; how also, its art, its literature, its philosophy, are in

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 180.

process of slow adjustment to what is implied in the new economic nexus".[1] Lenin's opportunity, he adds, to alter the history of the world did not come to him before the break down of the social system maintained by Czarist Russia.

Like Marx, then, Laski believes in an economic interpretation of history. In the same way he believes that history may be viewed as a series of struggles between classes that are created by their positions relative to the economic structure of their society. When the system built on that structure prevents the further expansion of the forces of production, a conflict follows. The reason is that some class or classes would find themselves deprived of the means of fulfilling their desires. They would demand a change; and gradually new beliefs and principles, a new ideology hostile to the old one, is developed. The class in power would first attempt to check the tide of criticism; then it would offer concessions but as they would come late, they will not be satisfactory. Actually their price will be so alarming to the ruling class that it would seek to keep itself in power by their cancellation.

At this stage we may ask: Is class antagonism real? Is it not the fault of the government that it fails to see the real unity of interest in society? In a society like ours, can't we establish better wages by permitting production and profit to increase? Laski is not prepared for a compromise. Like Marx, he is convinced that the class divisions are inherently real. To both, the development of capitalist industry divides society into two great hostile camps, a bourgeoisie which owns the instruments of production and uses the power of the state to protect the benefits of its position, and a proletariate whose only means of living is

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 121.

the sale of its labor and is thus in a very disadvantageous position especially when capitalism ceases to expand. The outcome of this intolerable situation is the struggle of the working class for the alteration of their position together with the existing social structure. For, in reality, when the means of production are in the hands of a small class, its interest in total social production is different, as far as the problem of distribution is concerned, from the interests of the rest of the non-owning community. The main object of our small possessing class is profit, and as total production is limited, the more there goes in wages the less there will be left in profit, rent and interest for it. We are, that is to say, dominated by profit. Wages and even employment are determined by its requirements. Under capitalism, when the inability to make profit will either mean more unemployment or a reduction in wages. The glaring implication of all this is that in a society characterised by the private ownership of the means of production, there is a basic antagonism between the interest of capital and labor.

It may be pointed out that, in our society, other social and economic antagonisms exist. Their competition and interaction do not seem to produce the same results ascribed to the conflict between labor and capital. Coal miners and owners of oil, railroads and motor transport, the private shop keeper and the cooperative society, compete, but still exist side by side. Why is it that these have not destroyed each other though their interests are apparently as antagonistic? What is the difference between their antagonisms and the rivalry between capital and labor? The dif-

ference lies in the ownership of the instruments of production. That is the great handicap of the worker. He does not have a share in the control of those instruments. On the other hand, unlike the non-owning class whose position is permanent, the other social rivalries are not enduring and may be removed. Of two competing capitalists, one may disappear, or combine with the other. That is also true of trade unions. Nor can a conflict between churches mean the permanent exploitation of one class by another. "The distinction, which is ultimate, between all other social antagonisms and that between capital and labour is that the resolution of the latter can be achieved only by an alteration of those postulates"[1] (of capitalist society).

Again, it may be argued that the conflict in many states is not sharp and selfish. The various classes, it is asserted, show a real concern for the solution of the common problems of their society, and have not become convinced that the only way out of the crises is a bloody class war. The many public services which the state has undertaken, from a convincing proof that it represents the interests of the community as a whole and not the selfish demands of its ruling class. The new methods of taxation that call upon the wealthy much more heavily than upon the poor, and the various social schemes which provide benefit and protection for the workers, are very remote from narrow class blindness. Nor is the fact that the American socialist party has only a small following despite the intensity of the economic crises and the worries of the millions of unemployed in the country, without its meaning.

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p., 127.

But all that, to Laski, is not an acceptable refutation of the existence and the inevitability of class struggle. In any society which is characterised by division of labor and the private ownership of the means of production, conflict is certain to be the rule. When the expectations of one class are greater than the gains they are realising, they will become class conscious and ultimately become openly hostile to the existing social order. That the struggle may be retarded, is a fact. There are a group of factors that may postpone the inevitable clash. The political maturity of the people (though this may be traced to economic organs) and the quality of their government are, no doubt, of considerable weight in that direction. The influence of religion may help to make people less inclined to think of their hard lot and misery and accept things as they are, whereas racial differences actually distract their attention away from the immediate economic issues. There is no doubt that the traditional American principles and notions, block the way to socialist convictions. For The humble American who has been taught that opportunities are open to all, that present conditions are only temporary, that his son may become a successful business man or climb to the highest offices of the state; in short that he is basicly the equal of others. It is hard, for a time, to regard himself as a member of an oppressed, dispossessed class who will sink deeper and deeper down in the social scale. Such a person will not readily think of his problems in socialist terms. That he will some day be forced into it, seems to me to be the natural outcome of the present capitalist system.

Moreover, a society that is expanding economically does not suffer from the strain of class struggle. At such a stage

opportunity and achievement are wide. Men concentrate their attention on the possibilitee open before them. Those who do not have are lulled by the apparent nearness of attainment. But when the economic expansion comes to an end, hopes are shuttered; ambition is replaced by the dim realization of the injustice and the inadequacy of the existing order. A revolutionary spirit urges higher and higher seeking an outlet in a new society.

Laski's Theory of the State is a Marxian Theory. It regards the state as a power instrument exercised in the interest of a dominant class. The unity of society on which the idealistic theory is built, is a unity maintained and enforced by one section of the community in accordance with its own conceptions of good. Real common good is a subject that belongs to the realm of conceptual analysis. In actual life it is moulded by the relative position which we hold in society. Generally men belonging to the same economic class have common ideas of good that are different from the beliefs held by men belonging to a different class. That each ascribes universality to its own values seems to be inevitable. The honesty or dishonesty of the rulers does not alter the conclusions.

The implications of this theory are certainly grave. It reveals the nakedness of the class struggle, and predicts its inevitability. It shows how men resort to force and violence when the issues at stake are of a serious character to them, and it insists that men who are dispossessed in a society which can produce plenty, will not accept their lot silently for long. Protests of good intentions, and relative improvement on what had

existed before, will not give them permanent satisfaction. Their expectations are of primary importance in this context. It is what they believe can be attained that sets the limits to their dissatisfaction and struggle against the existing order. When the change they desire is checked, they will resort to violence. That is not to say this will succeed. If they succeed, a new order will be established; if they fail, slavery under a dictatorship will be the decree of fate.

To refute the theory, one has to show that, at certain periods of history, economic power was divorced from political power. One has to show that the rulers of a certain society did not rule in the interest of the dominant economic class, and that the impact of its laws was equally beneficial on all its members regardless of class alignment. It is not enough to show that the state has been an instrument in the hands of families contending for power, nor in the hands of racial group or religious sect endeavouring to establish its hegemony over other racial groups or religious sects. That this has been one of the functions which the state has performed is certainly true, yet it is no negation of the fact that, underneath all the relatively petty rivalries, the state has been an economic class instrument exploited by the dominent group until conquered by another economic group that, in turn, makes it his instrument for the establishement of an order built on its own conception of good, and, in fact, relative to its own interests.

Laski is not unaware of several points of attack against his analysis of the nature of the state. He knows that some

people will claim that history has been marked by an attempt to creat things better than what preceeded them, and may be considered as the record of the promotion of an ideal. Statesmen, as could be easily shown, have been found who devoted all their energies to the service of the public. It is unfair to accuse them of being the promoters of narrow interests. The justice which the law affords to all, and the servides which the governments have been performing in the interest of their respective communities, are indications against the mastery of class interests. During the last century, the lot of non-owning classes has definitely improved due to the development of a more sensitive social conscience. Much of that has been attained through legislation to protect their interest by interfering in spheres that previously belonged to private enterprise and profit-making. The Factory Acts, Workmen's Compensation, limitations of hours of work clearly show the will of the state to subordinate private profit to common good.

Laski does not deny the attainment of some improvement. But he insists that what has been achieved has been dearly fought for by those who now benefit from them. "It took over sixty years of hard effort to establish in England the idea that the state should be responsible for the elementary education of its citizens".[1] It is true that limitations on the hours of labor exist, "but, to take only certain obvious instances, the position of shop assistants, domestic servants, and agricultural laborers remain profoundly unsatisfactory." On the problem of allowing the unemployed to survive, he proceeds to say, "We maintain the unemployed at a certain level of subsistence by unemployment insurance and public assistance; but their own account of the life this main-

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 171.

tenance makes possible ought to leave no observer without an acute sense of discomfort."[1]

Nor does the growth of social conscience receive the praise some of us might expect. To him, it has been the product of the glaring evils of the system and the struggle of the nonpossessing classes. We cannot build much hope upon its power; the capitalists are willing to grant some concessions, but not more.

Finally, even equality before the law, Laski believes, is not a proof of satisfactory achievement. Law, in its general principles, is the legal expression of the principles of a dominant economic system. In this context, therefore, the legal side of law is unimportant. What counts is what that law stands for. It is true that certain sections of the law, such as commercial law and procedure are not the product of class struggle, yet other sections, such as law of seditions, adequately reveal how law is harnessed to the protection of the order of a particular system. Instances which support this argument are not lacking. The attitude of courts in cases in which trade-unions are involved, shows clearly that they act on the assumption that the trade-unions threaten the capitalist society. Moreover, equality before the courts, loses much of its meaning because of the existence of financial hindrances. It is still a problem to the poor to meet the financial requirements of an action in the courts. There is nothing in this that doubts the honesty of judges or lawyers. The relevant fact is that they have to follow the implications of principles set for them by the capitalist system. In addition it is worthy to observe that the lawyers usually belong to the property owning class, and that judges are largely chosen by the executive on the basis of their general attitude towards capitalist assumptions.

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1. State in Theory and Practice, p. 172.

Chapter IV

LIBERTY

Nature of Liberty:

Liberty, to Laski, is the existence of those conditions which enable men to realize what is best in them. Thus a state which is sensitive to the demands of personality in its development to full stature is one which confers freedom upon its subjects. It permits them to communicate their intimate personal experience so that it may be known and examined. It guarantees, that is, that the decisions of its government are not based on some exclusive source of interest and opinion, but on the widest possible knowledge possessed by its members. For, otherwise, any liberty maintained will be enjoyed by that section alone whose opinion influences the decisions of the state. Liberty, again, is the absence of restraint: There ought not exist externally imposed prohibitions upon the power of men to choose their own way of life. If such limitations exist, they will become unfree.

This conception of liberty, as Laski admits, is a negative one. Yet we should not misunderstand its implications. For he does not mean that men will be happier the more completely restraints are absent. In fact he makes it clear that some limitations on individual freedom is necessary if liberty is to be made a fact. He does not hold that regulations should be abolished in order to maintain liberty, but believes that the social gregariousness of men makes it imperative that they should be limited by some common rules. Man in this world does not live isolated from others. His activities are largely interwoven with those of others, and they live a life which is, though separate and intimate in certain aspects, common at many points. In this sense a prohibition of driving a car before

having passed a certain examination, or requirements to observe certain hygenic rules by meat sellers, or an effective check on the impulses of some men to commit murder, cannot be considered a threat to our liberty. Nor is it different to compel parents to educate their children. For, as Laski says, "Historic experience has evolved for us rules of convenience which promote right living; and to compel obedience to them is a justifiable limitation of my freedom."[1]

Nor does Laski omit to say that another limitation is essential. The freedom of an individual should be conceived in terms of the same freedom of others. For where some are free while others are not, there is no real freedom. Such limitations, of course, are a limitation of liberty regarded as the absence of restraint, but they are justifiable because they do not conflict with the ends which liberty seeks to attain. One point, in this connection, Laski wishes to make clear. The justification of such compulsion is not to be found in the fact that it is ordained by the power legally competent to issue it. The legal source of a limitation is no adequate proof of its justice. A government may be invading freedom while it is declaring that its decision seeks the realization of common good. That, Laski tells us, was the case when the non-conformists were excluded from full political privilege, and that was the experience learnt from the combination acts of 1799-1800 which destroyed the liberty of the workers. In this context, liberty is not the observance of rules. These, if they are not to be forcibly imposed, should be such as men can, in general, abide by and accept. "Myself", Laski writes, "is too distinct from other selves to accept a given order as good unless I feel that my will is embodied in its substance."[2]

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 14
2. Ibid., p. 145

Some restraint, such as payment of the income tax or the lighting of lamps of motor-car at night, one has to endure. "Where restraint becomes an invasion of liberty is where the given prohibition acts so as to destroy that harmony of impulses which come when a man knows that he is doing something it is worth while to do."

Certain conditions, according to Laski, are essential for the preservation of liberty. With these I shall deal later. At present I shall concern myself with the presentation of that condition which is, he insists, vital if the other mechanical contrivances for the maintenance of freedom are to have any value. I am refering to the determination of men in society to make those contrivances work, and to resist any encroachment upon their freedom. Such a function, it is obvious, implies vigilance and examination. Men have to pass judgment on the working of their institutions and the decisions of their government. All that, of course, requires an essential condition - freedom of the mind. The individual faces the state. He expects it to help him become happy. He thinks of it in terms of the response it offers to his needs. It is from this direction that he gets his experience. And, if he is to be free, his experience may not be replaced by others. No one may substitute his conclusions for those of another. For they are the result of separate and unique observations and impressions. To make his experience known, the individual should be able to state it freely. That, Laski adds, implies his right to speak it, print it, and to attempt in conjunction with others to put it into effect. For, if the individual remains silent, authority will become despotic. His opinion and judgment may be worthless, yet they are entitled to full consideration. "Without freedom of the mind and association", Laski insists, "a man has no means of self-protection in our social order. He may speak wrongly

or foolishly; he may associate with others for purposes that are abhorrent to the majority of men. Yet a denial of his right to do these things is a denial of his happiness. Thereby, he becomes an instrument of other people's ends, not himself an end."[1] Such a denial, that is to say, will make authority negligent of its duty to seek the opinion of the various sections in society. It will accept only such desires as coincide with its own. And silence will be taken to mean consent. "Historically, Laski concludes, "the road to tyranny has always lain through a denial of freedom in this realm."[2]

Laski's purpose is to show, first, that liberty of thought and association is good in itself, and second, that "its denial is always a means to the preservation of some special and, usually, sinister interest which cannot maintain itself in an atmosphere of freedom." As for the first, it is one of the vital assumptions which Laski makes that the business of authority is the satisfaction of the wants of those over whom it stands. It follows therefore that, since no authority can adequately enterpret by itself the desires of its subjects, each individual or group should be free to report their experiences. "No state, for instance, "he says, "could rightly legislate about the hours of labour if only business men were free to offer their opinion upon industrial conditions. We could not develop an adequate law of divorce if only those happily married were entitled to express an opinion upon its terms."[3] Most people, Laski adds, seem to agree with this statement when it is put in a general form, yet many would immediately dissent when its full implications are made clear to them. The statement, he holds, does not mean only to praise an existing order, but also the freedom to attack it and

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 80
2. Ibid., p. 80
3. Ibid., p. 81

condemn it vigorously. "A man", for instance, "may say that England or America will never be genuinly democratic unless equality of income is established there; that equality of income may never be established except by force; that accordingly, the way to a genuine democracy lies through a bloody revolution. Or he may argue that eternal truth is the sole possession of the Roman Catholic Church; that men can only be persuaded to understand this by the methods of the Inquisition that, therefore, the reestablishment of the Inquisition is in the highest interest of society."[1] Such views, to many of us are horrible. Yet they represent the experience of some people and experience is to be made known.

Moreover, the suppression of thought is both undesirable and ineffective. It does not, in the first place, alter opinion. In fact, it may cause a greater conviction, and arouse more interest in the subject of opinion which it is attempted to suppress. That was the result, Laski tells us, when United States Customs Department suppressed "Candide", and when the British Government prosecuted the communists for sedition in 1925.

In addition, there is an inherent evil in suppression. "The heresies we may suppress today are the orthodoxies of tomorrow"[2] New ideas may originate with one or a few, and, Laski concludes that it is extremely harmful that they should be suppressed because they do not conform to the established conventions of society. If the new idea is untrue its true nature will be revealed in the course of time, and not because a certain authority passes an unfavorable judgment upon it. If the opinion is only partly true, the true element embodied in it will be established in the process of rational discussion and examination. Most of us agree that Nero and Diocletian

1. Liberty in the Modern State, pp. 81-82
2. Ibid., p. 83

accomplished nothing by their persecution of Christianity. The same is true of the vigorous persecution which the prophet Mohammad met at the hands of the Meccans. To many of the adherents of the two faiths, the success of the persecution of their relative creeds would have been irreparable disaster to humanity. Most people today look back with resentment upon the persecution of the labourers by the landed aristocracy in the 19th century. Yet today many of us fail to comply by the implications of the logic of that resentment

In all this there is involved a vital question. Who, Laski Laski asks, is to be the person or group of persons to whom will be entrusted the function of selecting the ideas to be suppressed? What again, are the tests which that person or group are to apply? Mere zeal in those who are to play the part of censor is not adequate These will either declare any view opposed to their own heretical, or any criticism of the existing social order as dangerous, Laski even goes as far as writing, "If you take any of those who are appointed to work of this kind, you discover that association with it seems necessarily to unfit them for their task. For it turns them into men who see undesirability in work which the average man reads without even a suspicion that it is not the embodiment of experience with which he ought to be acquainted. Any one who looks through the list of prohibited publications enforced by the Dominion of Canada will, I think, get a sense that the office of censorship is the avenue to folly."[1] The essence of Laski's argument is the assumption that no person nor group of persons, not even the state, is wise enough or good enough to control the intellectual nutrition of the human mind.

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 86.

Again, we are faced with the problem of tests. What criteria are to be applied to decide whether a certain work or idea is to be suppressed? Broadly speaking, Laski says, publications are suppressed on the basis of either being obscene or dangerous. Yet we do not have a working definition of obscenity even for legal purposes. Laski cites the example of two books suppressed by the English magistrates for obscenity in 1929. "One, Miss Radclyffe Hall's Well of Loneliness, seemed to men like Mr. Arnold Bennet and Mr. Bernard Shaw a work which treated of a theme of high importance to society in a sober and high-minded way. They saw no reason to suppose that the treatment of its difficult subject-sexual perversion-could be regarded by any normal person as offensive".[1] The second book is Mr. D.H. Lawrences Lady Chatterley's Lover which was secretly circulated. Of that Laski says, "I gather that its public sale would have been definitely prohibited. Yet I observe that some of the most eminent American critics have praised it as the finest example of a novel seeking the truth about the sexual relations of men and women that an Englishman has published in the twentieth century."[2]

About this second book I have a word to say. Copies of it have reached our country, and I have come to know of the effect which its reading had on some young men in such a place as a university. I feel that I may say, though I might not be competent to do so, that the result was not an addition to the enlightenment of those young men about sexual relations. The proof I have is their own remarks about its contents. In fact I can state that, in the cases I know of, not the whole book was read, but only those sections which described the meetings of the lady with her lover. The inference is clear.

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, pp. 86-87.
2. Ibid., p. 87.

Nor, I think, is the effect, on at least young men of reading certain local papers and weekly magazines, beneficial ~~to them~~ One, therefore, cannot simply accept to see such material in free circulation. Limitations where certain sections of society are badly affected are desirable when they could be effectively imposed.

I do not believe, however, that Laski insists that no publication can be harmful. The difficulty which he faces is that it is hard, perhaps impossible, to define the limits of suppression. For suppression of what might be bad is the suppression of what might be good. The protection of what some might call innocence in the sexual field, Laski would call the protection of ignorance; "virtuous people," he says, "who shrink from frank discussion in this realm seem to me responsible for probably more gratuitous suffering than any other group of human beings."[1]

The same, Laski holds, to be true of what is called blasphemy. He does not defend any wanton insult of religious beliefs, yet he is anxious that there should be complete freedom in the realm of faith. Blasphemy is, to each group, an attack on its own principles. There are many serious-minded people, who honestly and sincerely cannot accept the principles of some or all creeds. Are we Laski asks, to suppress the publications of such men also though their works are alien to any love of mockery or vulgar disrespect?

And to move to the realm of text books, are we to limit our choice to a certain category of them? Laski writes how, as a member of the Education Committee of the London County Council, he was presented with a petition by a Catholic body, against the use of certain text-books because, that body claimed, they contained untrue statements about the Reformations. Yet, he observes, he did not detect

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, pp. 88-89.

in the same Catholic body a desire only to use those text-books in their own denominational schools which Protestants are prepared to accept as a true picture of the reformation."[1] The argument does not apply only to books of a religious character. It is true of the books containing material about contested historical claims. Each group chooses those books suited to its own views. "In London" Laski writes, "we think that a true theory of value is best obtained from the works of Professor Cannan; in Cambridge they pin their faith to Marshal and Pigou; in the Labour Colleges ultimate wisdom is embodied in the writings of Marx, and Cannan, Marshal and Pigou are all dismissed as the pathetic servants of bourgeois capitalism", and he asks, "Is anything gained for anyone by insisting that truth resides on one side only of a particular Pyrénées? Is it not wisdom to begin by an admission of its many sidedness? And does not that admission involve an unlimited freedom of expression in the interpretation of facts?"[2]

That is why Laski Stands against suppression of ideas. It is bad because it prevents the social ventilation of important problems. It deprives the public of knowledge of facts that might be of great benefit. Moreover, we have no authority or judge wise enough or virtuous enough for the rightous application of suppression, nor do we know of any definitely acceptable principles for discrimination Prohibition simply means the protection of the old and the limitation of the new. Or as Laski wrote, "Suppression here means not the prohibition of the untrue or the unjust or the immoral, but of opinions unpleasing to those who exercise the censorship."[3] It is the duty of man as a member of society to contribute his share to the public

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, pp. 91-92
2. Ibid., pp. 92-93
3. Ibid., p. 94.

good. That contribution cannot be made if persecution of his thought is to follow its expression. The only way to provide him with the possibility of full self-expression is to allow him to say what he thinks. "To act otherwise is to favour those who support the status quo, and thus either to drive the activities of men into underground and, therefore, dangerous channels, or to suppress experience not less entitled than any other to interpret publicly its meaning."[1] Yet one limitation, Laski is willing to accept. A man should be free to criticize. But that criticism must be proved to be independent of any private interest. A man may not, for instance, accuse his neighbour of immoral conduct unless he can do two things. He should be first able to prove the truth of his accusation and, second, to show that it has a definite public relevance. For no one may cause scandal just because he happens to find pleasure in doing so.

The foregoing was concerned with the non-political aspect of freedom. Let us now turn our attention to the more important political aspect of freedom of expression. "How far," Laski asks "is a man entitled to go in an attack upon the social order? What opinions, if any, are to be prohibited on the ground that they incite to subversive conduct? Is there a distinction between the printed word and the spoken word? Is there a distinction between speech in one place, and speech in another? Is there a difference between normal times and a time of crises like, let us say, a war or a general strike? At what point, if any, do words become acts of which authority must take account to fulfil its primary duty of maintaining the peace?"[2]

5 Laski makes a distinction between the written and the

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 119
2. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 97.

spoken word. In the case of the first, he is anxious that there should be complete freedom. "If", he writes, "an English Communist leader writes a book or pamphlet, whatever its substance, and to whomever it is addressed, I do not think the law ought to be used against him." For it is the history of these matters that if governments once begin to prohibit men from seeking to prove in writing that violent revolution is desirable, they will, sooner or later, prohibit them from saying that the social order they represent is not divine".[1] In Italy, papers were suppressed not because they attacked Mussolini, but because they praised the Papacy and failed to praise Fascism. And suppression would drive men to become desperate and add to the ignorance of the masses in political matters. Under such an atomosphere, men who are faced with prohibitions on every side, may cease to think for themselves and thhm cease also to be real citizens. They would become mere recipients of orders which they followed without examination. That would make authority over confident in its wisdom and arrogant, and it would take silence to mean consent. It would fail to satisfy the wishes of its subjects because it did not know what those wishes were. That the views of the subjects may be mistaken, Laski does not deny. But, he argues, "Political thought, after all, however unwise or mistaken, is never born in a vacuum. Lenin's view of capitalist society is just as relevant to its habits as the view of the Duke of Northumberland or of Judge Gary; each is born of contact with it, and each, as it is expressed, has lessons to teach from which, as these are scrutinized, a wise policy can be born."[2]

This unlimited freedom of expression in written form, Laski argues, should not stop short of cases where the armed forces are

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 98.
2. Ibid., p. 100.

involved. These are really composed of citizens. The government has every reason for retaining their allegiance. Consequently, if printed material can produce discontent in their ranks, there must be something wrong with the government "and, in fact," Laski writes, "Whenever agitation has produced military or naval disloyalty that has been the outcome not of affection for the principles upon which have made either soldiers or sailors responsive to a plea for their disloyalty. That was the case with the Spithead mutinies of 1797; with the French troops in 1789; with the Russian troops in 1917"[1]. When the soldiers of sailors, that is, are ready to turn against the government, the likelihood is great that the government is unfit to retain power.

Ideas, it may be said, are dangerous. Hence if they are given complete freedom, they might cause disorder. But Laski rejects this argument for two reasons. In the first place, he maintains that we cannot satisfactorily define dangerous ideas. In the second place, if some ideas can disturb the foundations of the state, then there must be something wrong with it. For, in general, 'disorder is not a habit of mankind.' People usually cling to the ways of their fathers so much so that popular violence is always the outcome of a deep popular sense of wrong'. The ordinary man will not be persuaded to resort to violence unless the government of his state has, due to its own wrong conduct, lost his allegiance. Laski further argues that "the best index to the quality of a state is the degree in which it is able to permit free criticism of itself. For that implies an alertness to public opinion, a desire to remedy grievance, which enables the state to gain ground in the allegiance of its citizens."[2] Freedom of speech results in mitigation which may

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 101.
2. Ibid., p. 102.

make violence unnecessary; but a denial of that freedom drives agitation underground and makes it dangerous. "Rousseau was infinitely more dangerous as a persecuted wanderer, because infinitely more interesting and, therefore, infinitely more persuasive, than he would have been when unfettered in Paris. Lenin did far more harm to Russia as an exile in Switzerland than he could ever accomplished as an opposition leader in the Duma."[1]

The case of the spoken word is different/ as persuasion in written form is largely as an attempt at individual conviction. But speaking to a crowd or at a meeting is a different matter. It is a matter of general experience that a skillful orater has a great deal of power over a crowd. A friend of mine, who had spent about a year in Germany told me that the influence of Hitler upon him when that German leader was speaking to German youth, was so great that he would have, in spite of the fact that he was fully conscious of his being an Arab, obeyed Hitler and carried a gun and fought instantly had that leader given the command. Of course, Hitler is not the only man who can sway a crowd, and it is clear that a good orater may easily cause disorder if he chose to do so. And that is why Laski cannot leave order at the 'tender mercies of an orator with a grievance to exploit'. "The government," he maintains, "clearly, has the right to protection against the kind of public."[2] But there are limitations on the right of the government to do so. It is not entitled to assume for itself that disorder is imminent; the proof must be offered to an independent authority. It has to show that the utterance was, at the time and in the circumstances in which it was made, definitely calculated to result in a breach

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 105.
2. Ibid., p. 104

of the peace. It may not, also, prohibit a meeting before it is held 'on the ground that the speaker is likely to preach sedition there.' Nor should it call for conviction for sedition on the grounds that the utterance would have caused a breach of the peace if it had been made under different circumstances from the ones under which it was made. Thus it is justified in the prosecution of an orater attempting to produce disorder at Trafalgar Square, "but", Laski adds, "I do not think it would be entitled to prosecute on Calton Hill in Edinburgh. For we know that when men in Edinburgh are incited to march on London, they have a habit of turning back at Derby."[1]

Laski admits that he is trying to maximise the difficulties of any government in its desire to prosecute in this realm. His reason is that he distrusts the wisdom of the executive where there is a threat or an assumed threat to public order. "Every state contains innumerable and stupid men who see in unconventional thought the imminent destruction of social peace. They become ministers; and they are quite capable of thinking that a society of Tolstoyan anarchists is about to attempt a new gunpowder plot."[2]

To put, in a different form, what Laski aims at, I shall quote his own words. The view I am concerned to urge", he writes, "is that from the standpoint of the state the citizen must be left unfettered to express either individually, or in concent with others, any opinions he happens to hold. He may preach the complete in-

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 104-105.
2. Ibid., p. 106.

adequacy of the social order. He may demand its overthrow by armed revolution. He may insist that the political system is the apotheosis of perfection. He may argue that all opinions which differ from his own ought to be subject to the severest suppression. He may himself as an individual urge these views or join with others in their announcement. Whatever the form taken by their expression he is entitled to speak without hindrance of any kind."[1] He may do so by writing a book, or publishing a pamphlet, or through a newspaper. He may express his opinions in the form of a lecture or orally at a public meeting. "To be able to do any or all of these things, with the full protection of the state in so doing, is a right that lies at the basis of freedom."[2] For, Laski would ask, what are the alternatives? The criticism of social institutions is a question of degree. If we prohibit an individual from saying that the only salvation of society is through revolution, we will end with prohibiting him from observing that our social system is not of a divine character. "If I begin by assuming that Russian Communism is politically obnoxious, I shall end by assuming that language classes to teach English to Russians are a form of communist.propaganda."[3] The trouble is that there is no authority fit to discriminate, for practical purposes, between the two points. And if men are prevented from drawing conclusions from their experiences, they will stop to think, and will, as a result, cease to be true citizens.

But we may ask, does all this apply to a time of crises as well as to normal times? It might seem that when the safety of the state is in danger, it is justified in taking great powers to protect itself. Thus to suggest that it should be limited by prin-

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 120
2. Ibid., p. 120
3. Ibid., p. 120

ciples of freedom, is equivalent to 'ask it to fight with one hand tied behind its back.' Or, as Laski puts it, "The first objective of any society must be organized security; it is only when this has been obtained, that freedom of speech is withingthe pale of discussion."[1] He, however, is unable to share this view. He does agree 'that it is entirely academic to demand freedom of speech in a time of civil war' because no one will pay any attention to such a demand. Yet, when the question of who is to possess power is settled, the principles of freedom, should become effective again. "Here," he writes, "I can only express the view that the resumption of order ought always to be followed forth with by the normal principles of judicial control, and that the military authorites ought not, save where it is quite impossible for the civil courts to exercise their jurisdiction, to have any powers over ordinary citizens."[2] He takes his stand because he cannot trust authority to wield powers outside the normal confines of law. Such an exercise of powers would be abused. "It was abused in the Civil War even under a mind so humane and generous as that of Lincoln; it was emphatically and dangerously abused in the Ammitsar rebellion of 1919."[3]

We come now to the case of war. What is the position of a citizen whose country is at war? Laski emphatically insists that a state of war does not suspend citizenship. It remains the duty of the individual, perhaps more than ever, to contribute his instructed opinion for the welfare of his country. The magnitude of the w ar is not relevant not only those who think that the war is just should have the freedom to say so, but also those who think that it is unjust. "I believe, for instance", Laski writes, "that the opposition of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Snowden to the war of 1914 was a

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1. Liberty in the Modern State., p. 107
2. Ibid., p. 108.
3. Ibid., p. 109.

fulfilment on their part of the highest civil obligation."[1] No one is entitled to assume, that is, that during the period of war, he is to abdicate the exercise of his judgment in order to allow the government to act completely freely. It follows that the government may suppress opinion at the time when it is more than ever urgent to perform the task of citizenship.

During the war of 1914, Laski observes, it was claimed that hostile opinion should be limited because it would hinder the successful prosecution of the war. But, he asks, what does hostile opinion mean? "Does it imply hostility to the inception of a war, to the methods of its prosecution, to the end at which it aims, to the terms on which its conclusion is proposed?"[2] He seems to be willing to put one limitation on freedom of speech during the time of war - it should not hinder its prosecution. "It is, surely, evident," he writes, "that to limit opinion in periods of war to opinion which does not hinder its prosecution is first to give the executive a completely free hand, whatever the policy it pursues, and, second, to assume that while the armies are in the field an absolute moral moratorium is operative".[3] But otherwise experience has shown that criticism is most needed during such a period. Its limitation means that the government will commit the natural follies of dictatorship. It will deprive the people of useful information on the basis of which they can build their judgment of its policy. "Freedom of speech, therefore," Laski concludes," in war time seems to me broadly to involve the same rights as freedom of speech in peace."[4] He, of course, does not mean that the citizen should be free to communicate military secrets to the enemy, but that if he thinks that British methods against the Boers in South Africa are

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 112.
2. Ibid., p. 113
3. Grammar of Politics, p. 186 4. Liberty in the Modern State p.11

methods of barbarism, 'it is his right, as well as his duty, to say so'. Otherwise, the statesmen in power will have a free hand in describing the state of affairs as they choose. That might not only be misleading, but disastrous. Laski shows how the accusations hurled against Germany in 1914-1918 had evil consequences. That country was represented as the only instigator of war, though now we know this to be untrue. It was condemned as the enemy of peace 'whose sins were incapable of exaggeration.' She was deprived of all virtues and her achievements were made insignificant. In this way the average man came to think of her as a criminal, and when peace came, it had to be a Carthaginian peace, though the statesmen knew, "as the famous memorandum...of Mr. Lloyd George makes manifest, that a Carthaginian peace was disastrous to Europe; but it was too late to destroy the legend they had created."[1]

Another closely connected aspect of liberty is freedom of association. The individual in society does not stand alone; he joins with others of similar convictions to persuade society of the truth of their principles. Our societies are, in fact, full of associations that try to promote one end or another. They may have their dangers, yet Laski maintains. "That a man must be free to combine with his fellows for joint action in some realm in which they have a kindred interest is, I take it, of the essence of liberty."[2] Therefore, the less the interference of the state, the better. But Laski does not wish to make the state completely powerless. No voluntary association, for instance, should have the right to inflict physical punishment or imprisonment upon its members. If such an attempt was made, the state would be justified in interfering to check it. Yet the problems that are involved in this field

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 118
2. Ibid., p. 121.

are not as simple as this. What, for instance, Laski asks, is the relation of a state, whose law recognizes only monogomy, to an association that holds to polygamy? What may a state do when a congress of trade unionists calls for a general strike? In industries whose services are fundamental to the community, what are the rights of combination among employees? To what action is the state entitled when a society is engaged in convincing people that a revolution by the use of physical force is best for them? Should we here make a distinction between merely preaching the desirability of revolution and acting for that end? And, lastly, what constitutes action?

Laski attempts to answer the first question by using the Mormon Church as an illustration. The members of this church desire to practice a certain mode of conduct that is not acceptable to society in general. It is assumed that their membership is voluntary and that they do not attempt to force their own way of life on others. In one realm, that of marriage, they wish to be free from outside interference. In such a case, Laski declares, "I cannot see that we are entitled to interfere with them. We may think them unwise, foolish muddle-headed, immoral. We know perfectly well that we cannot hope, by the external constraint of law, to abolish all conduct that comes within those terms".[1] He happens to think, he adds, that it is a gross superstition to bequeath money on the Catholic Church in order that masses be said for the soul of the testator; yet he would not accept any interference between the church and its members to forbid such bequests. Society, he goes on to say, permits many practices which are far worse than polygamy, because it knows the futility of control. Hence, he

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 185.

concludes, "The only way to deal with the ideals of the Mormon Church is to prove their indesirability to their members. On the evidence of history, persecution will not be acceptable as proof; and it is not improbable that the only legal effect of prohibition has been to make furtive and dishonest what was, at first, open and avowed."[1] That is his principle as regards or similar problems of association. If, for instance, a group of women joined into an association to propagate and practice the (to them) ideal of children outside the tie of marriage, the state has no justification for interfering with them. That is tosay, as long as such voluntary bodies are outside the realm where their idea and conduct are intended directly to alter the law, they are to meet no interference and may act as they please.

In the political field, Laski deals with the right of the state to limit freedom of association in industry. In practice, he says, this reduces itself to the question of whether trade-unions may declare a strike. Four general principles, he thinks, underlie this problem. First, it is said that the state has a right to prohibit a general strike because it is an attempt to force the government either directly by making it introduce legislation which it would not otherwise do, or indirectly, by inflicting such hardship on the community that public opinion forces the government to act. Second, it is argued that the state may make it illegal for its employees, such as postmen, to go on strike or join an association the nature of which may influence the neutrality of the government. Third, it is claimed that, in certain industries, such as railways and electricity, that are fundamental to the community, the right to strike may be rightly denied. Fourth, it is held that the purposes of a trade union may be limited to their proper industrial sphere.

1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 184.

Before analysing these four principles, Laski makes some preliminary observations. He first points out that, in industrial societies, 'liberty of contract always begins where equality of bargaining power begins'.[1] Therefore, under normal conditions, 'only the existence of strong trade unions will insure to the average worker just terms in his contract of service.' If he is isolated, he does not possess neither the knowledge nor the power to obtain adequate protection. Moreover, strong trade unionism, makes public opinion effective in an industrial dispute. "One has only to compare the situation in the British textile industries, where the power of the unions necessarily involves an inquiry by the state, if there is a dispute, for the terms of a just settlement, with that in America where, from the weakness of the unions, the state seems hardly to know when a dispute has occurred, where also, the police-power is almost invariably exerted on the side of the employer, to realize the meaning of strong trade unionism."[2] If a limitation is to be placed upon the freedom to associate, it has to be shown that the result will be a decisive advantage to the community including members of the trade unions themselves.

With this as a back ground, Laski proceeds to examine the four principles stated above. The first of them postulates that a general strike is a threat to the well-being of the community; it is a revolutionary instrument because it is a threat to the constitution. The proper way to influence the government is not the use of industrial power, but the ballot-box at elections. He cannot accept this view. On certain occasions he may agree that a general strike is not justifiable. That would be his attitude if, for example the Trades Union Congress of Great Britain called for a general strike

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 126.
2. Ibid., p. 127

the purpose of which was to force the government to accept a federal scheme for Great Britain. But where industrial questions are involved, his stand is different. A general strike would be justifiable were it called 'to secure the eight-hour day, or to protect the payment of unemployment relief, or to continue the Trade Board system in sweated industries'. Laski does not mean to say that a general strike for these or similar purposes is wise or desirable. Nor is he ready to declare a strike unjustified until he becomes acquainted with the facts about the circumstances of the given case. "I am not willing, for instance, " he declares, "to condemn the general strike of 1926; on a careful analysis of its history, I believe that the blame for its inception lies wholly at the door of the Baldwin Government. No one acquainted with the character of the trade union movement but knows that a weapon so tremendous as the general strike will only be called into play on the supreme occasion. To lay it down as law that, whatever the occasion, the weapon shall not be used, seems to me an unjustifiable interference with freedom."[1] On certain occasions it is desirable, even essential, that a government be coerced to take a certain action. The general strike of 1926, Laski believes, was such an occasion. "The Trade Unions," he writes, "would never have called the strike had they seen in the policy of the government even the fragment of a genuine search for justice".[2] In the case at hand, to have made the strike illegal, would have been to attempt forcing the trade unions to accept the defeat of the miners without showing their solidarity with them, and it would have been to tell the government that it need not fear the ultimate weapon of labour. All this, of course, is not to say that Laski is not aware

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 188-189.
2. Ibid., p. 189.

of the injury and hardship which the community would have to meet in the case of a strike. Yet one of its benefits would be to awaken the inert public to some injustice. "Effectively to do this, in a real world, it must inconvenience the public; that awkward giant has no sense of its obligations until it is made uncomfortable."[1] Ultimately, to deny the right of strike, is to introduce a form of industrial servitude; the worker must accept the employers terms for fear of causing any discomfort to the public.

Laski does not accept a distinction between a strike for political purposes and one for industrial ends. Only in extreme cases can the distinction be clear. But between the two extremes are found questions which cannot be neatly sorted into the two categories. Even in certain political cases, war for example, Laski declares himself in favor of a strike by trade-unions. "Quite frankly," he writes, "I should have liked to see a general strike proclaimed against the outbreak of war in 1914; and I conceive the power to act in that was as a necessary and wise protection of a people against a government which proposes such adventures."[2] The threat of such an action, he believes, would make a government intending to embark upon aggressive conduct, far less likely to think in belligerent terms. And another question is involved here. Only when the issue of dispute is so vital will the Trade Unions call for a strike. In this case the legal aspect of their action will not likely affect their decision. Legal limitation would only centre attention on the legal side of the question; the real nature of the dispute would be concealed.

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 130.
2. Ibid., p. 132.

The second principle involves government employees. Here, Laski admits the right of the government to demand the loyal and continuous service of its employees. It is thus entitled to make regulations to limit their liberty. In particular, the army, navy, and police possess a special position. Their conduct may put the executive power in an impossible position. But the regulations which the government may make for this class should be just. In order to ensure this justice Laski suggests two principles. First, the regulations should "be made and administered in conjunction with those who are affected by them; and in their application or change executive action should not be the final court of appeal".[1] This would compensate for their loss of liberty and would protect them against the injustice of the executive.

The case of the ordinary public employees is different. The class of clerks that are engaged in routine work has interests akin to those of laborers outside the public services. Therefore, they may, in Laski's opinion, join the associations formed by persons from private firms. They may even go on strike, though he reserves to the government the right to force them to submit to conciliation before they take such a step. For it is unwise to leave the government free to determine the conditions of work. "It is just as likely as any private employer to extract the most it can get for the least it needs to give; and it is no more fit than any other employer to be left uncontrolled in this field."[2]

The civil servant is not only a government employee, but also a citizen. This gives rise to the question as to whether he may take part in the political life of his country. Laski has different answers for the different classes in the service. The higher

1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 136
2. Ibid., p. 138.

of the civil service whose work is concerned with the making of policy, are to be denied the freedom of political activity. Otherwise the government will not be able to trust them and the dangers of the 'spoils system' will appear. The restriction is the more important in the case of the army, navy, and police. The state is entitled to put an absolute limitation on their political activity. For their complete neutrality is essential. "Anyone," Laski writes, "Who remembers the attempted use of the army in 1913&14 for ulster, the habits of the French Army during the Dreyfus period, the peculiar relations between the German Army and the monarchy, will easily see how vital is this abstinence. There are American cities where the relations between big business and the police mean that the authority of the latter is certain to be abused in an industrial dispute."[1] But there are certain classes in the civil service whose members, in Laski's opinion, should not be barred from political activity. In this category he places the industrial employees of the government such as postmen and shipwrights.

The third principle deals with fundamental industries. These, some people argue, are so vital that the right to strike ought to be denied those who are engaged in them. Laski agrees that an interruption of the vital services is most undesirable and that all measures should be taken to minimize the possibility of such an occurrence. But he does not believe that prohibition will achieve this end. Nor are fundamental industries operated for private profit very much concerned with the interests of the community. "No one, surely, can examine the record of the coal industry either in England or in America and say that the motives which underlie its ownership by private interest are compatible with the view that an

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 141.

uninterrupted service to the community has been the first object of the owners."[1] Thus, where there is private ownership, Laski believes that the right to strike ought to be retained. If, for instance, the Seamen's Union went on strike in order to have every vessel put to sea equipped with a wireless, its action would be justifiable. The same is true in the case of miners who go on strike 'if they believed that some part of a pit to which they were to be sent was in fact too dangerous for coal to be hewed there without an alteration of the physical conditions of mining in that particular place.' Where the vital industry is in public hands, Laski would apply the principles which he holds in the case of government services in general.

We now come to the fourth principle. The trade union, it is said, should confine its activities to its appropriate sphere. Laski's objection to this, is that we cannot define this sphere. He uses the question of foreign policy as an illustration. He points out that we cannot prevent the trade unions from direct interest in this field because it is closely connected with economic policy, and this, in turn, is the chief factor in the determination of the conditions of employment. Where the distinction between the two spheres is clear, is only where extreme cases are involved and these will likely be very rare. In addition, Laski points out how the sphere with which trade unions concern themselves has grown wider. That, in many cases, is regarded today as normal. "Let me only remind you," he writes, "that in the American garment trade, the union concerns itself, as a vital part of its function, with the efficiency of the employers for whom its members work. A

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 143-144.

generation ago, this would have been dismissed as an insolent interference with the rights of management; today it is obvious that upon no other terms can the function of the trade union be fulfilled.[1]

What, we may now ask, are to be the powers of the state when confronted with associations whose aim is the overthrow of the existing social order. Laski begins by stating that 'the state has a right to protect itself from attack. It must assume that its life has a value which should be preserved. If a change in the system it maintains is to be effected, it must demand that the change should be peaceful. How far does this limit the freedom of the associations in question? Laski does not wish to make the state entitled to suppress associations whose principles alone are subversive of the existing order. To do so, he believes, is to allow the government to persecute principles of faith and not overt acts. Associations, no matter how dangerous its principles are, are to be left free unless they attempt to translate their principles into action. Only then may the government interfere. "A society", he writes, "might be formed, for instance, to discuss and propagate the principles of Tolstoyan anarchy; I do not think any government has legitimate ground for interference with it. The time for that interference comes only when, outside the specific categories of peaceful persuasion, men have moved to action which cannot logically be interpreted as other than a determination to overthrow the social order."[2] According to this the government is justified in interfering with a society of communists that is teaching its members military drill. The same is true when a political party like the Ulster Volunteers, for instance, or their opponents, the Nationalists', purchase munitio

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 149.
2. Ibid., p. 155

of war. But that is not to say that a government may prohibit a communist party from propagating their principles either by the spoken or the printed word. It is to say that the government may not suppress because of principles nor declared intentions, but only when it can prove actual acts committed. The executive, Laski insists, should not be the judge of the nature of these acts. He is anxious that their interpretation should be in the hands of an ordinary court of law. "We do not want a clumsy minister to assume that a society of Tolstoyan anarchists is likely to attempt a new gunpowder plot. We do not desire to give license to those amazing citizens who see in every movement of unconventional thought a cover for the unscrupulous assassin. The state, clearly, has a right to self-protection, but it should be in obvious danger before it is given leave to act."[1]

One last word about modes of conduct that may cause harm or that are obnoxious to the community. To drink a little amount of alcoholic liquor will not cause harm, but to take it in excess is harmful. Sunday games are found obnoxious by some communities. In such cases, it is claimed, the state may interfere with its prohibitions and limitations. Laski cannot accept the view that because a certain mode of conduct is harmful in excess or because it is disliked by the community it ought to be suppressed. In the first case, he suggests, a safeguard may be applied against excess, such as limiting the strength of a liquor and restricting its sale, but in the second case each question is to be examined separately. For, he points out, we cannot legislate against all modes of conduct an excess of which causes harm. In this category fall such things

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 183.

as over-eating, excessive adulation of film-stars and athletes. Moreover, we ought to take into consideration the effects of prohibition upon personality. "Men," Laski believes, "are made not by being safeguarded against temptation but by being able to triumph over it."[1] The individual ought, as far as possible, be left free to determine the shape of his own life. Rules from the outside to do that for him tend to destroy his personality. Again, where the prohibition does not possess the general approval of the public, people will take pleasure and pride in evading the law. The prohibition will have a bad effect on principles of conduct because people will think out means of evasion. And the more the law is evaded, the more will the government resort to greater severity in punishment. This will create in the public a suspicion of the government. Where the prohibition involves an industry which a considerable body of people strongly feel that they require, a secret attempt will be made to supply them with it. But this will mean the functioning of some of the worst elements in society to supply the service. It will mean devious methods and high charges, and a big army of lawbreakers. High profits will make it possible to corrupt the police by high bribes. In addition, there is one last reason why Laski stands for the widest personal freedom possible. In every state, he believes, there are 'fussy and pedantic moralists' who seek to use the authority of the state to establish a uniform rule of conduct identical with their own. "They are interested," he writes "in prohibition and uniformity for their own sake, and every success that they win only spurs them to greater efforts. If they stop the sale of alcohol, they become ardent for the limitation of the limitation of the right to tobacco. They are anxious to control the

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 172.

publication of books, the production of plays, women's dress, the laws governing sexual life, the use of leisure."[1] They are vehement in their denunciations and 'to themselves, of course, they appear as little Calvins saving the modern Geneva from the insidious invasion of the Devil'. Such people are incompatible with a climate of mental freedom. "They," Laski believes, "lack altogether respect for the dignity of human personality. They are utterly unable to see that people who live differently think differently and that in so various a civilization as ours absolute standards in these matters are out of place."[2] Their success would cost society a great deal. They are enemies of freedom. And they ought to remind us that we ought to question any restriction on our liberty, though restrictions are not made in the name of destroying it.

Conditions essential to liberty:

Laski's object has been to give to the individual the widest field of choice and action possible. He is anxious to make him as free as possible to shape his life in the greatest degree of conformity to his own separate experience. For Laski cannot find any higher authority than the individual to decide what is right or wrong. He rejects the view that obedience to the law is the mark of freedom, because the law, he insists, is made by a number of persons who are not necessarily wiser or more honest than the individual. The commands of the state do not necessarily embody the common good which alone makes the individual, even against his will, free. For those commands are issued by persons who cannot be infallible, and who are more likely to be the representatives of particular interests He, at the same time is eager to extend freedom, not only to the individual, but also to minorities, racial and religious, and even

1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 172
2. Ibid., p. 174.

to states whose own power is not adequate to provide them with protection against the aggression of more powerful states. But this aspect of freedom will be dealt with elsewhere.

Certain conditions, Laski believes, are essential for the maintenance of liberty. These may be broadly considered three in number. I propose to deal with each separately.

Democracy: First, the general conditions that characterize a democracy seem to be vital for the existence of freedom. For what does a democracy imply? It means that men have the chance to choose their government and it means that the laws which the government makes are binding equally upon all. This of course will not insure happiness to men, but it will not make possible the treatment of men as mere recepients of orders. It will mean that their experiences, much more than under any other conditions, will be made articulate and considered. I will make possible the voicing of grievances to draw the attention of the government to them. Where the franchise exists, the government cannot simply act on the assumption that it may completely replace the experience of individual, a conformity to which alone makes him happy and free, by its own. "Whatever is to be said against the democratic form of state, it seems to me unquestionable that it has forced the needs of humble men on the attention of government in a way impossible under any other form."[1] That is why Laski believes that to be free, men should be able to choose their rulers, and that those rulers should never hold their power permanently. It is also necessary that certain rights should be placed outside the competence of the rulers. To secure there rights it is essential that the interpretation of the law be left to an independent judiciary. For it is obvious that power to judge should not be a function of the executive who might be one of the

1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 58.

parties in a case. The judge, that is, must be assured freedom from external influences. He should be secure in his office subject only to good behaviour and a reasonable age limit. Thus, Laski believes, it is unwise to make judicial appointment depend on popular decision or government pleasure. In addition, his promotion should not be left to the descretion of the executive, and he should not be allowed to use his post as a stepping stone to a future political career.

Another judicial guarantee is essential. At the present day, the amount of legislation is so great that the legislature has developed the system of delegated legislative authority which enables the departments of the executive to fill in the details of the general acts of the legislature. In this way these departments have assumed power that may not be used justly. Laski finds the growth of this delegated power both necessary and desirable, but he wishes to see it surrounded with adequate safeguards. He does not trust executive justice; he wants to see it surrounded with judicial limitations. "No body of civil servants," he writes, "however liberal-minded. They may be, ought to be free both to make the law and to devise the procedure by which its legality may be tested; and that, be it remembered, without a power of appeal from their decision."[1] In certain cases, 'like rate-fixing in public utilities, in workmen's compensation cases, in matters concerning public health', the opinion of experts is not less valid than that of a judicial body. Yet the decision of these experts have to be reached through a process which compels them to take account of all relevant facts and which makes possible a just representation of the claims of all parties to the case. There should also exist the right of appeal from their decision

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 44.

to the ordinary courts 'on all questions where denial of proper procedure is held to involve a denial of proper consideration.' Another suggestion which Laski makes in this field is to make it possible to appeal to a higher administrative tribunal composed of both officials and laymen who are trustworthy and experienced. These safeguards, Laski believes, are essential for they relate to issues that might be vital. "...We must remember," he inisists"that however great be the good will of the public services, what, to them, may seem a simple matter of administrative routine, may be to the citizens involved a denial of the very substance of freedom. Certainly a case like exparte O'Brien makes one see how real would be the threat to public liberty if departmental legislation grew without proper judicial scrutiny at every stage of its development."[1]

Moreover, Laski wishes to see two things realized. First, he wants to make the state responsible for the acts of its agents. If, for instance, a man is run over by a careless driver of a railway truck, he is able to secure damages. In the same way, there is no reason why such a man should not be able to do so where the truck belongs to the postmaster-general of His Majesty. Second, he wishes to see the discretionary power, like the power of the Home Secretary in England over requests of aliens for naturalization, that has come to the possession of departments of state, surrounded by safeguards. Accordingly in case a request of naturalization is refused, the grounds on which the refusal was built should be made known and the applicant should be given the opportunity to refute all accusations against him. In addition, Laski wants to see that there is the right of appeal from the decision of the Home Secretary to "A judge in chambers where the latter would, on a case stated

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1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 46.

by the Department, bear such evidence as the applicant chose to bring for its refutation and then only make a final decision".[1] Otherwise there would be a danger to the freedom of the subject.

Bill of Rights: Another safeguard against attacks on liberty is a Bill of Rights. There are, it is assumed, certain rights which are of a special character-almost sacred. Freedom of speech, security against arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, the right to vote and the like, come under this category. They are placed above the normal processes of governments in order to make their violation a matter of extreme difficulty. Such a bill of rights, Laski believes, has a real value. It draws attention to the fact that, where essentials are involved, vigilance is very important. It acts as a check on government excesses. It forms a prejudice in people against infringement of freedom, and may be considered as a rallying-point for those who are concerned about the principles of freedom. "I believe," he writes"...that the existence of the First Amendment has drawn innumerable American citizens to defend freedom of speech who have no atom of sympathy with the purposes for which it is used. A Bill of Rights, so to say, canonizes the safeguards of freedom; and, thereby, it persuades men to worship at the alter who might not otherwise note its existence."[2]

Yet Laski warns that a Bill of Rights is not an automatic safeguard against the violation of liberty. He enumerates many cases, where, despite its existence, the rights it contains were violated. (This is the evidence provided by Abrams V. United States in relation to freedom of speech, and exparte Merryman in relation to the writ of habeas corpus. (in America;) This was true of the treatment of conscientious objectors in England after the close of the

1. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 49.
2. Ibid., p. 52-55.

World War. Therefore, to make the preservation of rights effective, the people should be vigilant and determined to protect them.

Equality: The second fundamental condition of liberty is equality. "Unless I enjoy the same access to power as others," Laski writes, "I live in an atmosphere of contingent frustration".[1] The alternative is acceptance of a special station in life which is fatal to any creativeness in the individual. Such a condition destroys initiative. It also becomes regarded as natural; "men who see others selected to govern by a principle other than their own choice tend, over a period to believe that these have come to govern by nature."[2] They will cease to examine their institutions; they will regard them as necessary foundations of the state. The total result is that their personalities will not attain their full stature because some of their faculties will not be developed. Moreover, the conduct of their masters will become sinister. They will look upon the system which they maintain as the natural order. Those outside their class will be considered inferior to themselves. "The will even argue, like the slave-owners of the south, that exclusion from privilege is a benefit to those so excluded. They will discover special virtues in themselves, as when Macanly argued that the middle class is "the natural representative of the human race."[3] That is why Laski believes that liberty cannot exist apart from equality. By equality, he does not mean identity of treatment nor, where the difference does not make possible the invasion of the rights of some by others, identity of reward for service. It does mean that no one should be in a position where his attempt to realise the best in him will destroy or minimise the chance of others to

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 149.
2. Ibid., P. 149.
3. Ibid., p. 150.

do the same. It implies the existence of a system which will 'balance a share in the toil of living with a share in its gain also.' That gain should be sufficient to meet adequately the requirements of citizenship. It also implies that though my opinion and experience may be less valuable than those of another, yet they should get equal consideration as those of others. No offices in the state ought to be closed to some, as citizens, and open only to others. "Whatever rights where in another by virtue of his being a citizen must inhere, and to the same extent, in me also."[1]

Equality should also extend to opportunity. To some extent, Laski agrees that this cannot be realized. The opportunities of different children will, for instance, differ with the family atmosphere in which they are brought up and the character of the parents. Yet it is possible to create conditions which would approximately give to children an equal start. Equal educational facilities is one. That, he believes, does not exist today. "Childrn who come hungry to school cannot, on the average, profit by education in like degree to those who are well fed....The boy or girl who has to assume that at fourteen they are bound to pass into the industrial world rarely acquires that frame of mind which searches with eagerness for the cultivation of intelligence."[2] In our society, broadly speaking, opportunity is a matter of parental circumstances. The road to the university is open to the son of the rich; manual work to those of the poor.

Adequate education, Laski insists, is necessary if citizens are to be, what they are supposed to be, intelligent and capable of passing judgment on the issues of life. That is to be made possible, not to the few, but to all. "Our business, therefore, is to assure

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 153
2. Ibid., p. 154.

such an education to all as will make every vocation, however humble, one that does not debar those who follow it from the life of intelligence."[1] For, Laski would argue, citizens have to express their wants and state their experiences if they want to make them articulate to those who rule. They have to pass judgment on rulers and their policies. All this requires ability to understand and state opinion intelligibly. Hence adequate education is essential; education to all and not to some so that no section of the community will be unduely privileged. This is vital to freedom. "Anyone" Laski writes, "who has seen the dumb inarticulateness of the poor will realise the urgency of education in this regard. Nothing is more striking than the way in which our educational systems train children of the rich or well-born men to habits of authority while the children of the poor are trained to habits of deference. Such a division of attitude can never produce political freedom, because a class trained to govern will exert its power because it is conscious of it while a class trained to deference will not fulfil its wants because it does not know how to formulate its demands."[2]

Laski, it should be clear, does not aim at reducing all men to a common level. Wide disparities should not exist because they tend to put some at a disadvantage and destroy equality of opportunity. But he does recognize ability and fitness. If, he argues, there is any superiority in some, let us discover it. It should not be simply assumed to be in a specific group. Where there are distinctions, it has to be shown that they result in common good. On this basis alone must be built the justification of the existence of a hereditary aristocracy. The same is true in the case of 'an economic system in which the luxury of a few is paralleled by the misery of

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 155.
2. Ibid., p. 147.

the many'. Differences in social or economic position may be justified only after a certain minimum level has been secured for all. Any advantages, above that level, must be necessary to the fulfilment of a social function. According to this a general may have greater powers than a soldier because that is essential to the welfare of the army. It is also true 'that a statesman in office must be so remunerated that he is not oppressed by narrow material cares; and that might well involve placing him in a higher financial rank than a bootmaker or shop assistant'. But the reward for work should be the result of personal effort and service. No one may be allowed to live in a house of twenty rooms when some people are not in possession of adequate shelter, nor should be permitted to occupy such a house because his father was a man of great wealth. Thus the satisfaction of certain wants should be our first concern. "Once urgency is satisfied Laski concludes, "superfluity becomes a problem of so fixing the return to society as a whole".[1]

Vigilance: The third condition of freedom is the existence of a determination on the part of the people to preserve their liberty. Without such a determination, no mechanical safeguards are effective. Men therefore, should be always ready to resent and trained to resist any encroachments of authority. A temper of resistance, Laski believes, may be developed by the maintenance of a system of decentralization. in which their is provision for making it possible to influence the centres of public decisions by all those whose interests are affected. In this way a great number of people will have a share in the control of their affairs. They will grow accustomed to see an effort made to embody their desire in the rules they have to obey. In this manner, they will become more sensitive to encroachment upon their freedom.

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1. Grammer of Politics, p. 158.

They will learn vigilance; and when there is an invasion of their liberty, they will protest against it. Laski clearly sees that they might be wrong, yet they should not be silent. The experience of no one may be substituted for their own. For individuals are different from one another. Their experiences are different and unique. There might be some agreement among them, but that agreement might be based on different considerations and may have different meanings to them. To accept forcibly the principles of others is to become a slave. That is the reason for Laski's insistence on the duty of the individual to act according to his own conscious no matter how poor or perverse, or foolish it may be. For, to him, that is the only way to be free.

Laski of course realizes that this might be considered a doctrine of anarchy. This does not produce a change in his stand. To him, as an alternative, to keep silent where there is injustice, is to buy the ally of its authors. And when authority is met with acquiescence alone, it starts to assume its infallibility. This means that he recognizes the right to rebellion. Order, to him, is not the supreme good. When authority constantly frustrates efforts to remove injustice, what alternative is there but a resort to violence despite all its evil consequences of which he is fully aware. Such was the decision which Washington faced. Such has been the decision which oppressed peoples have encountered in their attempt to liberate themselves. Or again, it was the command of his conscience that Luther obeyed when he felt unable to accept the demands of Rome. In Laski's words, "Liberty is nothing if it is not the organized and conscious power to resist in the last resort. The implied threat of contingent anarchy is a safeguard against the

abuse of government,"[1] and "To fight for the assurance that a man may do his duty as he conceives it is not only to fight for freedom, but for all the ends which the emancipation of mankind seeks to attain. I do not know whether liberty is the highest objective we can serve. I do assert that no other great purpose is possible of achievement save in the terms of fellowship with freedom."[2]

Liberty in a real sense, as Laski is fully aware, cannot exist except in a society in which men have agreed on fundamentals and have not developed a temper which makes them prefer coercion to peaceful persuasion. For violent disagreement on what is considered vital drives men to attempt to forcibly impose their point of view upon others rather than listen with tolerance and magnanimity to what others believe in. Hence a statement of the principles of freedom tends to appear to be applicable only to a few societies where the great mass of men find the existing order generally acceptable. That at least is the impression we get from a study of Laski's analysis of liberty with its various forms and problems. That, it seems to me, is not a point of weakness. If the principles of liberty that Laski stands for are not applicable in certain societies, yet they are a fine goal to which men have and should strive to attain.

Yet a few remarks will show that Laski's distrust which is well founded, of the state or any person or group as a judge of what is wrong or right carries him a little too far. I am fully aware that the suppression of what is wrong may mean the suppression of what is right. But I cannot agree that society cannot place

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 149.
2. Liberty in the Modern State, p. 77.

certain limitation without violating our freedom. Laski, for instance, finds that we should not suppress a book on the ground of obscenity because what some men may consider immoral and obscene, may be considered by others as a reasonable discussion of sexual problems of vital importance to men and women. But any one who has observed the effect of books and magazines of this nature upon certain people cannot evade the conclusion that some limitation has to be placed to protect those sections of society that are affected. I have no desire to curtail the scientific discussion of sexual problems, but I am anxious that no one be allowed to destroy the health of people and contribute to their sexual perversion. The truth about sexual problems, as professor Soltau has pointed out to me, may be exposed by "pure discussion"; "description" may be sacrificed without regret.

In the field of education, again, I find myself in disagreement with Laski. I am referring in particular to the lower stages of education. The students at this stage have, besides their family surroundings, practically one source of knowledge and inspiration -- their school books and programmes. These have a great effect on their beliefs and minds which remains long and strong. Other sources of inspiration and beliefs are hardly open to them. Hence a school may possess a monopoly over what a student may read, hear, and, to a lesser degree, believe. Under the name of liberty, schools should be free to choose their own books and work out their own programmes. If the state were to do that for them, the danger of imposing a uniform set of ideas would arise. That is certainly true. But due to the fact that where schools are free they may have what is similar to a monopoly over the minds of their students,

I find it necessary to place certain limitations over them. These limitations should be calculated to destroy that monopoly without causing uniformity. A school in an Arab country, for example, should not be allowed to teach its students American or English geography or history without teaching them Arab history and geography A school may not teach its students from books that contain religious matter that is objectionable to other sects. When there is disagreement, only the pure facts and not the usual adjectives and denunciations should be given to the students. In general; a society specially one which is threatened with internal division, is entitled to see to it that, without suppressing as far as possible the particular point of view of particular schools, those schools conform to general national educational standards and do not teach anything prejudical to other sects without, at least, making it possible for the students to acquaint themselves with the different outlook. People who know the conditions of countries like Palestine and Lebanon are in a better position to evaluate the need for such requirements.

On another point, I cannot accept the judgment of Laski. He would approve of a strike by the trade unions to prevent war. The government of the day may be wrongly driving the country into war. The strike is justifiable to stand in its way. But this rests on the assumption that the trade unions are wiser and more honest than the government. The truth, however, is that, though a government may be mistaken, or may be plunging the country into war for sinister causes, we have no assurance that trade unions are not mistaken or selfish when they take their decision on such an occasion. Trade

unions are right when they exert pressure to prevent their country from going into war against a country which has, for example, turned communist, but they are not justified in doing so when their country is defending itself against aggression. Though it is not easy to make a distinction, trade unions are entitled to strike when their country assumed the role of agressor, but in case the struggle is defensive, they have no right to do so.

DEMOCRACY

During the last World War, it was claimed that the Allies were fighting to make the world safe for democracy. In the present struggle, we hear the same claim, largely from Britain and America. We are told that what the Americans call World War II is not only a clash of material purposes, but also involves a conflict between two ways of life - one endeavouring to preserve liberty and freedom, the other aiming at its destruction. In general, that is, it is a contention between those who stand for democracy and those who wish to impose a dictatorship on the basis of which the whole life of society is to be built. The former declare that, without democracy, liberty will be destroyed and men enslaved. Authority will become corrupt because it will be unquestionable and irresponsible. The interests of the few become supreme, and violence and force will conquer reason. The individual not having a share in the government, will lose all initiative and creativeness and become blindly obedient to a will external to himself. The consequences will be grave. Human personality will deteriorate; general welfare will give way to selfish interest; and human progress will be obstructed. The latter, who attack democracy, accuse it of being inefficient and wasteful. They call it the rule of demagogues and the irrational mob. It is, they insist, destructive of state power, slow in formulating decisions, and incapable of boldly executing them. The equality on which it is built is false, and the liberty which it advocates is identical with disorder and confusion.

It was inevitable that the people of Arab countries should have taken sides. Among other causes of division, democracy has

not been lacking. Some of us wish to see Britain victorious because that will mean, besides other things, the victory of democracy. Those whose hearts are for Germany point to the achievements which that country has been able to attain because (they claim) of its repudiation of democratic methods and its dependence on unified leadership. And each side would enumerate the advantages or disadvantages of the system that it defends or attacks. The arguments for or against democracy are not only raised as war events give rise to them, but also when the question of the future organization of Arab countries is dealt with. We have to choose a form of government for our state or states. That raises the question of democracy. Yet when we begin its examination, we seem to forget an important problem. We do not examine democracy historically. No institution, if its real nature is to be fully revealed, nor any set of principles, can be fully understood except in their historical context. In the same way, democracy as a set of principles, and as a form of government is not the whole picture. One has to answer the question as to why democracy came into existence, under what conditions it became established and has been permitted to survive, and what changes have caused doubts about its desirability, and might bring its downfall. That is the basis of Laski's analysis of the problems of present democracy. It is an attempt to show why democracy is facing a challenge, and what the outcome might be.

On the surface, Laski wrote about seven years ago[1], there appears to be no symptoms of the approach of social convulsions

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1. Democracy in Crises, published 1933.
The same position was held in his "Parliamentary Government in England", 1938

in our society. Yet he pointed out that careful observation would reveal many upsetting signs. There is a general feeling of discontent. Strikes, the treatment of communists in some countries, and the resentment of wide disparity in wealth indicate the absence of security. Moreover, the spirit of disillusionment undermines the foundations of society. The belief in religion as a permanent set of rules of behavior has been destroyed. Our institutions are being questioned. In po stry, fiction, or philosophy you find the strong element of despair or protest. Why, one may ask, has security and content become an illusion? The answer is to be found in the economic basis of present day democracy.

Rise of Democracy: Capitalist democracy was a protest of a new class against the limitation placed upon it in the interest of a small oligararchy who were the government. It was the creation of a middle class that fought to destroy the privileges of the landed aristocracy. That class was a new economic class which was becoming more powerful. Hence democracy rose to meet a new economic situation which showed that land was not the only source of wealth. Here lies the fallacy of many of those who stood for it. Their fault was that they assumed the absolute validity of the form of political structure regardless of the economic character of the society it was supposed to represent. The truth is that, as Laski points out, each economic regime gives rise to a political order which represents the interests of the dominent class that possesses the essential instruments of economic power.

Historically, it was natural that the new class disliked authority, and regarded govenment a necessary evil the less of

which the better. It was believed that if each individual was allowed to make the best of himself and promote his own interest the result would be social good. In fact the liberal state that rose with democracy had an appeal for various sections of the people. There were first the religious dessenters who saw in the old aristocratic state the instrument which their opponents used to persecute them. There were also the business men to whom the new state gave an opportunity for action free from the corruption and inefficiency of the old one. And the masses believed that it meant the destruction of privilege and the creation of new opportunities which had not been open to them.

Inequality: But the liberal state did not intend to identify political equality with economic equality. Actually it has exchanged old privilege for a new privilege built upon economic power. Its doctrine of liberty of contract is false as long as there is no equality in bargaining power. Its equality before the law is meaningless if the weight of the law is on the side of one class. It started with rich and poor; now the two classes still exist with a huge gap between them. Liberty and equality might be guaranteed by the law, but law is nothing more than the reflection of the domination of an economic class. Other classes fight for equality - religious, social, economic, political - for the abolition of privilege as the middle class itself fought to attain equality through the destruction of the privileges of the landed aristocracy. Privilege may be accepted as natural for a time, but sooner or later it will be resented. "And unless it can be convinced that the maintenance of privilege is directly associated with their own good, the choice offered to society is always one between

concession and violence".[1] The people, under democracy, have conquered the power of the state. But they have realized that this power is only formal. They have discovered that as long as economic power is not in their hands, they are not the real masters of their society. The clue to political authority, that is, is to be found in economic control. When the people tried to win economic power, they found, Laski tells us, a great deal of opposition. The courts, the press, education, armed forces, and bureaucracy stood in their way. If they chose violence, the organized forces of the state were against them. Even when they, by constitutional means became the government, they found that they could not depend upon the instruments of the state, in the first place, and in the second, that their opponents were not always prepared to observe the traditions they respected. "They discovered, in a word, that agreements peacefully to disagree could only be maintained when the subjects of contention were not deemed valuable enough, by either side, to justify resort to violence."[2]

Capitalists: It is not to be implied that Laski doubts the sincerity of the capitalists of the ruling class. His contention is that their narrow outlook, makes them unfit to be statesmen. By putting profit above everything else, they are unable to see the different demands, and understand traditions not built on profit. There is even, it seems to me, an over-emphasis in Laski's words: "No doubt, in his own way, he has been thoroughly devoted and conscientious. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of his identification of his private well-being with the public good. When, as in America he has bought judges, state governors, even the presidency itself,

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 52
2. Ibid., p. 55.

he has done so in the belief that to make them the phable instruments of his purposes was the best thing for the American people."[1] It would have been much nearer to the truth had he said that they were thinking of their own interest and not necessarily of the infliction of misery on others, when they bought those officials.

Security of the Democratic State: One may point out, as Laski is fully aware, to the success of democracy and the security of its state. He himself tells us how England became the predominent state in the world. Other people tried to emulate its habits, and its political institutions were believed to have brought about a happy adjustment between liberty and authority. The great upheaval of 1789 was not repeated on its soil, nor did the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 extend to it. That, Laski says, showed that its governing class knew how to build its power on popular consent. Even at the height of Chartist agitation, the supremacy of the state was not seriously challenged. "It is small wonder that, when the twentieth century dawned, parliamentary democracy seemed, to most observers, the way of life in which national salvation could be discovered."[2] To men of the Victorian Age, parliamentary democracy had obvious merits. The parties appealed to the electorate. The one that won a majority, became the government. Its oponents become the opposition whose duty is to reveal its defects. In the intellectual battle that ensued, the electorate had the opportunity to become more politically educated, and to pass judgment on the claims of both sides. This system made possible the application of reason to the settlement of disputes. Political

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1. Democracy in Crises, p.p. 56-57.
2. Ibid., p. 31

authority was not to be seized by force and violence. "Each was prepared to agree that success at the polls gave an unquestionable title to office. From the reign of Queen Anne, the dynastic question apart, no party in England had seriously considered the possibility of revolutionary effort."[1]

Englishmen, Laski says, may look with pride on that tradition. It afforded a system of government whereby party victory depended upon discovery of the national good. It ensured to able men whose ability and character were tested in parliament, the opportunity to play their rightful political roles. Among its virtues was "the self-confidence which could allow the amplest criticism of the system's foundations so that the most revolutionary exiles - Engels, Marx, Kropotkin - could live unhampered in its midst". And, last, its civil service was both clean and efficient.

It is essential to discover the causes which made this parliamentary democracy a success in order to find out whether those causes have ceased to exist or not. Laski claims that, in the main, its success was due to two principal causes. In the first place, the period was one of continuous material progress or economic expansion. The standard of life of the different classes became higher, and, Laski seems to put the two together, "most of the important questions which were debated - the franchise, education, public health, the regulation of women's and children's labor, the place of churches in the state - admitted of a fairly simple solution."[2] Second, there was, among the two main parties, general agreement about fundamentals. "After the triumph of free

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 32.
2. Ibid., p. 33.

trade, there was hardly a measure carried to the statute-book by one government which could not equally have been put there by its rivals".[1] The liberals established free trade; the Tories emancipated the trade unions. The liberals made the reform of 1832; the tories of 1867. In the reform of local government and national education both had its contributions. And both were in substantial agreement on the great importance of liberal individualism. It is this agreement on fundamentals, Laski points out, that made compromise and peaceful agreement possible.

But conditions changed. After the eighties of the last century, the industrial supremacy of England was not longer secure. The working class that was the product of the industrial revolution, made demands which neither party was prepared to admit. "The rise of Fabian Socialism, the birth of the Independent Labor Party, the increasing absorption of the trade unions in political issues, meant the end of the Victorian compromise."[2] The new outlook was not compatible with the laissez-faire state.

To meet the challenge of the new demands, the state became a social service state without, of course, effecting any change in the basic problem of ownership and control of economic power. The change may be indicated for example, by the income-tax, the super-tax, and death duties which were of such dimensions that "would have horrified the Victorian financier". Legislation regulating conditions of work, hours of labor, and public insurance point in the same direction. It was found that there were evils whose removal could not be entrusted to the individual. Thus the

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 33.
2. Ibid., p. 35.

state took upon itself the provision of services for the public. Its system of taxation became built on the principle of higher taxes on the rich according to ability and service for those who are poor. The system of individualism did not, as it had been formerly believed, result in common good, and the state had to interfere to make up for the defects.

But how far could the state extend its services? Of course it was not prepared to abolish private ownership. The capitalist system on the basis of which it is built, leaves a big portion of the people without the material well being which is conductive to satisfaction. The state steps in to afford that; but there is a limit to its willingness to do so. Its concessions and social expenditure have to be paid for, in part, by the capitalists. These, of course, will not pay indefinitely. During a period of economic expansion the problem is relatively simple. Opportunities seem to be open to all who are willing to make an effort. Expectation are easy to meet because of the big possibility of achievement and the rising standard of living. The capitalists are economically in a position to pay the price of their economic and political control. Yet, as economic expansion comes to an end, and a period of crises sets in, the situation is radically altered. Concessions become too costly. The decreasing profits and greater risks, force upon the capitalist a dislike for social expenditure which they have to pay for. They will no longer be able to maintain the old generosity. The demands of the working class become more irritating. These have been made to think that democracy is the government of the people and for the people. They have been taught that men are equal, and that it is the duty

of the state to improve their lot. In other words, there has been developed in their minds certain expectations which they believe are to be met. In contrast to these expectations, they find themselves in the midst of a depression. The opportunity of economic achievement is meager. Security is destroyed, and thousands become unemployed. As long as they believe that conditions will soon change, they will not demand any change in the fundamental structure of society. But when they become convinced that the economic depression is permanent; that, given the present economic system, there is no hope of any material improvement; and that no change of governments of the same class, nor any legislation that leaves untouched the foundations of society, will result in a change which will make possible the realization of their hopes, they will attack the capitalist system at its very basis. They will come to believe that private property stands in the way of their self-realization. Therefore they will challenge it too.

Liberal governments may come to power to attempt a reconciliation between the old established system and the new one which is struggling to replace it. That, according to Laski, was the part played by President Wilson in his first term of office, by the liberal government of 1906, and by the labour governments of 1924 and 1929. These increased the concessions, and fought against the vices of the old system. Yet, like Turgot and Necker at the opening of the French Revolution, they did not deliberately attempt to plan a new system different from the old. And the problem was not solved. The depression made the gap between the two camps wider. Again Laski shows how in England, after the brief post-war boom, depression steadily settled. The importance of the crises caused an eclipse of the liberal party whose supporters moved to

the conservative camp or the liberal camp. When the coalition government of 1931 came to power it "moved drastically to the right; economy at the expense of the social services - the recognition, in a word, that the policy of concessions had gove too far - was the pivot of its policy."[1] He adds that, the Labor Party, in turn moved further to the left. "For the first time in its history it was driven to recognize that compromise with capitalism was impossible. It adopted a policy of which the central purpose was a direct assault upon the foundations of economic power. National ownership and control of the banks, the land, power, transport, the mines, investment, and industries like cotton and iron and steel under government control, these were put in the forefront of its programme."[2] That is not to say that it became a revolutionary party. It proposed to achieve its objectives within the framework of the constitution. But that marked the abandonment of the belief in "the inevitability of gradualness." Actually it made known its intention to bring under the direct control of the state the key economic positions immediately following its next attainment of power.

What are the implications of this argument? Laski holds that in democratic society, owing to the depression which seems permanent, there is a division into two camps. These, unlike many other divisions, represent a disagreement in society upon fundamentals. It is a disagreement between those who would retain the capitalist system of private property, and those who fight to abolish it. Under such conditions, democracy is threatened. For democracy implies the willingness of the different parties to

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1 & 2. Democracy in Crises, p. 38

settle their disputes peacefully by persuasion and reason and not by violence and force. But, Laski's contention is, men will not give up peacefully positions which they deem vital without being forcefully compelled to do so. They might be willing to yield on minor issues, on fundamentals they are ready to fight. That is the experience we learn from the American Civil War. That, again, is the lesson we draw from both the French and Russian Revolution. In Italy, the violence of the workers caused the counter Fascist revolution. That also was the case in Hungary.

The United States, we may argue, does not support Laski's argument. It is a democracy and it is capitalist, and the individualistic spirit is still intense. Moreover, that country is suffering from a crises. Yet there seems to be no serious attack on the basis of society. Although a socialist party exists, it is actually dwarfed by the other two parties neither of which attacks the existing order, but actually stand for it. The answer to these claims is that the Republicans and Democrats, who have largely dominated the American scene for a long period, have no essential differences between them. "Like Liberals and Conservatives in Great Britain, they have been able to quarrel peacefully about minor matters because they were in agreement upon the fundamental way of American life".[1] And what has postponed the emergence of the socialist problem, was the fact that the vast resources of America had not been fully exploited until comparatively recently. "But, once the last frontier had been crossed, it became the obvious destiny of America to repeat the classic evolution of European capitalism in a more intense form".[2] Until recently, that is to say

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 44
2. Ibid., p. 44.

opportunities were so great that the business man and private profit capitalism - were accepted as the highest type of civilization. The long period of prosperity made the average man convinced that the constitution, which protected the rights of private property "was as nearly sacrosanct as any such instrument might be. But when the crises set in and the vast opportunities vanished, criticism and awareness of the presence of defects in the system increased. At the present, Laski says, "There is in America a wider disillusionment with democracy, a greater scepticism about popular institutions, than at any period in its history".[1]

The present cleavage in society is not one that is built on a minor issue. It is based on the demand of one class that another class should give up its ownership and private control of the means of production. Under democracy, the dispute is to be settled peacefully according to constitutional principles. But will the ruling class give up its position peacefully by submitting to democratic arbitration? That is what Laski very seriously doubts. Or will it organize itself for the destruction of democratic institutions and practices in order to maintain, by force, its present hold on economic and political power? That is what he, fully aware of its pessimistic note, thinks will probably be the course of events.

That is the nature of the grave problem underlying democratic assumptions. The need for reorganization is felt by many, but, except for those who believe in the necessity of dictatorship, Laski says there is no general agreement as to the course reorganization should take. There are, of course, difficulties in the way.

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 47.

The electorate itself might be taken first. Under democracy universal suffrage is supposed to give political power to the masses. Actually these do not have the interest nor the training to perform the task that was intended for them. Their daily concern so much of their time, that little, if at any, is left for politics. The complicated nature of present-day problems is not such as would arouse their interest. Housing schemes, unemployment insurance, currency reforms are not general issues that appeal to the public and strongly attract its attention. It is clear that the electorate are not well educated enough to make good political decisions. In the first place, education is expensive. In the second place, if the standard of education is raised, the expectations of the masses will become greater. Consequently it will become harder to maintain the gap between the rich and the poor, for a highly trained proletariate is hard to keep content. That is why the dominating capitalist class cannot afford to allow the people in a democracy the real amount of education which alone would make its principles and its practice as identical as possible. In the words of Laski himself, "all regimes built upon inequality draw their strength from the ignorance of the multitude, and all such regimes seek to make their methods of education such as are least likely to injure their own foundations".[1]

In this connection it may be well to point out what Laski considers the press to represent. At the present, he claims, it is organized, like other capitalist institutions, on the basis of private profit. That means that, instead of presenting the truth to the public, it has to offer the news in such a way as would

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 75.

secure for it the widest circulation conductive to profit, and second, that it has to depend on advertising. It is obvious that it cannot attack the system which the advertisers are eager to maintain. This will give an idea as to how newspapers tend to color and weigh the news. "Any one who compares the treatment of disarmament in the British Press in the first phase of the Geneva Conference of 1932 with the importance allotted to the sexual behavior of an Anglican sector in the same period will not find it difficult to discover how public opinion is made in a capitalist democracy".[1] This not to say, of course, that newspapers controled by the opponents of capitalism will present nothing but the true facts. Moreover, Laski observes that there is a compensation for the distortion of facts. Experience will ultimately reveal whether certain claims and allegations are founded or not.

The Legislatures: The legislatures of the democratic state are not in a satisfactory condition. They are overwhelmed with more work than they can reasonably carry out with the proper scrutiny. The private member is not free in his judgment due to pressure of party control. Direct initiative, Laski says, especially in finance and foreign affairs, has been lost by the legislatures. They, cause "irritating slowness", in the work of the government. These he claims, rarely complete their proposed programmes. Their sensetiveness to the electorate and their preoccupation with the problem of reelection, makes them unable to carry out measures of real reconstitution. Nor is this all. A government that has a vast majority behind it, will simply reduce the small minority of opposition to impotence. If it possesses but a bare majority, it

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 75.

will, out of necessity, follow a course which will increase its chances of staying longer in office rather than act with decision and clarity. For coalitions, Laski has a strong condemnation. "If the government is a coalition of parties," he declares, "The necessity of sinking differences in order to attain the appearance of unity breeds a dishonesty of temper, an accomodation in principle, which saps the moral character of the parliamentary system. There can have been few governments more void of any real moral foundation than the coalitions of 1918 and 1931 in England; and successive French Governments since the war have shown how the absence of any clear majority for some definite political purpose stultifies the prospect of a clear direction of affairs."[1]

It is not to be understood that Laski advocates the abolition of legislative assemblies. In fact he believes that there is much to be said for them, and rejects the claim that they are defective because they have been a collection of men of mediocre ability, on the ground that a parliament is not and should not be an assembly of specialists and experts but one of ordinary men. "For because a man is eminent in business, or engineering, or economics, or medicine, that is not ground for believing that his eminence is relevant to the peculiar tasks of a Parliament."[2] A parliament, in his opinion, can perform many functions. It is a good judge of character; a good vehicle for the expression of grievance; and, in general, invaluable for general discussion of general principles openly and with a full chance of hearing for rival sides. In this way the dictatorial practice of making decisions and acting before criticising the proposals involved is avoided. But, he argues, "It is not a paradox to argue that a lgislat-

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1. Democracy in Crises, pp. 78-79.
2. Ibid., p. 79.

assembly is unfitted by its very nature directly to legislate."[1] He builds his argument on the claim that the variety of persons in it are too numerous to be fit for a task other than to accept or reject proposals offered by the executive. Actually, initiative has become increasingly with the cabinet. "Indeed," he adds, "the more fully the modern Parliament can be freed from the necessity of scrutinising narrowly the specific details of legislation, the more adequate is likely to be the performance of the functions for which it is, in fact, suited."[2] It may, for example, discuss the problem of nationalising ownership of land, but not the details of the process by which that is to be achieved.

At the basis of all this, one factor is essential for any satisfactory working of a legislature assembly - there should be an agreement among parties on the essential foundations of society. When such agreement does not exist, a parliament cannot function in any real democratic manner. Laski doubts whether such a disagreement as that between a conservative party which accepts the profit-making motive and a labor party which attempts to abrogate that motive, will leave any of the two parties in a position to allow the other to realise its purposes peacefully.[3] The respect for constitutional processes, he thinks, does not seem to be strong enough to make that a possibility. That is the experience he draws from the American Civil War which was fought between those who wanted to make the slaves free and the slave-owners, and the case of Ulster which threatened civil war when Parliament suggested its unity in a self-governing Ireland. In this argument

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 81
2. Ibid., pp. 81-82.

we may find the basis of his question: "On experience, are the accepted conventions of the constitution, in any country, more than the agreements men are prepared to maintain because on essential things they are whole at one?"[1]

Nor, Laski believes, is the case of England different. He is aware of the arguments that Britain is the home of compromise, and that since 1688, except for the dynastic question, she has been able to settle her disputes without bloodshed. It is the country, we may be told, where "the instinct for law and order is so ingrained that a determined will to socialism on the part of the majority is certain to secure the acquiescence, however regretful, of their opponents".[2] Yet he regards the future with pessimism. He doubts that, if the Labor Party wins a majority and intends to put through a real programme, the capitalists will simply accept its decisions. A Labour Government would need emergency powers to cope with financial or industrial sabotage, and with the House of Lords which might choose opposition. In this, there is the element of civil disruption, "for nothing tests tempers so much as the putting of ultimate principles to the proof". "Let any one", he argues, "consider for a moment the mood in which crises like that of Ulster or the general strike were approached by men such as the late Lord Birkenhead or Mr. Winston Churchill, and he will find it difficult to insist upon the certainty of peace".[3] That is why he believes that the

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3. He states that in the "Short Programme" of the Labor Party issued in the spring of 1937, "There are promised to the electorate, in the event of a socialist victory, not only wide measures of nationalization, to be completed within a five year period, but also immense social reforms which include the abolition of the Means Test for the unemployed, the revision upwards of the insurance rates paid to the latter, and the raising of old age pensions to one pound per week to a single person, and thirty five shillings per week to a married couple". Parl. Government in England, p. 84

1. Ibid. p, 84 2. Ibid., p. 85 3. Ibid., p. 86

accession of the Labour Party to power will be accompanied by drastic changes in parliamentary government. It would acquire drastic powers, and act by ordinance and decrees. If it meets no violent resistence, the continuity of parliamentary government will depend upon a guarantee from the conservative party that it would not undo, if it came to power, what the socialists had achieved. But Laski tells us that he cannot answer the question as to whether such a guarantee would be given or not. He regards it, however, as the price of peace.

Laski considers two other alternatives. The first is that a socialist government may be met with resistence. If that happens to be the case, it would be inevitable that the constitution would be suspended. The result of the situation which would be created, would be civil war. The alternative is what he considers to be the probable course of events in England. When a labor victory at the polls is declared, a conservative government would still be in office. The leader of the victorious party would be called to a conference. He would be told that the policy he proposes to follow would be a great threat to the stability of the state. It would be attempted to make him understand that it is his duty to pursue a peaceful course of action. Only on such terms, may be hope for the cooperation of his opponents to find a way out of the crises. His acceptance of these proposals would mean the postponement of a socialist administration.

But Laski believes that he would not accept; acceptance would mean a serious division of his party. What would be the outcome? The former prime minister would not call the new parliament, but would probably advise its dissolution. If again the socialists

win at the new elections, conditions would compel whoever obtains power to suspend parliamentary methods.

To support his argument, he points out to the spirit that has developed among the conservatives. He observes how the apparently permanent eclipse of the Liberal Party was due to the necessity of making a choice between Capitalism and Socialism. He adds that "The acceptance by a great mass of Liberals of the policy of conservatism has resulted in the formation of a "National" government which regards the classic technique of opposition quite differently from its predecessors. For where, before the war, the idea that it was the duty of an opposition to oppose was regarded as of the inner essence of the parliamentary system, now it is increasingly urged that opposition as such is merely faction; and the tendency is to discount the whole validity of the party conflict as in and of itself a detriment to national unity. At bottom, of course, this criticism is no different from that made by Fascists of parliamentary regime."[1] Moreover, he observes that there has been a movement for the reconstruction of the House of Lords in order, its proponents have admitted, that it may become a strong safeguard against a socialist government. In addition to that, there has been an intense effort to revive the prestige of the monarchy, and, which he remarks to be more significant, a mystification of the theory that the Crown is the guardian of the constitution. That would make the monarch, in time of crises, the arbiter between parties. It is not difficult to foretell in which direction his weight will be exerted. Nor is it irrelavent, he says, that "a Prime Minister has warned the

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1. Parliamentary Government in England, p. 87.

Labour Party of the danger it would run if, as a government, it were to follow the advice of those who urge it to make a frontal attack on capitalist foundations".[1] With all this, Laski believes, there is involved a new temper that is sceptical of democratic methods because it does not approve of democratic ends. That is the basis, he declares, of the different treatments, by the British, of Soviet Russia, on the one hand, and Hitler and Mussolini, on the other. It is, again, the basis of the conservative outlook on the Spanish struggle from which, to their satisfaction, Franco emerged victorious. "The fact", he says, "is that, since the war, our foreign policy is largely unintelligible save as the expression of a determination to discourage all movements abroad which, seeking democratic emancipation, have been driven to recognize that the vested interests of property are the main obstacles in its path; and that discouragement has been enthusiastically welcomed by the propertied class of this country".[2]

Nor would the respect for the constitution, he thinks, make peaceful change a certain matter. Constitutions win the loyalty of men only partly for what they are; the essential factor is what achievement they make possible. In his own words, "Men did not go out to battle for an abstract dislike of the royal prerogative under Charles I; it was the result of its operation on merchant and non-conformist which sent them out into the field. Men, similarly, will respect the British Constitution so long as they respect what it does. And their respect will be a function of its ability to satisfy their established expectations. Once it begins to fail in this, they begin to doubt the validity of its forms".[3]

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1. Parliamentary Government in England, p. 28
2. Ibid., p. 52 3. Ibid., p. 29

Today, parties in England do not function in the same atmosphere as that in which the conservatives and liberals found themselves. These two were able to disagree peacefully and to refrain from seriously questioning the essentials of the constitution, because they 'started from the same premisses.' The difference between them was, as Laski says, quantitative rather than qualitative. Their conflict tended to conceal the real unity between them; actually they did not differ on the foundations of the state. What they differed upon was the means by which the system to which they both held, was to be realized. "Whether in the realm of empire, or foreign affairs, of social principles or of economic method, liberals and conservatives alike could accept without repining the results of each other's governments because the policy of neither touched the basic question of the ultimate constitution of property."[1] This argument, Laski, points out, is not different from the words of Lord Balfour, which he quotes: "It is evident....that our whole political machinery pre-supposes a people so fundamentally at one, that they can afford safely to bicker; and so sure of their own moderation, that they are not dangerously disturbed by the never ending din of political conflict"[2]

But now, Laski's contention is, the people of England are not fundamentally at one. The present line of division is a choice between those who want to destroy private property and those who struggle for its retention. It is no longer a struggle made safe by agreement on the premisses; now each side has a completely different conception of society. And it is hard to believe that men who are closely bound up with the present system

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1. Parliamentary Government in England, p. 91
2. Ibid., pp. 200-201.

would permit its peaceful transformation. That implies that business men would, out of respect for the constitution, allow a Labour Government to move towards a society which they believe to be neither efficient nor really possible. It also implies a self-restraint on the part of the English ruling class, which, Laski believes, has not been their habit in the past. It is in this connection that he quotes Mr. Shaw's words that "It is the secret of our governing class....who, though perfectly prepared to be generous, humane, cultured, philanthropic, public-spirited, and personally charming, in the second instance, are unalterably resolved in the first to have money enough for a handsome and delicate life, and will, in pursuit of that money, batter in the doors of their fellow-men, sell them up, sweat them in fetid dens, shoot, stale, hang, imprison, sink, burn and destroy them in the name of law and order."[1]

The conclusion which Laski draws is that the British are not immune from using violence for the purpose of achieving change. British democracy produces a strong demand for equality. At the same time 'the belief in inequality is still a profound passion with our governing class.' They hold to inequality because it enables them to maintain the system of privileges which they enjoy. The system of education, he holds conforms to class distinctions. That is one way by which the privileged class controls the commanding positions in society. Again, such professions as the Bar (and medicine) the officer class of the army, of the civil service, and even of the Church of England do not offer a fair chance of entrance to the children of the working class. The diplomatic service is

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1. Parliamentary Government in England, pp. 188-189.
2. Democracy in Crises, pp. 223-224.

more markedly reserved to a small number of public schools. The result of privilege has been the absence of real unity of spirit and culture between the different classes of British society. They live in different worlds and the temper of the ruling class has not been one of resistence to claims of equality, but also of resistence to members of other classes to share in power with them. "No child of working class parents has ever sat in a conservative cabinet; and Mr. John Burns was the only trade unionist who, before the war, was selected for high office by the liberals. Until the advent of the Labor Party in 1906, as a separate force in British politics, it is notable that the most numerous class in the nation was virtually without representation in the House of Commons."[1]

Compromise does not seem to be possible. Laski does not agree that the attitude of the working class is an indication of the possibility of peaceful compromise. To him, the general elections of 1931 could not have shown that the common people stood solidly behind the governing class. Those elections, being what he calls panic elections, cannot be considered a sure test of the permanent temper of the working class. For, he argues, as long as the institutions are unaltered, the workers will demand a change. They may be opposed by the hopes of better times. But that will not permanently keep them satisfied. "Long years of industrial depression have produced a lack of faith in, an apathy about, our historical institutions which made them far more fragile than they superficially appear".[2] That the workers do not want revolution is true. But they want economic security and better living conditions. If the way to this goal is barred, they will not rest unmoved when they find that their hopes are being frustrated.

1. Democracy in Crises, pp. 223-224. 2. Ibid., p. 230.

The Cabinet: The foregoing analysis and arguments are the basis of Laski's view of the problems which democratic institutions are facing today. That, in fact, is the essence of his major argument in his work on parliamentary government in England. The weaknesses which democracy has and will display, has only partially been the result of institutional causes; the major common defect is the increasing diversity of view on the fundamental structure of society It is in this light that he examines the cabinet, the civil service, the judiciary, the army and the monarchy. Writers, for instance may argue that the cabinet has assumed the initiative which they wish to see with the legislature. They may say that its powers are great; that it is pressed by a huge amount of work to which it cannot attend properly. An important minister has to attend to the business of his department, has to acquaint himself with the important questions before the cabinet, and has to face the legislative assembly. Besides his family affairs he has to make party speeches and attend ceremonial functions. And, when formulating and announcing policy, he has to think of the electorate, of powerful interest, and of his colleagues. It also may be argued that the cabinet is enslaved to a powerful beaurocratic administration of permanent civil servants; or that through delegated and semi-judicial functions, has assumed powers of which she should be deprived. Yet, regardless of whether he agrees with any of these claims or not, Laski believes that the cabinet system, despite its great merits, has now to meet the ultimate conflict between Capitalism and Socialism if it is to prove that it can successfully maintain itself.

That again, is the basis of the attitude of the civil service. It is true that it has proved itself both efficient

and neutral. It is even true that it was its officials who discovered the facts which made the change from a laissez-faire to a positive state imperative. It was, Laski says, these facts upon which Marx built his condemnation of the capitalist system. But the fact that it has so far served different governments faithfully is no proof that it will do so when a socialist government, determined to proceed with the transformation of capitalist society, comes to power. That is a test which it will have to meet if the occasion arises. We have, Laski argues, to remember that the various governments which it has served, have been either supporters of the capitalist system, or socialists governments which moved within the framework of that system without really attempting its modification. We have also to remember that the highest officials of the service are members of the ruling class who live its own life and accept its tenets. The traditions which the departments have built will weight against change.

The case of the armed forces is not different. If we assume that the present ruling class will refuse to allow the transformation of their order, the attitude of the armed forces becomes very important. In case a socialist party attains power, will they obey the constitutional authority? It is said that the civil power is supremeover the military. Yet when one thinks of the color of the armed forces, he cannot be sure that this supremacy can be maintained under certain conditions. The officers, Laski argues, belong to the middle and upper classes." When further," he says, "the officer who retires from the service embarks upon a political career, his spiritual home is almost inveriably in the ranks of the conservative party."[1] Hence it is fair to say

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 107.

that the army favours the established system. And it follows that, unless the rank and file of the army are on the side of the socialist party, the armed forces, in a time of crises, will defend the conservatives.

The Judiciary: It might be claimed that at least in the realm of law, the facts are against Laski's contention. Legal equality we are told, at least in modern times has been one of the basic principles of society. The judiciary has developed a tradition of impartiality. The judges have been placed outside the realm of political influence. Before them the rich as well as the poor, the black as well as the white are not objects of different treatments.

Laski, however, does not attack the neutrality of the judidiary or the integrity of the judges. But his conception of law and the relation of the judges to it, make them instruments of the state which, in turn, is the instrument of class power. The judge, he declares, is an instrument of state power,[2] and "Law is not a body of eternal and immutable principles which, on discovery, the judge forthwith applies. Law is a body of rules made and changed in given times and places by men to secure ends which they deem desirable."[2] Law, Laski wishes to stress, is the reflection of the economic order of the society which maintains it. In a feudal society it is an expression of the rights and duties pertaining to the ownership

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1. See Article on Judicial Function in 'The Danger of Being a Gentleman.
2. Democracy in Crises, p. 129.

of land; in a capitalist society to ownership of property; and in soviet Russia, "is deliberately devised to protect the basic assumptions of a communist state."

Moreover, he points out, the appointment of its judges is in the hands of parties which uphold capitalist principles. These choose the candidate not only on the basis of his ability, but also on the 'soundness' of his views which really mean that he does not question the capitalist assumptions. That is why radicals or even sceptics have been rare on the court. Nor is the English system different though, in England, Parliament is supreme, and the judiciary has a tradition of independence and incorruptibility. The judge there is trained in the tradition of the ruling class. He takes part in its social functions. "He is", in Laski's own words, "a successful barrister, and, in the majority of instances in the last hundred years, a successful barrister who has played his part in the House of Commons". And the courts have actually shown an attitude which reveals their readiness to maintain the assumptions of the capitalist system. "There is, in brief, "Laski says, "a good deal in the habits of English justice which gives point to the traditional accusation that there is one law for the rich and one law for the poor."[1] That, he thinks, is illustrated in the realm of freedom of speech, treatment of the poor debtor and rich bankrupt, inadequacy of defence of poor persons, and the application of law relating to picketing

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 134.

during a strike. The attitude of the courts towards utterances hostile to the present order; towards socialist activity and the different treatment accorded to Fascists is illustrative of its class position. The police did not interfere in the Fascist meeting at Olympia in 1934, and inspite of the violence that occurred at that meeting, the House Secretary justified its attitude on the basis that "the law provides that unless the promoters of a meeting ask the police to be present in the actual meeting they cannot go in unless they have reason to believe that an actual breach of the peace is being committed." Yet when, three months later, a meeting, of which the chairman and first speaker were socialists, was held in South Wales, the police interfered, and had the right to do so according to the courts who held that "the police were entitled to enter any meeting if they had reason to believe that, in their absence, there might be either seditious utterances or a breach of the peace."[1] Laski concludes; "A principle of law.... that was unknown to the House Secretary's legal advisers in June 1934, is enunciated without doubt by the High Court in August of the same year. It is impossible not to note that the speakers at the first meeting were Fascists; while the chairman and chief speakers at the South Wales meeting were communists."[2] Even when the position of the lawyers is examined, it is found that their weight is in favour of one class against another. For a lawyer who earns his living by serving business men and companies, would lose that position if he attacked the order which they uphold or if that order was to break down. "Nor is it unworthy to remark," Laski says in this connection, "that the lawyer who served the

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1. Parliamentary Government in England, p. 337.
2. Ibid. p. 337.

Labour Government of 1924 in high legal office suffered a serious loss of income until he severed his connection with that party."[1] The training of the lawyer is rooted in the traditions of the past. A reforming lawyer, Laski maintains, is uncommon, and the profession has shown itself conservative and hostile to reform.

Laski's view may be made clearer by saying that he considers law to be an instrument the domination of the state by a certain class. Law, it follows, is not a system of abstract justice which extends its benefits and protection to people of all classes equally; its main purpose is to safeguard the gains which the dominant class enjoy against those who are not members of that class. And since the courts, judges and lawyers, are brought up, in a conservative manner, in the tradition of the old system, they tend, despite their integrity and impartiality, to endeavour to maintain the assumptions of that system. The significance of this observation may be fully realised if we recollect that in America the Supreme Court has the power to declare laws and acts of the executive unconstitutional, and that in England, despite the supremacy of Parliament over the Judiciary, the judges really share in making the law in the process of their application. Such power has made them, Laski maintains, able, in certain cases to impose a check even on the enactments of the legislature. That may be illustrated in the Taff Vale case which showed, he writes, that the "House of Lords thought it impossible that Parliament should have excused trade unions - despite the plain words of the statute - from liability for the tortious acts of their agents".[2]

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 142.
2. Parliamentary Government in England, p. 364.

That is to say, in Laski's opinion the judges when applying the law, have as a background to their decision, certain major premisses that embody the main nors of private property. The implication is that their judgment cannot go beyond the boundaries defined by these 'inarticulate major premisses.' Hence, the judiciary, in this context, cannot, no matter how impartial and independent it is, but he ultimately biased in favor of the ruling class.

The Monarchy: Laski attaches a great deal of importance to the position which the monarchy occupies in the English constitutional structure. It might, he believes, play a vital part in the struggle between Capitalism and Socialism. That is due, first, to its social attachments and, second, to the fact that its prerogatives are not well defined.

Since the days of Queen Victoria, the English monarchy has grown in social prestige. It has exchanged its former power for the influence and support which it now enjoys. The causes of this development seem to be apparent. The English monarch has, at least it is so believed, stood above party struggles. Thus he has withdrawn from the political arena, and saved himself the suspicion and hostility which would have been cultivated against him had he not chosen that path. Again, the requirements of the empire have enhanced the position of the English Monarch. Laski notes how the popularity of Queen Victoria started with her proclamation as Empress of India. The various part of the Empire, particularly those that are independent, need a symbol of unity. The cabinet or an elected president are not qualified for that high post. The monarch is. Moreover, Laski points out, the Royal

Family has been devoted to social functions, has shared the national emotions of the country, and has been associated with successful wars. This, together with the fact that every Royal Act and every utterance has been magnified and colored by every instrument of propaganda, explains the love and respect which the public hold for the Royal Family. One other development has contributed in the same direction. The remnants of the old aristocracy still look to the monarch for leadership and since the advant of the very rich into the aristocratic rank they have also looked to the monarch for favor to enhance their social position. In this way the range of support for the monarchy has been made wider.

But what does monarchy imply? It requires a court and and aristocracy: That is really inconsistent with equality. For an aristocracy cannot but stand for some privilege which is denied to those who are outside its ranks. The influence of the crown and its prestige tend to make such privilege look natural and fundamental. That is the import of Laski's words, "Yet the fact surely is that the whole impact of the crown and the social system it necessitates is to preserve that temper of inequality it is the purpose of a Labour Party to deny. It gives birth to a set of values which are both irrational and dangerous. It persuades men to accept the idea of a leisure class whose standard is set by the conspicous waste of which they are capable. It attaches romance and color to things in themselves utterly devoid of both".[1]

The implication is that, granted these bonds of the monarchy with privilege, it is doubtful if the influence and power

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 117.

of that institution will not be used in the support of the conservative cause. The very training which the prospective monarch gets, and the life he lives, despite the apparent display of interest in the lot of the poor class, is such as make him unable to understand adequately the workers side of the picture.

In the second place, the prerogatives of the monarch are not really well defined. The doctrine that the king must act upon the advice of his ministers, Laski believes, may give rise to different conclusions. Does it mean, he asks, that the king may advise, encourage, and warn, but must ultimately accept the advice of his minister? Or does he have a reserve power which he may use at his own discretion? Is he entitled to refuse a dissolution of parliament and to veto a bill passed by both houses? Is he the "Guardian of the Constitution" during an emergency? Who is to pass judgment upon what constitutes an emergency? These questions might not seem important. It is now generally believed that the English monarch stands outside the circle of political action, he no longer rules the country, but acts as a nominal head to serve certain general purposes. This may be best illustrated by the fact that there has been no serious attack on the monarchy--not even from the left. Yet Laski's argument is one which is concerned with how the prerogatives of the monarch might be exploited in a time of crises. Will the monarchy, then, be able or allowed to maintain strict neutrality? "Since Victoria", he says, "the monarch has proved his anxiety to remain outside of party conflicts. But at a time when the very foundations of society are threatened it would be superhuman on the part of the governing class if they did not exploit his prerogatives. So to refrain, at least, has

not been their habit elsewhere".[1] And Laski believes that, strictly speaking, the English Monarch has not been as passive as many believe. Queen Victoria, in contrast to the picture drawn by Bagehot, was active in the conduct of the government. "It is true, and it is important, that she never either refused a dissolution or vetoed a bill. But she played a considerable part in the choice of her ministers; she secured the appointment of some and prevented the appointment of others. She had no hesitation in forcing her views upon every aspect both of domestic and foreign policy;"[2] Edward VII also was not without his power. Appointments, pressure on the cabinet about his government of India, intriguing with individual members of the cabinet coming to agreement with the opposition - these are some of the acts which Laski puts on the kings' list.[3] "He never", our writer says, "overstepped the bounds of constitutional propriety in anything like the ruthless fashion of Queen Victoria. But there is no mistaking the side upon which his influence was thrown".[4] The conduct of King George V seems to have been different. This king was noted for his respect to the constitutional rules. Yet Laski doubts his neutrality at the transfer of power from the Labor Party to the National Government in 1931. In his analysis of the situation, however, he does not produce material evidence against the neutrality of the king, but he draws the conclusion that there is grounds for suspecting that King George V acted deliberately in such a way as to enable Mr. Baldwin to choose the best moment for elections which gave him a vast conservative majority. Finally, the short reign of Edward VIII provided a monarchical crises which, had its cause been different, would have thrown much light on the temper of the modern

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 124.
2. Parliamentary Govt. in England, p. 397
3. Ibid. see pp. 398-400 4. Ibid., p. 401.

British Monarchy and its alliance with the conservative forces in the nation. But the question which it envolved was not one on which there is any real difference between the socialists and the conservatives. Hence the agreement of both these camps can not be taken to mean that the conservatives are willing to join hands with their enemies against their king when the occasion arises. Had the attitude of Edward VIII represented an endeavour to champion the conservative cause, different conclusions would have been drawn. The real issue was that the king wanted to make the woman, whom he loved, his wife. But that woman was not fit, in the opinion of the British people in general and the British Empire, to be their queen.

Such, according to Laski, is the situation in England. The conclusions he draws are gloomy. For, he concludes, "it may be that the British Governing Class is different from any other inhistorical experience.... It may be that it is prepared,....to see itself stripped of power by the very instruments devised to preserve it.... In these events, no doubt, parliamentary government will be both enriched and strengthened by the proof of its unique flexibility. Yet because it may be the case that British human nature is not, in the last resort, so finally different from that of Germany or France or Italy, the discussion of alternative hypotheses is not wholly an illegitimate adventure."

Discontent and Authority: It is on the basis of the foregoing arguments that Laski explains the decreased power to secure obedience and greater resistence to law. These, that is, have not been due to any new love of this order and lawlessness on the part of men, but simply because there has come about a basic

disagreement on fundamentals regarding the kind of order under which men desire to live and mere changes in the political machinery, Laski holds, will not solve the problem. Such devices as the initiative, the referendum, proportional representation, devolution of power, federal forms, are powerless in the face of the impeding danger. The core of the crises is economic change.

Democracy claims to be the rule of reason. Under it the possession of power is not gained by a resort to violence. Only the power of argument and peaceful persuasion are necessary for political victory. Justice, it is implied is not identical with coercion, and parties that are not in power remain free to convince the electorate that they can serve the country more successfully than the government of the day. To those who passionately hate violence and have experienced the results of the replacement of reason by violence, the above claims are attractive. To them it is easy to see that the application of reason to the solution of human problems is extremely desirable. That, as Laski agrees, is true. But the question he raises is: Are men fundamentally reasoning animals who are guided by logic? Do they act according to reason? His answer is in the negative. For, as he says, "Theories of social organization for which no valid proof exists have been and still are, urged by their inheritors with a simple faith in their validity which would be pathetic if it were not tragic.....And he will cling to them as valid, will fight on their behalf with ecstacy, will bring to their support all the resources of intelligence and passion and imagination".[1] And futility of reason, where essentials are at stake, is adequately illustrated in the relation of state to state. Men, Laski wishes to make clear,

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 158.

do not love order for its own sake, but for the ends it serves; when those ends are in danger, men will sacrifice order by fighting for their preservation. When they have strong convictions which are threatened, they become less tolerant and are consequently unprepared to trust reason. In fact, they become so intolerant that they would, to say the least, not be offended by the use of unconventional means that serve ends which they approve. "The Conservative Party in Great Britain", he writes, "big business in America displays a fierce indignation towards the methods by which the Soviet system has consolidated its authority, but they display a singular levity towards the use of those same methods by Mussolini because they approve the purpose he is serving".[2] The same is true, he adds, of the attitude of the British Labor Party towards the Russian experiment though it does not favour its methods. The truth which these statements carry can hardly be denied. Many of us are aware that, to some people of the Arab World, an attempt on the part of a European country to carve out a colony and maintain its control over it is a criminal act worthy of extreme denunciation, but the actual annexation of part of Syria by a Moslem neighbour is, at least to a part of those people, an occasion of relief. The reason is known to those who know the country.

Reason, Laski believes, can prevail only when there is political stability and economic expansion. That is a period when the constitutional structure is not seriously questioned and when the demand for material comfort is satisfied. This is not to say,

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 158.
2. Ibid., p. 190

of course, that only material questions make men liable to discard reason as the instrument for settlement. Religious, social and family differences have caused bloodshed. But these, he argues, are largely unenduring. He quotes Madison's words: "The only durable source of faction is property" and adds that "over the rights that are to attach to it there is no sacrifice that men are not prepared to make".[1] At present, property is the dividing line between the two camps. The ruling class does not only find its property threatened but also the traditions associated with its possession. Its members are facing the danger of losing their commanding position and becoming the recepients of orders from those whom they have long regarded as their inferiors. And the new system which these inferiors are attempting to establish, deprives the present masters of the essentials which they hold dear.

But the expectations of the masses in a democracy produce a contrast to those of their rulers. They are taught that they are equal in politics and before the law. They tend to believe that they are equally entitled to benefit. When they come to realize that private property stands in the way of equality they seek, it is natural that they will attempt to abolish it. Such is the position of the worker. He is made to believe that, though his political power, he is able to secure control over the conditions under which he lives. In the industrial field on the other hand, he finds that he has to obey unhesitatingly the orders of the owner. The freedom which democracy is meant to provide for him, is bondage in the field of industry. When he becomes fully conscious of the contrast he seeks to liberate himself in the

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1. Democracy in Crisis, p. 192.

industrial field - The instrument of achieving that end is the abolition of private property. That is the position which Laski holds. He rejects the claim that there is friendship or real personal touch between worker and employer. Their interests, he maintains, are basicly contradictory. It is true that it is in the interest of the worker that his employer does not fail in business because that would make him lose his job. It is also true that if the profit of the employer drops, a reduction in wages or number of workers will be one of the results. But, he insists, it is also true that during a period of prosperity, workers will demand better conditions. When a depression sets in, attempts at economy at the workers expense will be resisted. In short, "The relation between capital and labor is always one of war, open or veiled, for in an acquisitive society, where the fundamental motive of behavior is profit, men are bound to struggle for the fruits of acquisition".[1]

The prerequisites of a successful representative government, according to Laski, are three. First, there should be agreement on fundamentals. Second, no important class should be permanently excluded from a share in political power. Third, there should exist a diffused habit of tolerance that would permit peaceful argument. Tolerance, it is added, comes with security. When these disappear, peaceful solutions become, to say the least, extremely doubtful. Past peaceful agreements in democratic countries have been possible because, they did not involve essentials. Laski even claims, referring to the English House of Commons that, "Its political relations, the social habits that it builds, the nature of its procedure, all express the fact that its members are

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1. Democracy in Crises, p. 198.

aware that its battles are sham battles in which vital wounds are not to be inflicted on either side. Every cabinet that took office from 1832 was aware, with one exception, that whatever legislation it passed would be obeyed; and that exception, the Home Rule Act of 1914, was for the Opposition a "Vital Round", which it is significant, led straight to the threshold of civil war".[1] That, he adds, is not only true of England, but of other capitalist democracies as well. In the United States, the Republicans and Democrats have been in agreement upon fundamentals, the one serious disagreement over slavery and the right of secession led to civil war. In France, "Since the foundation of the Third Republic no fundamental has been in question until the Socialists posed the matter of the ultimate constitution of property. When they did the menace of Fascism was at once apparent; and democracy in France was safeguarded only by an agreement between parties of the Left to postpone the issue of Socialism."[2] In the Scandinavian countries, the Socialist Governments have been able to maintain their position without violent opposition because they have not attempted to disturb the foundations of society.

That is why Laski believes that violence and revolution are imminent. The capitalist democracy of the present day divides society into two great camps, owners of property and workers. Democracy teaches the latter that they are entitled to freedom and equality. They, on the other hand, have become convinced that there is no real equality and freedom under a

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1. Parliamentary Government in England, p. 201
2. Ibid., p. 202. (Before the elections of 1956)

capitalist system. That system has ceased to meet their expectations. They seek to change it. But to the owners of property it is so dear that they would not peacefully surrender even to a democratic decision - agreement on fundamentals does not exist. Hence the clash of arms seems inevitable.

P A R T

T W O

SOCIALISM

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH SOCIALISM

The beginning of working-class consciousness in England can be traced back to the period before the great industrial upheaval which we call the Industrial Revolution. There had previously existed working-class unions and England had witnessed the occurrence of strikes. But not before the end of the 18th century or the beginning of the 19th did separate workers organizations form part of a concerted movement, or were they representative, in a real way, of the working class as a whole. In the words of Mr. Cole, "These earlier outbursts of industrial discontent were either sheer hunger movements, such as the bread riots which were common in many parts of eighteenth century England, or arose out of the specific grievances of bodies of workmen, for the most part skilled artisans or craft workers in particular trades such as the woolen industry under the domestic system or the smaller urban handicrafts of the eighteenth century towns."[1] What grievances there existed were not looked upon as part of a general social scheme. The separate groups of workers sought remedy for their particular trouble by the organization of strikes or by appeal to the state. Sometimes, it is true, workmen of one trade helped workers of another. It is also true that, at times, the workers' organization extended beyond a local basis. But this did not mean the existence of a common philosophy or of a common policy behind which the workers stood as a class.

That was true of England despite the fact that even before the advent of the Industrial Revolution, some sort of a

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1. Socialism in Evolution, 1938, p. 9.

capitalist system in the sphere of commerce had developed in England. Of that Mr. Cole writes, "Even before the introduction of power-driven machinery on any considerable scale, the woollen industry, at any rate in the West of England, and to a certain extent in Yorkshire also, was already organized on a capitalist basis; and both coal-mining and the more important branches of the metal industry had for technical reasons to be developed at an early stage on capitalistic lines".[1] Thus there had existed a distinct proletariat in England before the introduction of machines, but it was not united in a common organization nor was it class conscious.

But towards the close of the 18th century, working-class consciousness began to develop. The early movements in which this development could be discerned were not organized by the older proletariat of the woollen industry or the coal mines, but rose among groups of skilled artisans. It was this class of workers rather than the ill-paid factory workers and miners that first made an attempt to develop a new outlook and policy built on some sort of a conception of working class solidarity. The first organization of this kind was the London Corresponding Society which was formed in 1792 shortly after the French Revolution. The chief activities of this society were the holding of meetings, discussion, and the publication of pamphlets. Its objects were more political than economic. It attempted the organization of skilled workers for the purpose of supporting the middle class movements for political reform. At that time, the British political structure was oligarchi The changes in the centres of population in the course of the 18th

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1. Socialism in Evolution, p. 10.

century due to the rise of new towns brought about by the developments in industry and commerce, was not followed by a change in the territorial basis of political representation. "The existence side by side of rotten boroughs whose members represented in effect nobody but their owners, and a large unfranchised towns and industrial areas served continually to emphasise the oligarchical and unrepresentative character of the British Constitution -- the more so because the institutions of local government were for the most part even rottener than the Parliament, and afforded no outlet for the desire to manage their own concerns which was growing rapidly both among the increasing middle classes and among the upper stratum of the working artisans."[1] Influenced by the French Revolution, the members of the society stood for universal suffrage and annual parliaments. In its origin, the society represented the desire of skilled artisans to play a distinct part in the movements of political reform. It did not intend to inaugurate a separate movement, but sought recognition among other groups that worked for the same political reforms in which it believed. In fact, its members needed their own society, not to express a different set of beliefs, but because the already established reform societies required higher contributions than workmen could meet, and carried their work under conditions which suited neither the purses nor the manners of the artisan class.

But when the corresponding society and other similar associations which were formed in most of the towns of the country arose, the result was that they developed some degree of class consciousness, and attempted to express the grievances and miseries of the poorer workers. The movements of reform, however, were crushed

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1. Cole, Socialism in Evolution, p. 11-12

before any permanent result was attained. The experiences of the French Revolution moved the ruling class to deal with a crushing hand with any movement that aimed at the alteration of the existing oligarchical forms. Pitt, through his repressive measures, was able to break up the movement.

By 1815 conditions had changed. The Industrial Revolution had advanced. The high prices and the periodical unemployment during the war with France taught the workers a lesson in solidarity. The skilled artisan leaders obtained greater response from the masses of the people. The suppression of this wider mass movement could not be successful. Attempts of this nature were made. Leaders were sent to prison; workers organizations were broken up. Even a massacre - the famous Peterloo Massacre of 1819 - did occur. "But it was impossible for the post-war movement, however,much it might be repressed, to be crushed out of existence: it was too strong and too widespread for that, and there was no longer the cry of anti-Jacobinism to rally the frightened middle classes behind the repressive tactics of the oligarchs."[1] With the recovery of trade after the war, the great movements of unrest that marked the years immediately after 1815 disappeared. In 1824, the Combination Laws were repealed largely due to the efforts of Francis Place. The outcome was a great increase in trade union activity and a wide occurrence of strikes in many trades. Though the government, having become alarmed, reimposed some of the former restrictions on trade unions, the complete prohibition of combinations was abandoned. After 1824, the trade unions began to develop very rapidly.

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1. Cole, Socialism in Evolution, p. 16.

In the meanwhile, the agitation for reform was approaching the landmark of 1832. In this movement, the workers played an important part. They, however, did not pursue an independent course of action, but associated themselves, as subordinates rather than equals, with the middle class reformers who were ready to seek working class support to win political power, but were as much opposed to drastic changes like the granting of universal suffrage, as the tories themselves. This situation placed two alternatives before the workers - either to abandon the hope of reforming Parliament by constitutional means, or to support the middle class reformers in the hope of ultimately attaining a fuller political democracy. Most of the working class leaders, under Cobbet, accepted the second alternative, but there was a group among the workers who considered the class of employers and traders as more its enemies than the old aristocracy. This group was led by Hunt and came to be best known as the National Union of the Working Classes. It did not stand against the Reform Bill, but persistently demanded adult suffrage and complete political democracy. Its success, of course, was impossible, yet its value lay in the development of working class consciousness and of the working class movement.

Robert Owen:

During the period of the struggle for reform, as we have seen, Trade Unionism continued to grow. The ideas of one man dominated it - Robert Owen. At that time the workers did not have a fixed interest in the land. They exerted no direct power on the national nor the local governments. The Industrial Revolution did not provide them with certain benefits. The English worker lived

under miserable conditions. He was uneducated and many of his fellow workers were utterly poor and very badly affected by changes produced by the introduction of the machines. He worked long hours and was faced with the competition of women and children. Even, children, sometimes at the age of five or six, had to work the same hours as the adults. The effects of such conditions upon the working class cannot be hard to imagine. "Destitute as they so often were of parental protection and oversight, with both sexes huddled together under immoral and insanitary conditions, it was only natural that they should fall into the worst habits, and that their offspring should to such lamentable degree be vicious, improvident, and physically degenerate."[1] It was under such circumstances that Owen first formulated his socialistic scheme.

Owen became famous through his work at the mills of New Lanark. There, he had about two thousand people under him who had lived a wretched life. He set himself to the task of improving their lot, and he won great success. He taught the people habits of cleanliness and thrift, provided them with cheap supplies of good food, and was the first in England to found infant schools. His superiority over his rival manufacturers did not lie in his application of new methods of production in the cotton industry, but, as Mr. Cole says, "also in realising that business success was fully compatible with fair treatment and a tolerable standard of wages for his employees."

Up till 1817, Owen's work had been that of a philanthropist. Now, he became socialistic. He believed that the permanent cause of distress was the competition of human labour with the

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1. Kirkup, A History of Socialism, 1920, p. 59.

machines. This belief did not make him hostile to machine production, but led him to conclude that if its great benefits were to be enjoyed the machines should be subordinated to men. His plan was the establishment of communities of about 1200 people, each in one large building, to live on certain areas of land. In these communities, each family would have its private apartments and the entire care of its children till they reached the age of three. Beyond that age they would be entrusted to the care of the community. The life of the communities would be cooperative, and work and its products would be common to all the members. In order to obtain the advantages of both town and village life, agriculture will not be the only occupation, but the best machinery would be provided to each community. As such communities increased, they would join in a federation which would ultimately cover the whole world. Government would no longer be in the hands of politicians, but would be formed by delegates of the various trades. Owen, of course, considered his plan practicable and easy to put into practice. "He rapidly convinced himself that the Trade Unions would in a very brief space of time-five years-transform existing society into a socialist community by taking over industry and running it cooperatively, and that within five months they could secure a large number of immediate benefits."[1] His plan won popularity at first, but lost it later on largely because he made announcements hostile to the established religious beliefs of the country.

When the workers took over the ideas of Owen, they modified them according to their own needs. The developing capitalistic system was disliked by the formerly independent artisans and ordinary factory workers. Both of the working-class sections regarded

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1. The Common People, 1938, p. 289.

Owenism as a way out of their misfortune. In the words of Mr. Cole, "The skilled artisans interpreted it as a method whereby they could emancipate themselves from the control of private employers and take over the conduct of industry through self-governing producers' associations of their own, while the factory workers and miners saw in it the means of escape from the pestilential atmosphere of the new industrial towns into model communities under their own control, and conducted directly in their own interests."[1] In the years immediately after the Reform Act of 1832, which left the workers without the right to vote, the new cooperative Socialism of Owen was the prevailing doctrine among a large section of the working class. Industrial unrest and the number of workers organizations increased, and one plan after another of complete economic reconstruction on a cooperative basis were formulated. "There began to be talk, as there had been in the years immediately after 1815, of a general strike to be launched simultaneously by the workers in all trades, and to end only with the complete supression of private capitalism, and the institution of Owenite cooperation as the basis of a "new moral world".[2]

But less than two years after 1832, the trade union movement was encountering defeat. Local industrial troubles together with government suppression were more than the trade unions could successfully overcome. Yet, the fall of the Owenite Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, did not mean the whole collapse of the Trade Union movement. Workers societies remained in existence though the defeat of 1834 effected a change in their temper. This meant

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1. Socialism in Evolution p. 23.
2. Ibid., p. 24.

that "The first socialist phase of Trade Unionism was over; and through the middle decades of the nineteenth century the unions contented themselves for the most part with collective bargaining in the industrial field, without attempting any direct challenge to the capitalist system."[1]

The Chartist Movement:

Before the advent of what might be termed the modern phase of Socialism in England, Trade Unionism made another attempt at improving the lot of the workers through political organization. Immediately after the collapse of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, the Chartist Movement arose. Though William Lonett and his friends who drew up the charter realised that political reform would only come gradually, developments forced Chartism into extreme measures of action. The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which aimed at the abrogation of systems of relief to agricultural and industrial workers, caused a great deal of opposition. When the attempt was made to apply the new law in the factory areas, trouble started. "At once" writes Cole, "there flared up in the North of England and in South Wales a great instinctive movement of protest against the withdrawal of the old privileges of outdoor relief; and the unrest was the more serious and widespread because the introduction of the "reform" coincided with a period of acute economic distress".[2] The Chartist leaders placed themselves at the head of the mass movement and tried to win it over to support the Chartist cause. But the moderate leaders like Lonett were pushed aside, and more radical leaders like O'connor and Stephens, assumed leadership.

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1. Socialism in Evolution, p. 27.
2. Ibid., p. 29.

The demands of the Chartist were political - Manhood suffrage, annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, payment of members, and the abolition of property qualifications. Yet behind these was the further demand or intention to improve the lot of the workers. "Chartism" wrote Stephens, "is no mere political question; it is a knife and fork question. The Charter for us means good lodging, good eating and drinking, good wages, and short hours of labour".[1]

The Chartist movement failed to attain its objectives. Several reasons contributed to this end. It is claimed that the anti-Corn Law League and the attraction of cheap bread drew the attention of the workers away from political reform. It was true that the leaders of the movement were not united. One section of Chartists advocated the use of constitutional means for the attainment of their aims, while the second section believed in direct action such as the refusal to pay rent and taxes and the boycott of non-Chartists. But the real cause of failure was the fact that the ruling class was still powerful and confident. Mr. Cole tells us that the Capitalist system had not yet developed to be the degree which would make the working class ready for the exercise of political power.

The Modern Phase of British Socialism:

After the collapse of the Chartist movement in 1848, a period of prosperity of almost thirty years followed. Both agriculture and industry flourished and England became the workshop of the world. During this period, socialism fell into the background save in the circles of foreign refugees such as Marx. The workers occupied themselves with the building of trade unions and cooperative

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1. Hearnshaw, A Survey of Socialism, p. 186-187.

societies as defensive instruments within the capitalist regime, but there was no direct challenge to this system. But at the end of the period, a depression set in. With it was born the new British Socialism. Liberalism, in the last years of the 19th century began to lose its hold; it seemed unable to fulfil its promises. Free trade was found inadequate for securing prosperity and was consequently attacked. Competition did not only destroy the unfit, but also those who were less fortunate than others. Small capital, for no reasons of poor qualifications in its possessors, was crushed by big capital. The result was that the norms of orthodox political economy were seriously questioned. A belief in the competitive system was giving way before the belief in combinations and mutual protection, and the movement for land reform acquired more strength. All of this, of course, meant that liberalism was quickly losing its supremacy. What followed was a period of contest between liberalism and socialism in which each tried to win the workers over to its side. Up until the end of the 19th century, socialism was unable to attract liberal labour to its ranks, but with the opening of the 20th, independent socialist labour began its career.

Modern English Socialism was not dominated by the massive figure of Karl Marx and his teachings. He naturally had his influence, but it was from other sources that the movement drew its character. The workers in England seemed not to desire to join a movement expressing their aspirations and demands in Marxian terms which they did not readily understand, but wanted one that directly expressed their grievances and aims in a language that was meaningful to them. Marxian theories were largely introduced by Hyndman and the Democratic Federation which was formed in 1881. Its prog-

ramme, at first, was largely radical. It contained such demands as universal suffrage, Triennial Parliaments, equal electoral districts, payment of members. Its only socialistic demand was the nationalization of land which was more popular than any other. The membership of the federation was never large. It did, however, attract most of the prominent socialists of the country to its ranks. A group of these published a pamphlet in 1883 in which they attacked the combined domination of the old aristocracy and the middle class with its resultant poverty and distress to the workers. They urged the latter to work for free and universal education, the eight-hours day, the establishment of national banks and the gradual abolition of private banking, and the nationalization of railways and land. The temper of the federation was violent. The old Chartist battle-cry was used -- "Peacefully if we may -- forcefully if we must."

In 1884, the Democratic Federation became the Social Democratic Federation. But soon the failure to attract the liberal radical trade union workers, and the discord among the leaders caused a division. Some leaders left the Federation and formed the Socialist League. The Social Democratic Federation was, of course, definitely socialist in character. "Labour," declared its first programme, "is the source of all wealth, therefore all wealth belongs to labour. The object of the Social Democratic Federation is the establishment of a free society, based on the principles of political equality, with equal social rights for all and complete emancipation of labour".[1] Its demands were that all officers or administrators should be elected by universal suffrage, abolition of the standing army and its replacement by a militia, to give to the people the right to decide upon peace and war, the provision of free

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1. Beer, History of British Socialism, vol. II, 1929, p. 267.

secular and compulsory education and free justice, the regulation of production of wealth by society in the common interest of all, and the declaration of the means of production, distribution, and exchange as collective property. In the eighties, English Socialists, with the exception of the still obscure Fabian society, believed in and frankly advocated violent revolution. "Revolution in the eighties" writes Mr. Kirkup, "meant to socialists barricades in the streets, and socialism inaugurated by violence and bloodshed. Other significations are now attached to the word, but although this view was contrary to the express opinion of Marx, his English followers in those days scorned anybody who suggested that Socialism could be inaugurated by any other instruments than firearms."[1]

Yet this Marxian Socialism was only one aspect of British Socialism. In other words, Marx was one among other sources from which British Socialists drew their inspiration. "The ideas which called the pioneers to the service of the socialist movement were very varied", writes Mr. Attlee, "They were not the followers of a single gospel of one prophet. They did not accept one revelation as inspired."[2] He adds that the number of those who believe in the theories of Marx "has always been small" in England. We have to turn to Owen, to Henry George, to John Stuart Mill, and the land reform movements; and again to Ruskin and Carlyle to find the early influences on British Socialism. We have also, with the same view in mind, to turn to religion. "England in the nineteenth century was still a nation of Bible readers.....The Bible is full of revolutionary teaching, and it is not surprising that, in a country where thought is free, many men and women have drawn from it

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1. Kirkup, History of Socialism, p. 373
2. The Labour Party in Perspective, p. 26.

the support which they needed for their instinctive revolt against the inhuman conditions which capitalism brings".[1] Mr. Attlee thinks that the majority of those who have been responsible for building up the socialist movement in England have been zealous Christians. This Christian inspiration from which the British socialist drew at least part of their convictions explains how, "It is possible in Britain for a person to declare himself a communist and for millions of faithful Catholics to support the Labour Party."[2] This throws much light on the nature of British Socialism and it is fundamental for a proper understanding of its character.

The organization which was responsible for the formation and teaching of this new socialism was the Fabian Society.

Fabian Society: In 1882 a group of people among whom the leading personality was professor Thomas Davidson, met in London to study ethics. Later on, a number of men from this group turned to the study of social questions. The outcome was the formation of the Fabian Society in 1884. Its name, it is apparent, was adopted from the Roman leader Fabius Cunctator whose tactics they professed to initiate. "For the right moment you must wait, as Fabius did most patiently when warring against Hannibal, though many censured his delays; but when the time comes you must strike hard, as Fabius or your waiting will be in vain, and fruitless." A few months after its formation, two young intellectuals joined its ranks - Bernard Shaw and Sidney Weble. It was these two men, writes Mr. Beer, that gave to the Fabian Society its importance in the history of British Socialist thought. Together with other able members of the

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1. The Labour Party in Perspective, p. 27.
2. Ibid., p. 28

society, they attempted to educate themselves and gain knowledge rather than accept the work of one authority or thinker as prophetic and unliable to make errors. The product of their study was the new socialism which was opposed to both Owenism and Marxism.

The Fabians recognized the injustice of the distribution of wealth in society. They believed that the great differences in wealth and opportunity were due to the earlier monopoly of the means of production. In the case of land, those who possess better tracts obtain their differential rent not because of personal effort, but because of mere possession. In truth, the differential qualities of the land are due not to the efforts of the owner, or any one man, but to such causes as resources, site, climate, and scientific development. The same, the Fabians believed, was true of industry. Profit in this field was not really the rightful reward of those who made it. It was made possible by various agencies whose individual contributions could not be determined, such as site, better organization, inventions, scientific progress, and workers. That is the source of the unearned increment which, judging by the multiplicity of the factors which join the produce it, is really the product of society as a whole. Hence, the Fabians concluded, it should go to society as a whole and not to individual landlords and factory owners. By this, they did not mean equality in the distribution of produce; special ability should get its reward. "But every worker should be guaranteed a minimum of civilized existence, and the more able should receive a higher remuneration as rent for ability. As long as the social conscience of the nation was not yet developed enough to cause men to perform their duty to society without regard to the degree of remuneration, equality of

distribution was impossible."[1]

The early Fabians read the Capital of Marx. They were impressed by the descriptive parts, yet they could not agree with certain of its principles and believed that it contained economic errors. Nor did they like its bitter, hateful temper as Mr. Hearnshaw, who is hostile to both Marxian Socialism and Fabians, writes. In the first place, they did not accept the materialistic conception of history and the doctrine of economic determinism. The class war was also rejected both in principle and practice. Again, the labour theory of value was repudiated. "It is evident," The Fabian Essays proclaim, "that the exchange value of anything depends on its utility, since no mortal exertion can make a useless thing exchangeable"[2] Moreover, the Fabians did not believe that the state would be destroyed at the dawn of a socialist day, but held that the various organs of the state would be gradually transformed into socialistic channels for the permanent administration of the cooperative common wealth. Revolution, of course, was not to be the means of change. Evolution through gradual reform and amelioration would be the instrument by which Fabian Socialism would be achieved.

On all the above mentioned points, the Fabians were opposed to the Marxians. But they, like Marxians, clung to three beliefs which Hearnshaw terms "one error, one folly, and one illusion - that placed them unmistakably with the socialist goats rather than with any rational sheep."[3] The first is that they believed in surplus-value. This meant that labour produced a great deal more than it was paid for it as wages. The surplus

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1. Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II, p. 283
2. Hearnshaw, A Survey of Socialism, p. 296
3. Ibid., p. 297.

went to the capitalist and landlord who was, therefore, exploiting the labourers. The second is that they wanted to eliminate these two - the capitalist and landlord. And third, they wished to abolish private enterprise and build a collectivist, cooperative, non-competitive society.

The Fabians wanted to transfrom competitive society into a collectivist society. This transfromation was not to be achieved through general confiscation. In fact, what would be taken by the state, would be paid for. Yet by taxation, it is proposed to "recover from the propertied classes some portion of the plunder which their economic strength and social position have enabled them to extract from the workers...."[1] On the other hand the labourers would become the workers of the state, and every one would receive a minimum means of existence depending upon the stage of development of society. The state, that is, would be transformed, through constitutional means, into a socialist state. Its various organs, local as well as central, would administer the various industries and utilities, and distributes the products with special recognition of ability. The state was to be democratic in order to enable the whole of society to determine its own life.

Independent Labour Politics:

In the closing years of the 19th century, the need for independent labour politics was felt by several sections concerned with working class activity. So far, the masses of British workers had not been attracted by the socialist theories, and, in politics, the British trade-unions had largely acted as a branch of the

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1. Hearnshaw, A Survey of Socialism, p. 306.

liberal front. The trade-union members in Parliament voted liberal. Presently, conditions changed. Independent socialists and labour leaders became convinced that it was more important to organise the working men for independent labour politics than to emphasize the aim and end of socialism. Engels wrote about the need for the formation of a Labour Party with an independent class programme. A Fabian wrote, "The chief aim of our plan is the formation of a distinct Labour Party in Parliament."[1] And Keir Hardie, who was the great champion of independent labour politics, made a protest against the collaboration of labour representatives with liberals, who he declared, "are in direct antagonism to the working class."

In 1892, the feeling described above took practical shape. Preperations were made to unite the various independent labour organisations into one party. In 1893, in a conference at Bradford the Independent Labour Party was formed. This new organization seemed to occupy a middle position between the Social Democratic Federation and Liberal Labour. The former did not win over the masses of the workers largely because it insisted on the acceptance of its theory and endeavoured to impose its truth upon the workers rather than make room for their beliefs and attitude. The latter, however, failed to pursue a labour policy and allowed itself to remain a branch of the Liberal Party. That this was the general feeling of the delegates, may be shown by the rejection of a name proposed for the new organization - Socialist Labour Party - and the adoption of the name Independent Labour Party.

The conference adopted a socialist programme for the Independent Labour Party. "The aim of the Independent Labour Party" writes Mr. Cole, "was from the first to achieve some sort of

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1. Beer, History of British Socialism Vol. II. p. 298.

socialism; but it wanted to State Socialism in native English rather than in Marxist terms, and to keep its socialist advocacy far closer to the every day grievances of the working class than Hyndman's exceedingly theoretical version of Marxism allowed."[1] In practical terms, it aimed at the collective ownership and control of the means of production. This was to be achieved through parliamentary action, social reform, and the protection of labour and democracy in central and local government. Mr. Beer writes that there was no difference between the programme of the Independent Labour Party and that of the Social Democratic Federation. But, as he adds, there were marked divergences in the stand which each of the two organisations took towards the trade unions and in their propaganda. The Independent Labour Party was sympathetic towards the trade-unions. It tried to convince them that it was essential to adopt an independent labour policy, and that it was inconsistent to strike against liberal employers and vote for them at elections. Moreover, it did not use class enmity and revolution in its propaganda. "The speakers of the Independent Labour Party, in their educational work among the trade unionists, hardly ever referred to revolution and class-warfare, but started from the ethical, nonconformist, and democratic sentiments which appeal most to British workmen."[2]

The Labour Party:

It was the Independent Labour Party that was largely responsible for destroying the alliance between the trade-union movement and liberalism. In fact, as Mr. Attlee writes, "Its particular contribution to British Socialism was its recognition

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1. Socialism in Evolution, p. 51
2. Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II. p. 304.

that the trade union movement, although dominated largely by liberals, was yet the essential basis for a working-class political party."[1] Together with the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation, it was one of the main contributers to socialist thought in England, and played an important part in the formation of the Labour Party.

The creation of the Labour Party was brought about by two causes. First, the active socialist propaganda of hundreds of enthusiastic men and woman, and second, the recognition among organized workers that the strike was not a very effective weapon and that their mutual assistance must be supplemented by parliamentary action. In 1899, the trade-union congress adopted a resolution, originally prepared by the Independent Labour Party, instructing "The Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress to invite the cooperation of all the cooperative, socialist, trade union, and other working class organizations jointly to cooperate on lines mutually agreed upon in convening a special congress of representatives from such of the above mentioned organizations as may be willing to take part to devise ways and means for the securing of an increased number of Labour members to the next Parliament."[2] The conference for this purpose was held in 1900. An analysis of its debated reveals the existence of three currents of thought. First, there were those who desired to offer candidatures, not only to the working class, but to all those who were sympathetic with the aims and demands of the labour movement. Second, some insisted that candidates should be chosen only from those whose organizations were represented on the Labour

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1. Attlee, The Labour Party in Perspective, 1937, p. 38
2. Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II, p. 316-317.

Representation Committee. Third, the choice of candidates should be restricted to social democrats who professed a belief in class warfare and the collective ownership of the means of production. The second of these three currents of opinion prevailed. The conference elected the members of the Labour Representation Committee - Seven Trade Unionists, two members of the Independent Labour Party, two from the Social Democratic Federation (later this organization withdrew) and one Fabian. Mr. James Ramsay MacDonald was elected Secretary. At first, admission to the Labour Representation Committee was not open to individuals, but only to socialist and labour organizations. In 1906, the Labour Party won its first great victory. Of fifty candidates whom it sent to the electoral campaign, twenty-nine were successful. This success was largely due to the reaction of the Trade-Unions against the Taff Vale Case, and with it the Labour Party was born. That is why Mr. Attlee wrote, "The keen Labour man might well hang on his walls a portrait of Lord Halsbury alongside that of Keir Hardie."[1]

Was the new Labour Party Socialistic? The basis of its formation was the simple one of returning Labour members to Parliament, and, as Mr. Attlee writes, this object, until the war (1914), was quite satisfactory. "In 1917 as in 1906 its object is stated to be: "To organize and maintain in Parliament and the country a political Labour Party".[2] Such a conception of the Labour Party before the war, as Mr. Attlee adds, was made clear in the words of Mr. Wardle in his presidential address in 1911.

From the very first, the ties which bound the party together were of the loosest possible kind. It has steadily and, in

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1. The Labour Party in Perspective, p. 39.
2. Attlee, The Labour Party in Perspective, p. 40.

my opinion, wisely always refused to be bound by any programme, to subscribe to any dogma, or to lay down any creed. Its strength has been its catholicity, its tolerance, its welcoming of all shades of political and even revolutionary thought, provided that its chief object, the unifying of the workers' political power was not damaged or hindered thereby."[1]

Yet this does not seem to be the whole truth about the Labour Party before the war. It is true that it did not adopt socialism as its creed. It is also true that the forces of liberal labour were resisted and ultimately defeated in 1908 when the Miners' Federation joined the Labour Party with its fifteen members of Parliament and 550,000 members. But socialism was closely connected with the party. It did not openly and unhesitatingly adopt socialism because there were men, including socialists, who insisted that such action would be forcing the Trade Unionists into an acceptance of socialism in which they did not believe, and would destroy the alliance between the socialist and non-socialist workers and workers' organizations. But at the annual conference held in Hull in 1908, though a socialist resolution was defeated, another socialist resolution was accepted "because", as Mr. Beer writes, "it was understood that it was proposed for the purpose of eliciting and expression of opinion." This resolution runs as follows: "That in the opinion of this conference the time has arrived when the Labour Party should have as a definite object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, to be controlled by a democratic state in the interest of the entire community; and the complete emancipation of labour from the domination of capitalism and landlordism, with the establishment of social and

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1. Attlee, The Labour Party in Perspective, p. 40.

economic equality between the sexes"[1]. Mr. Beer concludes that the discussions of socialist resolutions at the Hull Conference showed that, "The Labour Party stood for social reform - for a socialistic reorganization of society by gradual steps, but it was not social revolution; it had no final goal, but immediate gains; it did not occupy itself with theories, but with practical measures[2] Again, Mr. Kirkup seems to hold a similar opinion. Writing on the victory of the Labour Party in 1906, he states: "At length a party - it adopted the name of Labour Party - was constituted, socialist in almost everything except its name, and sufficiently powerful to make itself a factor in Parliament. J. Keir Hardie was elected chairman, a fact which indicates that it was predominantly socialist in opinion notwithstanding that the organized socialists were but a small minority of the membership."[3] Earlier, he had stated: "For although the Labour Party was not a socialist Party in name or membership, it became the organ through which the political activities of the Indpendent Labour Party and the Fabian Society were almost completely expressed, its policy was purely socialist, and the great majority of its leading members, inside and outside Parliament, were Socialists".[4]

Recent Socialistic Trends:

As the first years of the twentieth century passed on, the labour movement assumed a more revolutionary character. As a consequence, the Fabian theory of state collectivism began to lose its hold, and new socialistic trends became manifest. Collectivist socialism, with its parliamentary action seemed unable to improve the lot of the workers. For a long time, there had been more

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3. A History of Socialism p. 386 4. Ibid., p. 385
1. Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II., p. 333
2. Ibid., p. 334.

centralization, more big business alliances and amalgamation in both commerce and industry in Britain. On the other hand the more efficient and increased use of machinery brought the unskilled labourers nearer to the skilled labourers. The latter felt that their position was seriously threatened, and came to learn the lesson of class solidarity -- That wage earners, both hand and brain workers, have common interests. Moreover, in the process of capitalism amalgamation, the lower middle class was reduced to a "salaried class of clerks, salesmen, officials, and civil servants". It seemed, as Mr. Beer writes, that capital and labour were arranging their armies for battle. To add to the revolutionary ferment, the continual rise of prices naturally caused a reduction in real wages. When the Great War came, it stimulated these tendencies. Unskilled labour and the labour of women, were increasingly used. War finance and commerce fostered the process of amalgamation and concentration. "Joint stock banks, shipping companies, chemical works, coal, iron, and steel concerns formed alliances or were linked up with one another".[1] The war also caused prices to rise. The result was that the rich became richer while the position of the middle classes became more precarious.

It was natural that such developments made the workers inclined to believe that parliamentary action had not been successful. Political activity had not caused an improvement in their economic position. In the words of Mr. Beer, "The electoral victories and the usual trade union methods, it appeared, resulted in an economic defeat. Revolutionary writers and speakers did not fail to point the moral and draw the lesson against parliamentary action and old trade union leadership. The light of State Socialism began to pale before the rise of syndicalism, guild socialism, and

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1. Beer, History of British Socialism, vol. II. p. 381.

direct action."[1]

Syndicalism, as a theory, is not a British product. It came to Britain from two sources -- first from America through the Socialist Labour Party in Scotland; and second from France through Tom Mann. In general, the British syndicalists stood for economic action as opposed to parliamentary action. They believed in class struggle as expressed through direct action and the general strike. What Parliamentarism they would tolerate would be made subservient to economic action. Behind the Labour politician should always stand the revolutionary trade unionist. For, "The utmost such a politician or old trade union leader could look for, was state socialism, which really signified state capitalism, while the revolutionary trade unionist was always conscious of the fact that government was but the executive of the possessing classes, and the emancipation of Labour could only be effected by the working class themselves, by their own ceaseless fighting on the economic battlefield."[2] Nationalisation and municipalisation were, of course, rejected. What the syndicalists stood for was Labour control and administration of the means of production.

The theory of syndicalism in its pure form, did not win much success in Britain. "Even Mr. Tom Mann, its chief exponent and advocate in Great Britain, does not seem to contemplate the total extinction of parliamentary government."[3] Yet it had its influence on British labour activity. This was shown in the great coal strike of 1911 and the railway strike of 1912 both of which Mr. Hearnshaw declares to have been distinctly syndicalist and revolutionary in character. Its influence was also manifest

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1. Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II, p. 350
2. Ibid., p. 350.
3. Hearnshaw, A Survey of Socialism, p. 320.

in 1913 when the triple alliance of Miners, Railway men, and transport workers was formed, and, after the war, in the railway strike of 1919, the general coal strike of 1920, and the general strike of May 1-14, 1926.

Guild-Socialism:

An attempt was made by some academic revolutionaries to bring syndicalism and the demand for direct action under a coherent philosophical system. The result of this attempt was "a peculiarly British product; a compromise or cross between Fabianism and syndicalism..." It became most attractive between 1912-1922, but since 1922, "when its great experiment, the building guild, exploded and vanished into thin air..."[1] it has lost ground. It was opposed to state socialism; state interference in industrial concerns, and condemned bureaucratic despotism. It demanded self-government for industry. In this field, the worker should not only be free from the domination of the capitalist employer, but also from state control. Each industry or profession would be made entirely autonomous. Each of these would have its separate organisation and a complete monopoly in its field. It would choose its own officials, set hours and conditions fo work, and fix its own wages and prices. All of these producers' guilds would be associated in a national system. At the top would stand an economic parliament, free from political and religious authority, which would deal with all general questions of commercial and industrial policy. Such would be the economic organization of society. But as it is recognized that economics do not cover the whole field of life, the guild-socialists would establish a political organization to which would be entrusted the handling of non-economic questions

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1. Hearnshaw, A Survey of Socialism, p. 321.

as internal police and foreign relations. It would have the power to safeguard the interests of the consumer against the producers' guilds.

In the opinion of Mr. Cole, one of the leading British guild-socialists, the socialist and labour parties and collectivist schools thought of the social problem as largely a question of the distribution of the national income. (He was referring to the pre-war period). They stood for nationalisation, and looked forward towards the establishment of an impartial state that would control and organize industry, and would secure for all an adequate share of the national wealth. This meant that production would be undertaken, not by a company, but by a state department; the place of the capitalist manager would be occupied by a state bureaucrat. On the other hand, Mr. Cole holds that syndicalism does not only with to secure better wages for the worker, but hopes to give him control over industry. His character as a producer is emphasised as the most important in his life. From this position it follows that the trade-union is not to be a mere wage - bargaining instrument, but an organic organization which gives direct expression to the life of its members. It is made the centre of future industrial organization. Whereas collectivism would create an industrial bureaucracy, such trade union organization would make possible industrial democracy. On this basis, the workers are urged to join their forces into trade union organizations. Their weapon should be the strike, for political action had not proved itself successful.

Mr. Cole called upon the workers to concentrate their efforts and fands on organizing themselves for economic action.

They should obtain a monopoly of labour. When this is attained, "There would then be onoone side the army of workers in complete possession of living, value-creating labour; on the other, the capitalist class possessing the dead machinery of production. Such a situation would lead to a deadlock and to a long and arduous struggle, in which the majority, well organized, skilfully led, and completely united, would finally be victorious."[1] The owners of the means of production would be forced tc give them up to the state. They would receive, as a compensation, an annuity for two generations. The state, as the trustee for the whole community, would in its turn lease the means of production to the various guilds These would enjoy the right to produce and exchange their products. Should occasion arise, difficulties would be brought before a general committee of the federal guilds which would be elected by the annual congress of the guilds. The state, under this scheme would not be destroyed. Its traditional sovereignty would be destroyed. It would become an organization among other organizations. Its task would be the representation of the general and common interests of the people, not as producers, but as consumers. In conjunction with the guilds, it would reach an agreement upon the conditions "upon which the producers consent to serve the community. In case of conflict between state and guild, "we must look for our ultimate sanction to some body on which all the citizens in their various activities are represented."[2]

The Labour Party and British Socialism.

In 1918, the Labour Party became officially a socialist party. It had, 1903, joined the International Socialist Bureau of

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1. Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II., p. 368.
2. Ibid., p. 372.

the "Second International formed in 1889". Its membership was then opened to individuals and its aim was declared in the following terms.

"To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."[1]

This objective was to be realised through nationalisation, the gradual elimination of private enterprise, and democratic control. The weapon for the attainment of this end was not to be violence and revolution, but the attainment of power through constitutional channels. Such, as Mr. Attlee writes, may be considered the position of the Labour Party until at least the last few years (1937). This also may be taken to represent the main current of British Socialism.

In general, British Socialists believe in the injustice of the present capitalist system. They are convinced that it brings huge gain to many out of proportion to their own efforts, while it deprives the vast majority of people from the possibility of living a decent life which would enable them to have access to adequate shelter, clothing, and nutrition; a-dequate education, and a reasonable amount of freedom both in the political and the economic fields. They argue that the capitalist system is wasteful, and has failed to extend its benefits to the majority, though the present industrial capacity of production can make possible a decent minimum level of existence for all. To satisfy the require-

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1. Beer, History of British Socialism, Vol. II, p. 397.

ments of a decent life for every one before securing abundance for the few, the British socialists would abolish competition and private enterprise at least in land and major industries and services. To replace them, a system of common ownership, service, and cooperation should be brought to existence. In this manner, the division of society into classes and its subsequent evils would be eradicated.

British Socialism recognises the antagonism between classes. But it does not stand for class war. It has sought to put its claims in terms which appeal to society as a whole though its main support comes from the labouring class. Moreover, it does not condemn religion and other moral and social values as the pure reflection of capitalist society. In fact it drew part of its inspiration from Christian sources that were repelled by the injustice of the great inequalities and evils of society, and, in addition, an explanation of its pacifism is partly to be found in the religious convictions of many of its adherents.

The principles and convictions of British socialists will be made clearer by a statement of the general aims of the British Socialist movement as expounded by Mr. Attlee, the present leader of the Labour Party. By general aim, we should keep in mind, he does not mean the immediate programme which British Socialists wish to follow once they are in possession of the power of the state, but the kind of society which they would like to help bring into existence.[1] One of the main aims of the British Socialist movement is freedom for the individual. The present capitalist system does not bestow on the individual adequate freedom. That

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1. Mr. Attlee deliberately states that there is nothing final or static about such a society as he would like to see come into existence.

will be secured for him under socialism. There will be complete religious freedom and toleration. Education will be democratic; no restrictions and no doctrines will be imposed. And industrial autocracy will not exist thus extending individual freedom to the industrial field.

The second main aim of British socialism is security. One of the curses of Capitalism is insecurity. The socialist society will afford work for all. Naturally, no one will be allowed to remain idle. But there will be the assurance of work. The increased efficiency of the machines will not lead to more unemployment, as has been the case under capitalism, but will increase the amount of valuable leisure which is necessary for the enjoyment of a tolerable life, and will raise the standard of living. Again, the socialist society will be an equal society. By equality is not meant identity. Nor is it meant that the standard of human existance will be lowered until everyone becomes as vulgar and beastly as the lower specimen of humanity. Equality will mean that no great diversities will exist; it will mean that a lowest level of existance for all will be established before anyone is allowed the luxury of extreme abundance. British Socialism admits that, "Human beings are, of course, unequal, and have diversities of tastes and gifts." Yet it is convinced that, "This need not be expressed in wide social inequalities."[1]

Moreover, the British Socialists believe that their society will be a democratic society. Dictatorship is emphatically rejected. No doctrines of any kind will be forcibly imposed as the ultimate truth. Blind obedience will not be exacted; active consent will be the basis of government. In this democratic society

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1. Attlee, The Labour Party in Perspective, p. 188.

ownership will be common. Land will be owned by the community. All the major industries will also be owned and controlled by it. Yet, the smaller enterprises may for a long time be left in the hands of private individuals. No fixed plans have been set for the organization of industry, but the evils of bureaucracy are recognized. There are, however, certain rules which will be applied in this field. First, the interest of the whole community will be superior to the interest of any of its sections. Second, the freedom of managers and technicians will not be infringed upon beyond the limits of the general economic plan. Third, the workers will not be considered as part of the machines of industry and as mere wage-slaves, but as citizens whose life is strongly affected by the conditions under which they labour. Fourth, the interests which will be recognized in the government of industry will be three -- the interest of the whole community, the interest of the producers, and the interest of the consumers. In addition over-centralization will be, as far as possible, avoided. For this reason, regional decentralization will be developed. Invention and progress, which the British socialists claim to be at present hindered by private interest, will be fostered and encouraged. And last, the British Socialist movement rejects extreme nationalism. In this form, it is opposed to peace and a just system of world order. Consequently it should disappear. There should be no exploitation of one territory by another. Nations should cooperate on lines conductive to the welfare of the whole international community. In this way, national sovereignty will give way to a system of world justice and peace which will give the interests of the whole world precedence over the interests of any particular state or group of states.

Such, in general terms, is the aim of the British socialist movement. It may be considered to embody the convictions of the mass of the socialist followers of the Labour Party. This party has definitely pledged itself to proceed with the practical application of socialism as soon as it will attain political power. It will declare to the country that the election of a majority of its candidates to Parliament will mean socialism. The House of Lords will not be allowed to hinder its action for the realization of this aim. If it becomes the government, it will take the following revolutionary steps: It will make the Bank of England a State institution through which it will control finance. It will make land national property, and nationalize such important services and industries as coal, gas, electricity, and transport. The removal of great inequalities will be largely affected through taxation. The Labour Party, however, does not believe in confiscation. It will grant some compensation to those who will be expropriated. That, as Mr. Attlee writes, will produce less resistance to nationalisation, and will bring justice to those who earned their property through hard labour and abstention.

In addition to the above mentioned steps, the following measures, calculated to produce social amelioration, will be introduced. The school-leaving age will be raised to fifteen and soon to sixteen, and extend the facilities of secondary education up to eighteen. Those who should be at school and those who should retire will be withdrawn from work to give room for the unemployed. Shorter hours of work will be set, and, without a reduction in wages, a fairer distribution of available work will be attempted. There will also be an extention of public works to provide employment for the unemployed, a two weeks holiday with pay, and an adequate standard of living for the farm worker.

In its foreign policy, the Labour Party will stand for peace, international cooperation, and will recognise world interests and obligations as against national sovereignty. At the Southport Conference in 1934, it declared principles which stand at present (1937) "as the official policy of the Party." They embody its belief in a world order and social justice; the economic cooperation and world control in economic and financial matters, such as raw materials, transport, travel and communications, hours and conditions of labour, etc.', and the use of force against an aggressor. Disarmament was bound with collective security, the theory of the balance of power was opposed together with national sovereignty as opposed to world obligations.

This is the programme which the Labour Party will attempt to follow the next time it will come to power. For the attainment of its aims, it will act within constitutional limits, and will not resolve to violence unless its opponents break the rules. For, as Mr. Attlee writes, "The Labour Party believes that, when it has obtained the support of a majority of the electors for its policy, it will secure the acquiescence of the greater number of its opponents in the changes which will be brought about."[1]

With this, the British Communists and radical socialists disagree. They believe that the socialist aims cannot be attained except through bloodshed and revolution. The ruling class, they argue, would discard the democratic methods and resort to dictatorship immediately its private possessions are threatened. That, Mr. Attlee admits to be one of the possibilities. Yet he believes that an unconstitutional move on the part of the ruling class would be defeated by the loyalty to democratic methods of the vast majority

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1. The Labour Party in Perspective, p. 113.

of the British people. The road to Socialism, he insists, must be constitutional. Experience learned from both Russia and Germany emphatically indicate the grave danger of a socialist revolution. Whether successful or unsuccessful, the outcome of violence would be the totalitarian state with its inherent evils. The Labour Party does not intend to drill people into accepting a certain dogma as the ultimate truth. It believes in diversity, not uniformity. It has opposed revolutionary tactics and has refused the application of the Communist Party for membership. "If labour cannot obtain a majority," declares Mr. Attlee, "it must as a minority accept the will of the majority."[1] This, he adds, depends upon the constitutional conduct of its opponents. Up till the present, two Labour Governments have come to power in 1924 and 1929. They did not introduce any socialist measures. Now the Labour Party stands pledged to do so. If it obtains power and keeps its promise, the world will be given a great example of whether the British will maintain their tradition of peaceful revolutions, and of whether great changes can be peacefully effected through the decision of a majority.

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1. The Labour Party in Perspective, p. 117.

Sources of Inspiration

Laski has been a socialist since the end of his school-days. The sources of his socialist inspiration, which he considers to be the central conviction of his life, came from various directions. "Something was due to the influence of a great school-master who made us feel the sickness of an acquisitive society."[1] His Jewish upbringing, as he himself has written, led him in the same direction; it aroused in him the sense "of being treated differently from other people and for no obviously assignable cause." From books, specially those of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, he learned much. "They made me realize, "he wrote, "that a whole class of human beings was overlooked in the traditional liberalism of the family to which I belonged."[2] Moreover, a speech by Keir Hardie, when Laski was about to begin his university career, had its influence on him. It made him understand, at least to some extent, what the workers have to pay for the reforms they achieve.

Laski held radical views when he first went to Oxford in 1911. The years he spent there added to his conviction of their truth. "It was the first experience I had of the intensity of class division in England. It was the first experience I had, also, of the resistance atmosphere can impose upon the admission of new ideas which are dismissed less because they have been examined than because their premises are outside the environment they seek to penetrate."[3] At Oxford also, Laski seems to have begun his socialist activity. A good part of his time was given to the Fabian Society and to propaganda for women suffrage. It was then that he came into contact with George Lansbury. This latter influenced him in two

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1. Laski: From An Article that appeared in the "American Nation" 1938
2. Ibid., 3. Ibid.

ways. From him Laski first learned the meaning and significance of liberty, and from him also he got his first job on the Daily Herald in 1914 when Lansbury asked him to write editorials for his paper. That made Laski acquainted with the radical aspect of the pre-war socialist movement.

When the war broke out in 1914, Laski tried to enlist, not because he believed in the war, but because, as he wrote, "I did believe that on the whole, the victory of Germany would mean more evil than its defeat".[1] His rejection, on account of his weak heart, proved to be a turning point in his life. When he applied for a lectureship at McGill University, he expected to spend a year there. But, in addition to that, he spent four years at Harvard until 1920. On the other side of the Atlantic Laski gained much experience and has kept to the present day his connections and interest in the political life of the United States. It was there that he knew that teaching would be his vocation. It was also there that he learned that an understanding of political science was not to be obtained only from books, but also, quite essentially, from actual experience in order to effect what he calls "an intimate marriage of theory and practice."

When Laski was at Harvard the famous Boston police strike occurred. Believing that it was necessary to know why the police were on strike, Laski made an attempt to discover the cause of the strike. He came to the conclusion that it was the product of past grievances that had accumulated and that had not been sympathetically met by the authorities. He announced his conclusion, "and," in his own words, "there broke about my head a storm of indignation in

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1. Laski: From an Article that appeared in the "American Nation" 1938

which I was described as almost every thing from a villain who seduced youth to a Bolshevik who preached revolution."[1] President Lowell promptly made it clear to him that, "a teacher limited his utility when he spoke on matters of current controversy." All that meant to Laski that one was not to question the assumptions of the existing society. As a result, when he received an invitation to join the faculty of the London School of Economics, he was not sorry to leave Harvard though he loved it and loved the friendships he had cultivated there.

Yet more lessons were learnt in America. There, Laski saw "more nakedly than (he) had seen in Europe", the significance of the enmity between capital and labour. It became clear to him that political liberty had no meaning as long as an economic plutocracy was in existence. The manner in which strikes were dealt with convinced him that the machinery of the state was used to crush any movement that threatened the authority of the economic rulers of society. He also learned that the pressure of conformity was great and that the claims of tolerance became weak whenever the existing social order was in danger of alteration. "I came back from America," Laski wrote, "convinced that liberty has no meaning save in the context of equality, and I had began to understand that equality also has no meaning unless the instruments of production are socially owned."[2] This was a conviction which, he was academic enough to believe, as he himself admitted, could be accepted by others as true through rational persuasion. An academic and rational proof of its truth, that is, was, in his opinion, enough to make men accept socialism.

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1. Laski: From an Article that appeared in the "American Nation" 1938
2. Ibid.

Early Reaction Against Inequality

As Laski himself wrote, "Up to 1920, I think, as I look back, that my socialism was above all the outcome of a sense of the injustice of things as they were. It had not become an insight into the processes of history."[1] That is certainly true of his earlier writings. They are full of indignation against the injustice of inequality and the subsequent misery and deprivation which it brings to the mass of the people. To some, his attack on material inequality and his insistence on securing to all equal opportunities for material gain, might mark Laski as a thinker who is concerned purely with the material aspect of life. Yet that is not the whole truth about him. What he aims at is the elevation of all men to a level at which they can fully enjoy life as civilised men should be able to do. At the same time he finds that there are material barriers that have to be removed if that enjoyment is to become a reality, and if society is to be built on sounder foundations of real fellowship.

Poverty, Laski believes, is a great evil. It makes men seem vulgar and brutal. It deprives them of the power to educate themselves out of their ignorance and unrefined ways of life. In other words, poverty, together with inequality, mark those whom it has affected as inferior to the richer elements of society. That inferiority, at a certain time, might be real; but, as Laski pointed out, it is significant that it has been regarded by the aristocracies as natural. Hence they have lacked a real understanding of and sympathy for the feelings and wants of the lower classes of society. They have also failed to comprehend the real nature of the passion for equality which has been for a long time recognized as the cause

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1. Laski: From an Article that appeard in the "American Nation" 1938

of revolutions. The conclusion that Laski draws is that the greater the differences among the men who constitute a society, the more precarious are its foundations. In a society which is divided into rich and poor, privileged and exploited there is, in the long run, no real harmony of general satisfaction or acceptance of the existing order as adequate.

Laski, it should be clear, does not stand for equality for the sole reason that inequality leads to grave dissatisfaction and, ultimately, to revolution. His is not a mere desire to reconcile a class of people who insist on the abolition of a system of privileges which does not extend its benefits to them. It is rather the injustice that inequality breeds that is his main concern; the frustration of legitimate hopes of personal improvement; and the obstacles to a full share for all who are capable of enjoying the fruits of civilization.

In our society, Laski argued, live rich men and women who have made little effort, if any, to produce. On the other hand, there are poor men and women the larger part of whose time is absorbed by hard work. Wealth has not necessarily been the product of hard and intelligent labour. These two factors, it is true, have been though not always at the source of wealth. Yet there are many whom society has excluded, for no fault of their own and despite their hard work and intelligence from the class of wealthy men. Riches have often been the result of corruption or accident. It is true that the rich, through taxation and philantrhopy, pay a price. But the price has not been high enough to remove the evils of a society in which wealth is in the hands of the few while poverty is the lot of the many. And men, Laski warns us, will not accept poverty

in silence. Religion no longer enjoys its former power of holding the poor in the mean place assigned to them. Education has also made men less satisfied with a society such as ours. The outcome will be an attempt to alter it.

The successful business-man and the principle of profit, Laski wrote, are the main landmarks of our present society. The power of the former is so great that his desires create new industries and control the standards of taste. His slightest preference and fancies are news of first class importance. "Granted only success of an enduring kind, and they (business men) live upon the same exalted eminence that the middle ages reserved for their saints. There is no sin they may not be forgiven, no honour they may not receive. They are patrons of churches, founders of universities, creators of a new aristocracy."[1] The organizations of business men are in a no less favoured position. "Mr. Morgan and his partners," Laski adds, "the governor and company of the Bank of England, Standard Oil, the Cmité des Forges, these are, in a basic sense, principalities which treat with the states they encounter on a footing of equality....They can buy courts and legislatures, make war and peace..."[2]

The business man has stood for a principle which places profit above purposes which it may be made to serve. Whatever stands in the way of making profit has to be ruthlessly removed. In fact, as Laski pointed out, that has made poverty a sin and wealth a virtue Yet there are now many men who regard the principle of profit making unsatisfactory for the establishment of a stable and free society. The evils of this principle are only too apparent. It has, Laski wrote, made "Belgium business men transform the Congo into a hell".

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1. Laski, Dangers of Obedience, p. 265.
2. Ibid., p. 265.

It has made business men eager to keep school age under fourteen. Achievement and social position, due to the domination of the principle of profit making, are measured by pecuniary gain. In the international field, it has intensified the rivalry between nations because of the feverish search for markets that is one of its inherent characteristics.

That is why Laski is anxious to subordinate profit making to the principle of public welfare. He refuses to accept the success of the business man as an adequate title to all the power which he now enjoys. Of course, he rejects the claim that freedom of contract enables all the parties concerned to protect their interests. In fact, he argues, it does not exist where there is no equality of bargaining power. Under any circumstances, certain requirements - adequate wages, reasonable hours of work, and education - are essential if men are to live a decent life. These requirements have to be secured before profit making asserts its claims.

Laski, it is clear, does not regard property a sacred right. A right to it, he maintains, cannot be justified except in so far as it results in social good. The business man, accordingly, has to give up his position as the master of the state and be content with the function of serving it. Such a demand, Laski pointed out, has already received partial recognition. Such has been the significance of Factory Acts, Compulsory Education, Workmen's Compensation; they embody an admittance that there are certain principles which inhibit the full play of the motive of profit making. That, however, is not to say that we have gone far enough. The business man still wields a great deal of power over the life of the worker and the community as a whole. His mastery has brought

about many evils. Laski refers to the promotion of frandulent corporations, industrial nepotism, unemployment, over production, commercial crises, and waste of natural resources as evidence against the desirability of the mastery of the business man. Hence, he stands for the subordination of his authority to what he calls rational ends. He insists that property must be the reward for personal and "creative" work. No righs to it should be permitted to conflict with the rightful claims of men to common good. Laski, that is, would not accept gain as the driving force behind the supply of necessities and services, and would not recognize any rights to property claimed by the functionless owner.

Laski's plan is to make business conform to moral principles. It is to be given a consitution and to be transformed into something like the professions. Its evils are to be reformed, and, as in the professions of doctors and lawyers, service should be placed above profit. The owner of profit, no longer a master, would receive a fixed dividend for the use of his property. The welfare of the community would be the guiding factor in industry. This is to apply to industry in general. Certain essential services, however, such as electric power, are to be free from private control. They would be socialized. In both socialized and privately managed industries, democratic methods should be introduced.

A summary of the preceding pages would be a statement of a reaction against the injustice of the capitalist system and the evils of the poverty to the many and the inequality which it causes. It would show that Laski could not accept the mere ownership of property and profit making as a valid title to mastery in the industrial field. To him, their working has not proved conducive to the welfare

of the community as a whole. He therefore came to the conclusion that they should be made to conform to the interest community through the socialization of the essential industries and the subjection to moral principles and democratisation of industry in general. The motive of direct reward, Laski believed, could be dispensed with. Public spirit and willingness to serve would be enough to induce men to work. He did not believe, however, that slackness or selfishness would completely disappear. But ideals of higher motives could be made effective.

In this manner, Laski believed that we can build a better society. The difference between his earlier and later writings lies in the fact that in the former he declared his belief that such a society could be brought into existence through peaceful and rational argument. He hoped that men would be academically convinced of the evils of present society and the desirability of a new one built on rational and moral basis, and would, therefore, accept a peaceful change from the first to the second. This, however, is not to say that he was not aware of the possibility of a resort to violence. In fact he warned that revolution might be the fate of society. "But we have," he wrote, "[illegible] been compelled, to inquire whether a civilization can endure which is permanently divided into rich and poor .... a wise approach to that question sets it in the perspective of the Russian Revolution. We must civilise business, or, in the end, there will be nothing left of civilization itself."[1] Thus, in Laski's mind, violent conflict was not an insignificant possibility. He also seemed to believe that, given the modern instruments of destruction, a revolution might mean the end of civilization. (This belief is not warranted by the results of the present world conflict)

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1. Dangers of Obedience, p. 275

Yet there was still a note of optimism in what he wrote. He believed that men were moving, though very slowly, towards a better order. And though he fully knew the dangers of the economic class struggle and the envy, hate, and faction it created, he hoped that peaceful cooperation and the fruits of scientific discovery would end the grave evils from which men were suffering.

By 1925[1], Laski's stand against the present economic order had not changed. In his "Grammar of Politics" he deals fully with the question of property. States, he declared, are divided into those who own property and are therefore secure "against the wants of the morrow", and those who possess no property and are therefore in doubt about even their daily bread. The man with property feels secure against the bitterness of need. He enjoys a greater amount of freedom than the poor can possibly enjoy. He is, for instance, in a position to refuse a job which does not conform to his desire. The leisure at his command makes it possible for him to enjoy what life and his wealth can offer. He is also able to escape the drudgery of a wretched life, and to pursue the objects of his desire. His children, naturally, do not face a life similar to that which the children of the poor have to experience. The property of their parents guarantees to them a healthy and refined existence which enables them, as it enables their parents to have access "to the social heritage of wester civilization." Practically all that is denied the children of the poor.

Naturally, as Laski points out, certain individuals may overstep the limits of their social position. "Those who have security often luxuriate in a life devoid of meaning; and those who

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1. His Grammar of Politics was first published in 1925.

are poor can sometimes know the rarest things that life can offer. But the latter are exceptional men; poverty for most-and most are condemned to poverty - means a life passed amid mean things with but a fleeting moment, like the first hour of love, when the creative impulse received a full response. Those who have security may, in fact, live a life as solid and as pointless as the ugly mahogany with which they are surrounded. But at least their existence is freed from the spectre of fear."[1] Any one, even those who dwell in a world spiritual, who knows the meaning of economic insecurity can understand the full meaning of the last statement.

As Laski Argues, the number of the rich in our society is always small. Their wealth is not necessarily related to certain virtues nor to services rendered to the community. "The owner might be the fortunate descendent of a mistress of Charles II, to whom was given a royalty on all coal exported from the Tyne; or he might be an outrageous money lender who lived by extortion upon the unfortunate"[2] And their welath gives them a commanding position in society. They have much power over the life of those whose main support in life is their labour. In fact the power of the owners of private property is so great that Laski considers the state as an institution which is highly sensitive to their will and purposes. It is true that society has sought, to a slight degree, to limit the power of wealth, "But, fundamentally", Laski wrote, "a regime of private property, in the background of industrialism, perpetuates the division into rich and poor, and separates the poor from the conditions which make possible their effective citizenship."[3] In brief, the results, of the system, to say the least, are undesirable. Production, Laski objects, is

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1. Laski, Grammar of Politics, June 1934, p. 174.
2. Ibid.,
3. Ibid., p. 175.

disorderly and wasteful. Goods and services are not determined by what society needs. "We build picture places when we need houses. We spend on battleships what is wanted for schools."[1] What a rich man spends on a trifle may be the equivalent of what a workman gets in a week. "A rich debutante", wrote Laski indignantly, "will spend on an evening frock more than the annual income of the workers who made it."[2]

In our society we have a large class of parasitic idlers. Their power is so great that they can make production conform to their own wants and tastes. Others, as Laski points out, make an attempt to imitate them. "To be rich becomes the measure of merit; and the reward of wealth is the ability to set the standards of those who seek to acquire wealth."[3] These standards are not governed by moral consideration. Men do not seek to acquire property only to satisfy their essential wants, but in order to gain what distinction and power its possession can secure for them. Laski accuses them of ruining natural resources when it is in their interest to do so; of promoting dishonest enterprises and corrupting legislatures; and of exploiting with the utmost cruelty the backward races. He even claims that it is they who "compel strikes which result in serious damage to the community." Yet despite all their power, the wealthy class cannot secure the stability of their society. For, Laski holds "It remains historically obvious that a community divided into rich and poor is, when the latter are numerous, built upon foundations of sand."[4]

Naturally, Laski rejects the claims presented in defense of the present capitalist system. One of these claims is that men need

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1. Written before 1926. Battleships seem more useful now.
2. Grammar of Politics, June 1934, p. 175
3. Ibid., p. 175 4. Ibid., p. 176.

an incentive to work. Under the present order, the power and freedom to accumulate property serves this purpose; without it men would not work as they do now. And as it induces men to work, this property incentive ultimately, it is claimed, contributes to the common good. Laski does not agree. Labour, he rightly argues, does not conform to public good unless what is produced is governed by the imperatives of that good both in the determination of what is to be produced and in its distribution. Moreover, he denies that there is no substitute for the incentive of direct reward. "The mere fact," he wrote, "that there is a property instinct does not go to prove that the present method of response to its demands is anything more than one of the ways in which it may be answered. The present method is a problem for analysis, not a solution of the problem."[1]

There is no doubt that the problem of incentive in a socialist society will be of vital importance. Besides, we cannot have full assurance that a solution perfect in every detail will be devised for it. Yet, we may feel certain that work will be done without the present incentive of property and profit making. Men will have to work in order to obtain the means of living; they will be driven to work by the natural inclination in them to create something. And in a society where there is ample room for the free choice of ones vocation, and where there is no great disparity between the poor and the extremely rich, people will no doubt find more pleasure and satisfaction in their work particularly if they share in determining the conditions which surround it.

Another justification for the present system with which Laski deals, is ethical. Property, it is claimed, is the reward which the individual gets for his effort. "The builder of a railway,

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 177.

Laski illustrates and argument which he rejects, "the inventor of a safety-razor, the discoverer of a patent medicine, have all worked hard, and their fortune is the result."[1] That, as a justly argued, is only partially true. Many men work very hard without ever accumulating, for no fault of their own, any significant amount of property. Nor does he agree that property is, in a real sense, the return for ability. "But," he wrote, "...it is the reward only for that particular kind of ability which consists in the capacity to make profit; and that altogether evades the problem of the value of such ability to society, and the type of effort in which it is desirable that profit should be made."[2] Even here, it is easy to point out that ability is only of the factors of success. Chance and luck, not to say anything about inheritance, have often made rich men who even lack common sense. Intelligence and ability do not seem to me to be inherent characteristics of the wealthy class.

Again, it has been argued that property helps to develop certain virtues which are essential to the well-being of society such as generosity, affection to family, inventiveness, and energy. Laski finds no difficulty in refuting this argument. If it were true, he tells us, then the majority of men are unable to develop these virtues. Actually, he believes it to be untrue. Generosity does not consist only of giving freely to others, but also in the ability to give. Nor has the desire to make a fortune the only source of inventiveness. Moreover, affection is not one of the monopolies of the rich. "Love of ones family cannot be the basis of yearning for property in the mind of any who know the lives of the poor."[3]

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 177.
2. Ibid., p. 177.
3. Ibid., p. 178.

The development of the individual personality is the main concern of Laski. Accordingly, he believes that man, as a subject of rights, has a justifiable claim on the wealth of society. He is entitled to sufficient wealth to satisfy his essential wants such as hunger, thirst, shelter, for if these are not satisfied he will be hindered in developing himself as he finds satisfactory. Laski, therefore, is preaching the urgency of creating a minimum standard of existence below which no one is to be forced to live. But this minimum right to property is inseperable from a duty. What a man gets should come to him only through his own labour. Society should not bear the cost of his maintenance unless he works for what he gets In the words of Laski, "no man....has a moral right to property except as a return for functions performed. He has no right to live unless he pays for his living. He has no right to live because another has earned what suffices for his maintenance. That alone is morally his which he gains by his personal effort."[1] He, it is obvious, does not tolerate the existence of a class that lives simply by owning property. To him, its existence is a great evil. In the first place, hereditary wealth makes it free from the obligation to work; in the second, to use its leisure "in such a way that taxes the productive effort of the remaining members of society." It will misuse its leisure and generally be idle and wasteful. What patronage it will give to art, will "destroy the soul of the artist." It may give its encouragement in the realm of letters, "but the literature it applauds will be deaf to the real needs of its time."

The power of the wealthy class has put, as Laski insists, the poorer classes at a disadvantage. "Our parliament, for instance, he wrote before 1926, "is still predominantly aristocratic in texture

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 184.

because a political career involves difficulties for almost all who do not live by owning."[1] Education, to mention another instance, is a matter of family standing; and certain regiments in the British army "are practically a private reserve for the sons of ancient families." Laski admits that these sons of wealth and nobility show courage in the face of danger, but denies that it is equally true that all of them have shown a mastery of the art of war.

In short, Laski wishes to see our wealthy class disappear not only because its existence is part of an unjust and evil system, but because he believes it does not perform, as a class, a useful function. What he thinks of it is best stated in his own words. Refering to the members of the wealthy and aristocratic class of England, he wrote: "They give to charity the perfume of their presence. Their bazaars and their bridge-parties, beatified by the occasional presence of some member of the Royal House, serve to remind them that they have a duty to the poor. They maintain their interest in intelligence by a winter in Luxor; they keep alive the national character by their devotion to the fox and the partridge. They live in London only six months of the year. When they leave for the "shires," or the warmth of the Riviera, London is empty, save for the six million odd Londoners who work to keep them alive. And a vast journalistic organization is maintained to gratify the populace with pictures of this incredible procession."[2] Such a class, Laski is convinced, has no right to exist though there may be found among its members some who are guided by the best of public spirits.

Reward: What then is to be our system of reward? Laski discussed several theories of reward. The first is equality of income. There is, he observes, a strong case for this. If man's power over society

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 108
2. Ibid., p. 106.

depends upon their income and wealth, we should make incomes equal if we wish to arm men with equal power in society. Moreover, if there are to be disparities in incomes, they will necessarily be arbitrary in character for the simple reason that the value of the various kinds of work and services cannot be accurately determined. Another argument in favour of equality of income is anthropological. Classes in society are built on economic differences. Marriage is a matter of class relationships; members of one class rarely choose their partners in life from a different class. So, if incomes are made equal, classes will disappear and, as a consequence, the whole community will become inter-marriageable. "There can be little doubt of the benefit that would accrue therefrom to the quality of the race."[1]

Yet Laski finds many shortcomings in equality of income. In the first place, it seems unjust to reward equally when there is no equality of effort. The same is true when needs are unequal. "The miserly bachelor," wrote Laski, "the church-devoted spinster, ought not, surely, to receive the same remuneration as the parents who have five or six children to maintain."[2] Nor, he adds, can we overlook, "granted the mental habits of Western civilization," the difficulties which would meet equality of income. Thus, at least for a long time to come, we have to accept to live without complete economic equality.

A second theory of reward makes income the product of the interacting forces of the market. That is to say that supply and demand are a fair index of "the social appreciation of the labour a man has to sell." These two forces, as they operate, give to each

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 189.
2. Ibid., p. 190.

a "natural" reward for his work or service. Laski rejects these claims for two reasons. In the first place, he argues, supply and demand do not freely interact. Monopolies and certain professional standards curtail that freedom. "The remuneration for medical officers of health is not fixed at what will attract competent medical men, but at the figure at which the British Medical Association will allow competent medical men to be attracted.....A judge's salary is largely a customary figure; many men would accept the position, as many do, at a great financial loss for the honour it implies."[1] In the second place, the decision of the market is not morally adequate. That has been shown by its actual working. "It leaves," wrote Laski indignantly, "one-third of the average industrial community on the verge of starvation. For them it means poor health, undeveloped intelligence, miserable homes, and work in which, broadly speaking, the majority can find no source of human interest."[2] Because of its evil results, the ruling class itself has been compelled to enact legislation to redress the balance against the injustices to which it gives rise. It arms the employer with an irresistible advantage over the employee who is not in an economic position to await at leisure for a job which he considers to be suitable for himself. Nor is it true that the free competition, which it presupposes, actually exists. "For freedom of contract," Laski wrote, "...is present only where there is equality of bargaining power".[3]

Supply and demand have not made the reward proportionate to the social value of work or service. The clever advertiser gets his reward because he helps to make people buy an article and not because the qualities which he ascribes to that article are genuine.

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 190.
2. Ibid., p. 191.
3. Ibid., p. 191.

"The lady who invented the "Kewpie" doll is said to have made a large sum from her patent; but the social value of the source from which her wealth was derived is, at best, not immediately obvious."[1] In reality, it should be added, the value fixed by supply and demand is related only to effective economic demand and not to values "which are socially important." "If it did," Laski goes on to say, "our houses, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the schools (other than the public schools) we provide, would be very different from what they are now."[2]

From each according to his ability and to each according to his need is a famous maxim. It is what the communist followers of Marx hope to be the basis of the future communistic society. It is, on the grounds of abstract justice, the best defensible system. But this does not make it acceptable to Laski. To him, only up to a certain minimum level can individual need be satisfied. Beyond that its satisfaction becomes an impossibility. Society cannot meet all various desires and idiosyncracies of men. Therefore, to each according to his need can find only partial translation into reality. And ability, in any accurate manner, does not lend itself to measurement. The difference between one judge and another, one doctor and another, or one professor and his colleague, is not clear enough to draw a scale of ability of more than broad outlines. Nor, as Laski pointed out, is the problem much easier in the case of manual labour. What might seem ability on the part of a certain worker, may be due at least partly, to the conditions which surround his work. Better management, more efficient machinery due to better care, and better surroundings, are factors which enter into achievement in addition to individual ability.

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 192.
2. Ibid., p. 192.

What then is Laski's own choice? The answer may be given in his own words. "Any principle of reward," he wrote, "must satisfy two complex conditions, that it enables the individual to reach out towards his best self, while, simultaneously, it preserves and develops the necessary functions of society."[1] What he means by this is that there should be involved in reward a minimum level of existence below which no one is to fall. This minimum should receive our primary consideration. "Our basic condition must obviously be that every need related to the civic minimum, every need, that is, which, when unsatisfied, prevents the attainment of effective citizenship, must be satisfied before we deal with needs above that civic minimum."[2] Naturally, this is to apply to people who work in order to be rewarded idlers have no title to it. But children, old people, disabled and defective persons, though they do not work like others, are not to be barred from the satisfaction of their basic needs. And when a person is contributing work which is "recognized as necessary," he wins a title to the means that will enable him, at least at a certain minimum, to meet his wants. Those means should be adequate to keep him in "good health," to develop his faculties freely, and to enjoy building a home. "Such a reward is inherent in his quality as a human being."[3]

Two things should be said about the civic minimum which Laski prescribes. In the first place, it does not imply any uniformity. It is not meant that all men should receive, at that minimum, the same meals, the same food, similar houses, and identical articles Their choice of the objects which satisfy their wants should be free. It is left to the individual to experiment with himself. His individuality is not to be governed by a deadening uniformity. To

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 195.
2. Ibid., p. 198.
3. Ibid., p. 196.

Laski, individual diversity, to which he wishes to give ample room for freedom, is a fundamental truth in life. "The more a man is tempted to experiment with his own standards of consumption, the better it is for society. The one thing we want to avoid are those long rows of villas with identical wall-paper, identical books, and identical standards of pleasure."[1] In the second place, even the civic minimum itself is not to be the same for all. Different occupations necessarily require different particular costs to which, by its very nature, it gives rise. The agricultural worker and the miner, for instance, as Laski pointed out need more food than a clerk It follows, therefore, that "the minimum we settle for each occupation will clearly involve differences built upon the costs that occupation involves."[2]

Besides the civic minimum, another factor is involved in Laski's system of reward. Above the minimum we establish reward is not to be equal. In order to have certain occupations function properly, men of sufficient talent are needed. To attract these to the particular work for which they are needed we have to, Laski believes, offer them attractive wages. In a society, not only miners are needed, but also doctors and administrators of special intelligence and ability are needed. And the value to society of a doctor or a judge, Laski believes we must admit, is greater than the value of a miner. We must, therefore, offer higher reward for the former in order to attract him to the work where he is needed. That is to say, Laski finds a justification for differences in reward in so far as those differences are essential to the efficient performance of functions in society.

This principle provided by Laski faces two difficulties, It is certainly difficult, as he himself pointed out earlier, to

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1. Grammer of Politics, p. 200. 2. Ibid., p. 197.

establish a scale of the social values of various occupations. The difference between the work of a judge or a doctor and the work of a miner might seem clear specially in our society, but the difference between the work of a doctor and a judge does not reveal the same clarity. Hence any differentiation between occupations on the basis of social value has to be very largely arbitrary and general. Nor, in the second place, are wages the only factor of attraction. A man possessed of high qualities would be attracted to the position of judge even though his remuneration would be equal to what a miner receives. In a socialist society, provided there is no great disparity of incomes, the power, distinction, and personal satisfaction which a particular work provides, would probably be at least as attractive, if not more so, than wages.

Laski himself, I should make clear, insisted that too much emphasis has been placed on economic reward. Men like Newton, Darwin or Pasteur, he pointed out, are not lured by monetary wealth. That is true of the great soldier who "finds his reward not in the income he receives, but in the public esteem that is the measure of his repute." It is also true of the civil servant, who finds better reward in being part of a great public service than in an economic career. Even among ordinary men, "Those who seem to pursue wealth for its own sake are, more frequently in fact, seeking those standards which, in a commercial civilization, bring standing and power."[1]

But in reality, it is true that wealth has its own attraction We have to agree that "payment by achievement as distinct from payment by effort seems, therefore, to have a real place in an imperfect world." This, the inference is obvious, means that we have to accept

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 198.

differences in income. What Laski does not mean is that there should be anything like the present difference. "A great lawyer," he wrote, "...is not, save in an acquisitive society, only to be purchased at seven or eight times the price of a great university teacher."[1] What difference of reward is to exist should not be of such magnitude as would permit such accumulation of wealth which may be used to benefit others. Under all circumstances reward must be for personal effort and achievement. In general, Laski embodies his principle of reward in two conditions. All men are equally entitled to find full means of life. All differences have to be related to the criterion of common good.

Nature of Industrial Organization:

Reward for work done: Laski tells us, is only one aspect of a theory of property. The nature of the lines along which property is to be organized is equally important. For, as Laski wrote, "A society might pay a just reward to its members and still remain essentially unfree. Nothing is easier than to persuade men to exchange power for material comfort."[2] Laski, therefore sets two general principles which should govern the nature of our economic organization. The first is that it is of primary importance to preserve ample room, in the industrial sphere, for individual freedom. Discipline and efficiency are not to be sacrificed, but the means of production as well as the conditions of production should be made relative to the welfare and personal development of the worker.

The second principle is that industry should be turned into something like the professions. That is to say that it is to be built on the basis of public service, and cease to be a group of men who

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 198.
2. Ibid., p. 201.

produce merely to make a profit. All those engaged in industry will be subject to certain public rules. These rules are not intended to reduce all industries to government or state services. Beyond a certain point the various occupations are to be free. They, Laski wrote, are to be free to protect themselves against "undue competition"; and again, "They may be successful, and success will possibly imply riches; but their success, like that of a good lawyer or the skillful doctor, must be built upon an ability to enrich the public in enriching themselves."[1]

In what manner does Laski propose to transform industry into its new character? In the first place he would change the character of the present owner of wealth. Our present capitalist would no longer be permitted to control the business in which his property is invested, nor would he be allowed an exclusive enjoyment of the profits. Actually, his capital would be hired from him, and he would be paid only the "market price" for the use of his capital. In other words, "He would not be, as he now generally is, the residuary legatee of industry, profiting by the special ability of management, or a rise in price, or the special privilege a monopoly can enforce."[2] Moreover, no one would have capital to hire except that which he produced by his personal effort. "No man,...." Laski insisted, "is entitled to wealth he has not earned. No man, therefore, will have capital to hire that is not the result of his personal effort. Hereditary business enterprise, in which the son takes over when the father feels ripe for retirement, and that without a nice scrutiny of competence, has no relation to a concept of justice."[3] To that, however, Laski makes a slight exception. Heredity, though it is to be absent from our new society, may be extended to children until such time as they are ready to enter life as

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 202.
2. Ibid., p. 203 3. Ibid., p. 201-202.

en, and also to widows. It is also to be in force in so far as in-timate and personal property, such as books, is concerned.

In the second place, there should be a change in the ature of control in industry. The present industrial autocracy is o give way to a system which makes the working force of industry he maker of rules governing its life. Laski does not hope to make ndustry completely free from a hierarchy. But he believes that if he element of ownership were eliminated, and if any greater autho-ity were related to function, both discipline and freedom would be reserved. "We can, that is to say, " he wrote, "make the relation-hip between a manager and a machine-tender an intelligible one, be-ause each has a function to perform; but once the element of owner-hip is introduced the possibility of harmony is absent....We can nly make industrial relationships effective by making the exercise f authority arise naturally out of function."[1]

In the third place, a certain degree of socialism should e introduced. This involves the socialisation of those services hich are essential to the well-being of the community. Electric ower, for instance, would be completely freed from private control nd private profit. Any gain made should benefit, not private in-ividuals, but the community as a whole.

In addition, Laski would grant a constitution to both ocialised and private industries. It would set the hours of work nd rates of pay. It would also introduce democracy into industrial life. He would also introduce the elements of qualification and pub-licity. Arbitrary power of appointment or promotion for instance would be replaced by fitness. "Exactly, that is to say," he wrote,

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1. Grammar of politics, p. 203.

"as a man must offer proofs of competence before he is admitted to the bar or to medical practice, before he can become the manager of a mine, or the master of a ship, so must he offer similar proofs before he becomes head of a factory or a department store. We must make an end of chance and nepotism in business enterprise if it is to attain the dignity of a profession."[1] In the same way, publicity is to be obligatory, for, Laski pointed out, concealment of costs of production and profits "is a fatal bar to a public spirit in industry."

Revolution or peaceful change?

How is the new order to come into existence? Up till about 1925, Laski believed that peaceful change would probably be successful. He did not believe that the abolition of "function-less property" would be an easy matter, nor that there was a "direct highroad to its accomplishment. To suggest peaceful action by the proletariat, to refrain from accepting the present system any longer, was, he thought, to ignore the fact that the workers can not maintain themselves for a long time without work. "Only a peasantry growing its own food," he wrote, "is in a position to continue its abstention for any length of time."[2] Another course of action would be violent revolution. That was not remote from Laski's thoughts. In fact he believed that, "It would be futile to suggest that political revolution is impossible".[3] But he did not advocate violence. He thought that the possibility of failure would make the attempt "a dubious adventure which may end only in fixing the fetters of the present system more firmly upon those who suffer by it; that it may even, by its magnitude, destroy the whole fabric of civilization."[4] Laski's attitude, however, was

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 204
2. Ibid., p. 208 3. Ibid., p. 208 4. Ibid., p. 208

not completely pacifist. Peaceful methods were to be employed only as long as they were not met with force. "We are only entitled," he worte, "to employ revolutionary instruments when methods of persuasion are challenged by violence. For the resources of civilization should only be abandoned in the last resort."[1]

Laski, therefore, preferred peaceful change. He advocated buying out, by legislative enactment, the rights of property owners. Compensation would be given which would help to appease the former owners of property. For, in his words, "The sudden extinction of these legal rights would, if unaccompanied by compensation, probably result in an assault upon the government making the attempt. Men will sooner, as Machiavelli said, forgive the death of their relatives than the confiscation of their property."[2] The compensation which Laski suggested, was not to be passed to descendants; it would, "at most" be "an annuity terminable at death."

Such are the broad outlines of the society which Laski calls upon us to create. In his opinion it would be a society on a much higher level than our present one. From it, at least, the element of economic fear and unsecurity would be absent. And through education and careful study of the conditions of work the life of both the manual and mental workers would be raised to a much more refined and creative level. Nor does Laski fear the dangers of uniformity and limitations which any collectivist system gives rise to. He seems certain that in the new society which he outlined to us there would be more variety than the enemies of collectivism can imagine. Not only the interests of the producers,

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1. Grammar of Politics, p. 208.
2. Ibid., p. 209.

but also the interests and desires of consumers would find their way into the new social system and its working arrangements. Certainly, Laski does not believe that a utopia would become a reality. But he does hold that better education, better working conditions for all, and a greater sense of justice in the new society would improve the quality of life. Mistakes will be make, selfishness and slackness will manifest themselves. Yet a system built on public service and loftier ideals which can be made to work, is certainly better than one in which pecuniary profit is the central motive in life.

What experience Laski has gained since 1920 has strengthened his socialistic convictions and effected a change in his position notably as regards the question of revolution. He tell us indirectly that his experience has been both rich and real. He has been an active member of the Labour Party, has served on government committees, and has "dewiled" for ministers of the two labor governments. Besides doing work in industrial arbitration, he has helped trade unions in every important strike and specially in the general strike of 1928. In addition to teaching and writing books, most of his time has gone to work for socialism. He has made himself familiar with political journalism and the adult-education movement. THrough invitations to lecture in foreign countries, he has become intimately acquainted with the universities and political life of France, Spain, pre-Hitler Germany, and the Soviet Union, and, in addition, he has returned to America a number of times.

What lesson has Laski learnt from this? "Out of it all, the great lesson I have learned is the broad truth of the marxian

philosophy."[1] As early as 1925, when he wrote his book on communism, this was evident. He accepted the materialist interpretation of history, though he believed that the economic system of a society was the most important but not the only factor which determined the social, religious, and political superstructure of that society. Nationalism, the work of individuals like Owen, and religious loyalty, he thought, could not be reduced to a simple economic basis. Laski, moreover, believed in the doctrine of class struggle, and agreed with the communists that the state is not a neutral power standing above the contending parties, but is, necessarily, biased in favour of the dominant economic class. Even when concessions were made by this class, they were the outcome of a heated struggle. Where Laski differed from the communists was in his refusal to accept the communist predictions about the inevitability of a communist society. He found, in other words, no reason to believe in the certainty of the triumph of the proletariat and the advent of communist era. In the first place, the different conditions in the different countries were not likely to bring about similar situations and similar social organizations. In the second place, an unsuccessful revolution might easily lead to a Fascist dictatorship. In the third place, better organization and scientific discovery might enable capitalism to satisfy the more pressing demands of the workers. "It might then," Laski observed, "be true of them, as it seems to be true of the American worker in our own day, that they would thereby be led to exchange political power for material comfort. Capitalism is not an unchanging phenomenon; and the margin of possible improvement, under its aegis, is larger than its critics like to admit. The intensity of

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1. American Nation, 1938.

production, for instance, which might follow a general level of high wages, might, so far from leading to revolution, prove a safeguard against it by the great increase it secured in the average standard of life. We may agree with Marx that, unless capitalism proved itself capable of large reforms, it is destined to perish; but that does not commit us to the theory that communism will take its place."[1]

We shall see later that Laski became convinced that capitalism is incapable of producing adequate reforms. For the present it is enough to state that Laski did not believe, as the communists did, that even if capitalist society were destroyed, the outcome would be a communist society. For the operation of such a society might be impossible; it might turn out to be different from what Marx had predicted; the violence and destruction required to overthrow present society would destroy the generous impulses necessary for the new society; and lastly while it may be assumed that economic classes would disappear, yet other forms of class rule might take its place. Those who wield the power to bring a communistic society into existence, might be unwilling to give up their power as is actually the case in soviet Russia of the present day.

Where the communists were right, Laski thought, was in their insistence that change was inevitable. He agreed that unless the poor and the disinherited were reconciled by the improvement of their conditions, they would seek to change them. The evils against which communism is a protest are real, and Laski thought that the only way to avoid conflict is to find the proper remedy. If conflict

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1. Communism, p. 87.

conflict comes, "...the fault will lie neither at the door of the communist, nor of the ordinary man. The former has been a warning to the rulers of the modern state that consistent reformation is the only effective answer to the challenge of the extremist; and the latter is too patient and long-suffering to revolt unless there is real justice on his side. The communist theory of the state, that is to say, has so much of justice on its side that the proof of its wrongness lies, above all, in the demonstration that its ideals can be realized by alternative means. That requires effort rather than assertion; and the effort must be forthcoming soon, if it is to reach its appointed end."[1]

Yet Laski has become more skeptical about peaceful development. "I have been driven," he wrote, "to the conclusion that no class voluntarily abdicates from the possession of power. I have come to learn that the private ownership of the means of production makes impossible for the democratic idea to transcend the barriers of class without the capture of the state power by the working class."[2] This has been the impact on Laski produced by the Russian experience, the advent of Fascism in central and South Eastern Europe and the reaction of the owning classes in Spain and France and the United States to any serious effort of social reform. This is what the general strike of 1926, the"betrayal of 1931" in England, and the recent emperialism of Japan and Italy have taught him. They have convinced him "that in large outline, there is no answer to the philosophy of Marx."

It is with a background of Marxian philosophy, Laski indicated, that the character of the problems and restlessness of the last years is to be sought. This is not only true of the internal

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1. Communism, p. 181-182.
2. American Nation, 1938.

problems of each state, but also of our international life. A Marxian analysis of the situation would show the close relation between capitalism and war. It is of course known to every one that war has occurred at the various stages through which human society has passed. Therefore we have no right to say that capitalism, unlike other, and at least previous systems, does ineviably lead to it. Yet we are right in asserting, as Laski asserts, that our present economic system, is very largely responsible for the outbreak of violence among nations. The search for profit by capitalists drives them to seek control over foreign markets. Competition among the capitalists of different states in this sphere gives rise, because of the necessity of force, to the need for armament. This, Laski wrote, is the basis of "concession-hunting," spheres of influence", protectorates, colonies; in short of imperialism. This, I may add, is one of the main factors why nations are made to subdue and oppress, allegedly in the name of civilization and trusteeship, other weaker and less fortunate nations. The failure of our society to disarm its states and maintain peace, and the failure of the League of Nations should be traced back, Laski tells us, to the nature of the economic system under which we live. A system which impels its leaders to compete for the acquisition of markets and concessions for private profit cannot hope to establish real peace and cooperation among states and nations.

Can Capitalism solve the problem of Crises and Depression?

In one way the conflict between the exploited class and its masters may be avoided. If we could show that the present capitalist system is not a hindrance to a fuller exploitation of productive potentialities; that it can cure the world from the depression which it has experienced since 1929, the hour of revolt will be postponed.

For, if that is achieved, the demands of the working class could be satisfied at a higher level than the present one. Their attempt to overthrow the capitalist order will come to an end because they will be convinced that it does not prevent the attainment of a higher material standard which they think is possible. Laski discusses several proposals which attempt to show that the capitalist system is capable of satisfactorily solving its present problems and restoring prosperity. Each of these is rejected.

The first of these recovery plans urges the removal of state interference and the restoration of the laissez faire policy. When that is done things will adjust themselves and an era of prosperity will dawn upon us. Laski's oanswer is the simple one that this proposal assumes a theoretical type of capitalism which is remote from the capitalist system of actual life. It also proposes the desertion of social responsibilities which have been undertaken as a result of experience gained from the working of actual capitalism A second plan seeks the solution in the opposite direction. It calls for none state experimentation and government control for the purpose of subordinating private profit to community well-fare.[1] This device will enable the state to control the capitalist processes in the interest of common good. The class structure of society will be maintained, but the bad parts of the system will be abolished, and the good ones preserved. The basis of the argument embodied in this plan is the assumption that the state is neutral and that the criterb of good and bad can be applied by the state to the economic processes of our society. The first part of the assumption, as we have seen, has been rejected by Laski; he declares the second meaningless. The primary concern of the capitalist system is not what is good and what

is bad, but what is "leading to profit" or "not leading to profit. "Any one who considers the history of capitalism, not least in its imperialis phase, will find it difficult to believe that its inher drive to profit will suddenly accept ethical limitations from whic the whole of its past has been singularly free".[1] Ethics have faile to govern economic dealing and profit making. To him, the history of the exploitation of Africa by the English proves this statement. "We have," he declares, "set up admirable principles of trusteeship through which to safeguard the interests of the native races there; but immediately gold is discovered on the native reserves, we can exhaust the resources of human reason to discover grounds upon which to invade those reserves. We can even persuade ourselves to believe that the native ought to accept our view that it is for his benefit that we are above all concerned."[2]

The essence of Laski's argument is that the problems we are confronting are not simple ones that may be dealt with by half-measures. They arise from the roots of our system; only there may the solution be sought. We have to ask why our great productive capacities produce scarcity; why thousands and millions of unemploye are idle. These are the general lines of the grave situation in which we find ourselves. We are confronted with a dropping rate of production, and with industries that must get subsidies to keep going. More important is the fact that the depression of which these are the characteristics, does not seem to be temporary." It has lasted, so far, for fourteen years in Great Britain; and even in the United States, technologically the best equipped country in the world, the depression is five years old, with no sign today

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1. The State in Theory and Practice 1935, p. 186.
2. Ibid., p. 187.

(July 1934) of visible permanent improvement."[1] Even people who hold to the postulates of the capitalist system tell us that, even if the unemployed were absorbed, the disposal of the commodities they would produce is not, granted the available capacity of the effective market, a feasible proposition."[2] "Of the United States", to quote another depressing statement," the Washington correspondent of the London times tells us that 'if by some magic a return could be made to the productive maximum of three years ago, there would still be no work for 45 percent of the present twelve million unemployed"[3] (Nov. 2, 1932). This is not different from the warning which Mr. Ramsay MacDonald gave to the House of Commons when he declared to it that even the restoration of prosperity might force upon Great Britain the maintenance of "great bodies of men and women, perhaps amounting even to a couple of millions to be, to all intents and purposes, in our society, superfluous scrap."[4]

The only remedy is to face the facts squarely. The time when capitalism was successful has passed. It can no longer generously confer political emancipation and a standard of living high enough to satisfy the masses. Government interference or absention cannot solve the problem. Nor would the imposition of a new, Fascist ideology be more successful. For new ideologies, to make men accept their present level, cannot be fabricated at will. They have to be the product of an alteration in the class relations of society. In fact, he insists, Fascism is not by any means a real ideology, but 'nothing more than an ill assorted rag-bag in which all kinds of remnants from the most diverse philosophies seek, as best they may, to find a place.' Its change of position is a clear illustration

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1. The State in Theory and Practice, 1935, p. 190.
2. Ibid., p. 190-191
3. Ibid., p. 191
4. Ibid., p. 191.

of the point. In 1921, it stood for republicanism and disarmament, promised the restoration of lands to the peasants and was hostile to the church. In 1934 it was no longer republican, had done nothing for disarmament, failed to fulfill its promises to the peasant, and had made concessions to the church. In other words, "stripped of all its rhetorical trapping, Italian Fascism appears quite simply as an insistence upon compulsory obedience to a state whose purpose is to protect existing class relations."[1]

The case of Nazi Social Nationalism is not different. In its early days it declared that unearned income would be abolished. The 'slavery' of interest would disappear and war profits confiscated; trusts nationalized, and land required for communal purposes confiscated without compensation. But even at a time when Hitler had not yet come to power, it was privately explained that their programme was only built for reasons of diplomacy. In the words of Mowrer, whom Laski quotes, a capitalist subscriber was told, "we must talk the language of the embittered socialist workmen"...or else they would not feel at home with us"[2] That, no doubt, conforms to Hitler's statement in his auto-biography, that "'the German'" has not the slightest notion how a people must be misled if the adherence of masses is sought'".[3]

In neither case, has the state interfered with the existing class relations. Nor is that expected. The Fascist state, like its sister the Nazi state, is capitalism disguised under cover of state absolutism and state interest. That this is true seems to me to be a fact. But that there are hundreds and thousands of people who believe in Fascism or National socialism as supreme ideologies is no less true. To many, national interest is above all. To many the

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1. The State in Theory and Practice, 1935, p. 195.
2. Ibid., p. 195 3. Ibid., p. 195-196.

nation in the form of the state should be master of the lives of the individuals so that its power may be enhanced and its glory magnified. Such people are certainly ready to sacrifice property and life for its cause. Whether they are misled or not is irrelevant. A military defeat, or an intense external struggle are bound to create in the hearts of men the honest conviction that, in order to be able to live in this world, their state is to be supreme. This is in no way conflicts with Laski's argument. Fascism or no Fascism our problem lies in the defects of our economic system. I fully agree with him when he says "If, as appears, the present scheme of class-relations makes it impossible for us effectively to utilise the instruments of production, we are left with no alternative but a change in the scheme of class relations".[1] The lives of millions of men are daily being made miserable and their most moderate and humble ambitions frustrated. We have to remember "that men do not always starve quietly."

Laski finds then, that the essence of our problems is the evil working of our economic system. He cherishes no hope of a voluntary surrender of their power by capitalists though he has repeatedly called upon them to do so. The conclusion which he has drawn "is the necessity of a unified working class party able either to win political power or, if it meets the challenge of Fascism, to emerge victorious from the conflict."[2] This, it is obvious, brings him much nearer to the communists than he stood in 1926. It is, it seems to me, the natural result of a series of convictions. If you believe that the present economic system is the source of evil; if you are aware that this economic system cannot serve more than a small privileged class; if you believe that the class to which the

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1. The State in Theory and Practice, 1935, p. 192.
2. American Nation, 1938

present system does not extend its fruits will not remain acquiescent for ever; if you are convinced that the ruling class will not voluntarily and peacefully give up its favoured position, you will be driven, if you do not want to sacrifice all for the sake of avoiding conflict, to the necessity of preparing yourself for it.

Laski, therefore, calls for a united effort on the part of the working class. Events in Germany and Italy after the war revealed how "the division of the working class means its defeat." "The lesson of France and Spain," he added, "is the equally clear one that the attainment of unity at the least enables the working class to give a good account of itself when the challenge comes."[1] Laski is convinced that when capitalism has reached its "phase of contraction", the ruling class will not respect any principle in their endeavour to maintain their power. He makes his position clearer. He rejects the pacifist doctrine of non-resistance. He also rejects Fabian gradualism. "That principle," he wrote, "was the natural method to recommend in an age of capitalist expansion. In a period of capitalist decline such policy would give the owning class a supreme opportunity to organize itself for counter-attack. The real lesson of post-war Germany is the futility of trying to reorganize the economic foundations of capitalism by half-measures."[2] That also was true of the two labour governments in Great Britain. "Each", Laski wrote with some contempt, "was more anxious to prove its orthodox respectability to its opponents than it was to get on with the work of socialism, to which it was committed by public profession. The result was to discourage its friends and convince its enemies that the price of social reform was greater than capitalism could afford."[3]

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1. American Nation, 1936
2. Ibid., 3. Ibid.,

Laski's temper is certainly much more radical than it used to be before 1927. He seems to be impatient; for him, the time has come when "a central attack on the structure of capitalism" should be made. To reform the evils of our society, "nothing less than wholesale socialisation" is essential. Otherwise, the outcome will be dark. "The alternative", he wrote, "in all Western Civilization outside the Soviet Union is, I believe, a rapid drift to Fascism in which the working class will be at a definite disadvantage by reason of the division of the forces. That division has already cost it Italy and Germany. It may one day cost England and the United States as well. In that event, we shall see a new iron age descend upon mankind in which the very memory of civilized living may well become no more than a traditional legend."[1]

I find myself in agreement with Laski's condemnation of capitalism. Though many men are ready to fight for its preservation not as many can deny the evils and shortcomings which seem to be inherent in it. The great productive capacities which have arisen with it stand in sharp contrast with the relative poverty of the masses, and, perhaps as important, the economic insecurity which afflicts many with bitter anxiety and fear. Unemployment, which seems to have become a permanent feature of our society; recurring depression; the check placed against proper education, proper health facilities, and proper minimum standards of life; are all limitations upon a decent life which are at least associated with, if not inherent in, our present system. Nor is this all. politically, a theoretical defense of capitalist economy, or, as Laski said, an exposition of the errors of Marxian economic theory, are not adequate to arrest the indignation of men against capitalism and the demand for its transformation into a socialist society. And it is of

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1. American Nation, 1938.

primary significance that both capitalist and socialist governments, in so far as they have acted within the capitalist structure, have failed to offer a remedy. In a human society, it seems to be fated that men who stand for what might be accepted as the common interest on humanitarian principles, cannot be as powerful as men, who consciously or unconsciously seek the interest of their class in a society which is built upon private profit. If, in a society, of plenty even the primary requirements of life such as food, shelter, health, education, and a reasonable opportunity for individual freedom, are dependent upon economic position, such society is emphatically unrelated to rational principles of justice.

To argue that, given human nature, a socialist society cannot function, will not be convincing until at least the most glaring evils of the present system are reformed. Nor do we have an assurance that a socialist society is impossible. Men do work for profit and power; but men do also work to earn a living, to give an outlet to their creativeness, and to gain a position which they wish to occupy. To argue, as Lippman does,[1] that a collectivist society will mean the absence of individual freedom and initiative, and compulsory consumption through collectivist control of production must not blind us to the fact that there is not today much freedom in a real sense, for the individual to choose the work he loves and to which he is fitted, and to consume the objects of his desire. Soviet Russia, no matter what its defects are, has proved a working proposition. We are not entitled to judge a socialist society on the basis of ideal standards. We are only entitled to set it against our capitalist society which leaves millions of men poor, ignorant, and miserable.

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1. The Good Society.

CONCLUSION

As the first years after the World War of 1914-1918 passed by, Laski's position changed. The significance of this change lies not so much in the realm of theory as in the realm of the programme of action which socialists ought to adopt in order to bring into existence a socialist society. In his earlier works, Laski seemed to be hopeful that the problems and evils from which society was suffering could be solved and reformed by the application of reason and the pressure exerted by a new social consciousness. As the poorer classes were the people who suffered from the defects of the social system, reform was conceived in terms of improving their conditions. Laski believed that some progress towards a better society, though on a small scale, had been made, and, at first believed that more progress would be achieved. He could even see, with increasing clarity, the directions in which reform would come. To comply with the implications of democracy, a better educational system would be established to enable the workers and the poorer masses to be properly equipped for the tasks and privileges of democracy. Again, and on the same grounds, the nationalisation, in some sort, of basic monopolies such as coal, power, transport and their direct management by the people themselves, had increasingly come to be felt as an urgent necessity. In addition, "Not less certain, as the future expands, will be the conference upon the workers of definite institutional security against the tragedy of unemployment. That the resources of the state must be used to safeguard its citizens against the hazards of trade is already a commonplace."[1] And last industrial self-

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1. Studies in Law and Politics, p. 126.

government would transform men from their present status of mere recipients of orders, to partakers of the control and determination of what industrial life shall be.

Laski, it should be clear, did not believe that such changes would come about in a short time or in an easy and direct manner. He knew that traditions stood in the way; he was fully aware that, "They imply a change in the property relation so vast as to alter in their implication the very purpose of the state."[1] Their realisation would be piece-meal, and it would suffer defeats as well as win victories. But, then, they would in turn become traditions, which would perhaps come to be regarded as the necessary foundations of society.

That, Laski adds, depends in part upon the maintenance of internal and international peace. "If we recognize sufficiently the inevitable basic infirmity in all human institutions so as to be convinced that with all its slowness the path of reason is preferable to the path of violence, that the inadequate good of peace may be preferable to the cost of ideal good attempted by war, an atmosphere of constructiveness may emerge from the present reaction."[2] The potential power of the means of conflict to destroy was so great in his mind that he seemed inclined to believe that there was a big possibility that men would not decide to use them in order to attain their ideals or to defend the present order.

Yet Laski seems to have lost what optimism he had cherished The owning classes, he became more fully convinced, would not grant concessions to the poorer masses unless their capitalistic

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1. Studies in Law and Politics, p. 129
2. Ibid., p. 129.

system was expanding. Once this process was checked, their attitude would be altered, and they would make an attempt to put an end to further concessions. At present, Laski feels certain, capitalism has sat on a period of contraction, it is unable, in so far as the capitalistic structure is maintained, to produce a period of prosperity which may satisfy the wants of the masses and postpone their struggle for political and economic power. The only way to meet present needs is therefore to alter the economic basis of society. But, as he has shown from a study of post-war Europe, the owners of property would not give up their economic power peacefully. The outcome would be conflict and violence.

A few years before the outbreak of the present war, Laski believed that the conflict between capitalism and socialism would occur in the near future. But he was not sure of a socialist victory. In fact he felt that the outcome would be the victory of the forces of reaction and the advent of Fascism. For, he argued, a revolution has no chance of success as long as the state retains the loyalty of its armed forces. The power of poorly armed workers is too negligible to overcome the weight of the armed soldiers of the present day. The state has not lost this allegiance, and before it has lost it a revolutionary attempt on the part of the workers would mean their defeat and a period of intense reaction.

Another cause, Laski believes, would contribute to the same end. Society cannot be simply divided into bourgeoisie and proletariat. The "petite bourgeoisie" which was considered a minor factor by Marx in the Communist Manifesto, seems, according to Laski, to hold the balance of power in its hands, and, at least

at first, seems to be attracted by Fascism rather than socialism. "The economic development of capitalism has effected an embourgeoisement of large sections of the working-class the psychological affects of which are important. The bank-clerk, the shop assistant the civil servant, the minor technician, the office-worker, those engaged in personal services of all kinds, these, to take only the more notable examples, seem little susceptible to the influence of trade-union organisation, and, still less, to the evolution of a proletarian consciousness. So far from being natural material for socialist propaganda they have proved, on the contrary, the most favourable soil for Fascist ideas."[1] In other words, this class, though its interests ought logically to coincide with proletarian interests, would, when the coice is to be made, join the Fascist forces rather than the socialist camp. This union between the "grande and petite bourgeoisie" would enable the forces of reaction to defeat the forces of change.

But this alliance, Laski holds, is not destined to last. The interests of the big owners of property would, except when there is an expanding market, make them unable to satisfy the wants of their minor partners. In so far as Fascism would not alter the class structure of society, it would be incapable of solving the problems of the industrial crises and unemployment. This would make the "petite bourgeoisie" break the alliance "which enables capitalism to defeat the working-class in the first instance." It would be driven to the side of the proletariat; and the condition of the new alliance would be a joint attempt to over throw the

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1. The State in Theory and Practice, p. 284.

existing economic system. At this stage, the possibility of a proletarian victory, given able leadership, is great. Yet Laski does not argue that a Fascist regime is an inevitable development on the way to socialism. There may arise occasions, such as a great crisis immediately after the close of a lost war, which, if detected by able leaders who know how to strike at the right moment, could be exploited to change the capitalist order in a direct manner. When such an occasion arises, Laski warns that it is the duty of the workers and their leaders to transform without hesitation the economic basis of society. Failure to do so means the potential success, at a later period, of the forces of reaction. This is the conclusion he draws from post-war Germany. Referring to the success of Nazi counter-revolution, Laski wrote, "But what it really proved was less the resistant power of capitalism to attack, than the fact that history takes its revenge upon those who do not use the opportunities with which she presents them."[1]

In part Laski's political thought may be regarded as an attempt to provide the individual with the means of self-expression and to protect him against the tyranny of a sovereign state. Only when this is achieved can a society of real free men exist. That is the basis of Laski's attack on sovereignty. That is the explanation of his insistence on making government open to the impact of any organization that satisfies human wants.

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1. The State in Theory and Practice, p. 294.

Whether that organization is religious like a church, or social like a club, or territorial like a city, it is entitled to a life of its own. For, to Laski, individuality is not uniform but unique, and it has various aspects and different loyalties. It cannot, therefore, be free when it is made subject to one all-binding loyalty and one interpretation of experience and life. Only in diversity, that is, may it find its fullest expression and development. The task of mankind is to recognize this diversity and to provide free channels for the development of individuality in conformity to its implications.

That this is a true explanation of the nature of individuality, the life of men around us seems to prove. But it is equally true that it is difficult to adjust loyalties to one another. In fact, loyalties may be found to be competing. A true Christian may fail to become a true German. The alliegiance of a Moslem Arab to his religion may stand in the way of his full acceptance of an Arab nationalism which would unite him with Christian Arabs. The strong attatchment which a man has to his district or state can easily blind him to the rights and just claims of other districts or states. When ones country seems to be in danger one loyalty surges to the top and over shadows all others - the love of the mother land.

How, then, can we reconcile the competing loyalties of life? Laski finds the answer in allowing each centre of human interest and want freedom in its own sphere. But under what conditions can this be achieved? Three requirements, it seems to me, have to be fulfilled to attain this end. In the first place, the

people of the society in question should have an adequate standard of education and culture. It is useless, for instance, to expect a backward Moslem or Christian to tolerate the religious beliefs of the other sect and to extend to its members equal privileges with his own. Nor, in the field of local government, can we fruitfully extend autonomy to those who are very poorly equipped to use it. In the second place, a general agreement on fundamentals which breeds a spirit of tolerance is essential. For when this prevails, the competition of loyalties loses its sharp edge and the friction it engenders would not be intense enough to lead to suppression. In the third place, the absence of external danger or injustice makes possible a freer internal development. Threats from the outside give to nationalistic claims more than their due and thus help to create a national feeling in men which makes them blind to the criteria of right and wrong. When at least these three conditions are present, then may we hope to see the free interplay of loyalties. And this cannot come true, Laski would tell us, until the contradictions of capitalist economy are supplanted by a socialist system.

In part, again, Laski's political thought may be regarded as a condemnation of the injustice and evils of our present social order. We find that our means of production can produce plenty. We regard with contempt or envy, a small class of men enjoying the luxuries that fabulous wealth can provide. When we do so we are struck by the contrast which this picture provides with existence of huge masses who are, not necessarily by any fault of their own, deprived of even the elementary requirements of a decent existence. Democracy has promised to them a different life; yet it has not fulfilled its promise. It has given them political privilege, but

denied them economic power. Therefore the promised equality has not been achieved; it cannot be achieved except through a fairer distribution of economic power. This may seem materialistic. But it is so. Whether we like it or not, many of our social values and even some of our religious and spiritual values, cannot be grasped and enjoyed except through the medium of economic security The conditions of the majority of men cannot be ascribed to inherent defects in them, nor, in an age of plenty, can we say that theirs is a natural fate. The existence of such misery makes one reject the claim, as Laski does, that the state exists for the common good. If it does so, it is only in so far as it does not violate the basic assumptions held by the economic masters of society.

The views to which Laski holds are a true reflection upon the problems which we face today. The capitalist system has failed to satisfy the needs of a big class of people. This class will seek to overthrow it. The cost of the attempt may be, as in Germany, Italy, and Spain, the rise of Fascism. But Fascism has to prove itself capable of adequately raising the standard of life of the masses, not in one or two countries through their military supremacy, but in a world where where no Fascist country exploits a military advantage (or disadvantage) over other countries. If it fails to do so (and it has not done so yet) then the interests of the majority of men will seek the transfer of economic power from the hands of the few to the hands of the many. The principles of socialism cannot be considered unrelated to the facts of life. The experience of Russia is one proof of this. The long failure of capitalism may provide another.

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