

old before Judaism and Christianity and Islam were heard of.

Toynbee's final testament.

Reviewed by ROBERT H. BROPHY III

The Trouble with Socialism

A Plea for Liberty, edited by Thomas Mackay, *Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1981 [1891]. xxxv + 828 pp. \$13.50.*

THE SUBTITLE OF this book is *An Argument Against Socialism and Socialistic Legislation*. The book consists of an introduction by Herbert Spencer and essays by leading liberals of the last quarter of the nineteenth century who had banded together in the Liberty and Property Defense League to oppose interventionist proposals disposing of the Corn Laws in 1846. Their manifesto was *A Plea for Liberty*.

The Irish Land Act of 1881, which threatened the privileges of the English landed classes, precipitated the League's founding. As the extension of the franchise slowly transferred effective control of the Parliament from aristocratic and commercial hands into those of the middle and working classes, the Gladstone Government enacted further interventionist legislation, notably the Employer's Liability Act of 1880, which provided for compensation to injured workers when negligence on the part of their employer could be proven. This was considered a threat to contractual freedoms.

Editor Thomas Mackay retired from business at the age of thirty-six to devote himself to the study of political and economic problems. His writings reflect the wide-ranging character of his economic and social interests and include *Methods of Social Reform, The State and Charity, An Apology for Liberty, and Dangers of Democracy*.

In his Introduction, Herbert Spencer notes that his opposition to socialism does not mean

contentment with the *status quo*. The present social state, he says, is transitional, leading to a future state in which liberalism will be perfected. "My opposition to socialism," he writes, "results from the belief that it would stop the progress to such a higher state and would bring back a lower state." Nothing but the slow modification of human nature by the discipline of social life "can produce permanently advantageous changes."

In his chapter on "The Impracticability of Socialism," Edward Stanley Robertson affirms that "social inequalities are inequalities which may be mitigated, but cannot be redressed wholly." The trouble with socialism, he says, is that it tries to change nature: "Socialism attempts to vanquish nature by a front attack. Individualism, on the contrary, is the recognition, in social politics, that nature has a beneficent as well as a malignant side." The only thing that law can secure is freedom: "Law cannot secure equality, nor can it secure prosperity. In the direction of equality, all that law can do is to secure fair play, which is equality of rights but is not equality of conditions."

In his "The Limits of Liberty," Wordsworth Donisthorpe agrees with Hobbes that the power of the state is absolute, and he criticizes those like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau who use the state of nature to suggest limitations on the state. The right course for the state to adopt towards its own citizens "cannot be discovered by education from any abstract principles, such as Justice or Liberty." Rules of conduct in the state "should be guided" by centuries of experience, "very much like the rules by which our own private lives are guided; not absolutely trustworthy, but better than no general rules at all." He predicts a diminishing role for the state as it surrenders gradually its functions to private associations.

George Howell, in "Liberty for Labour," admits that liberty necessitates regulation, which means restraint. Each person "must be restrained from infringing upon, or interfering with, the liberty of another, all being equally protected in the exercise of their undoubted rights, constitutional and moral." But state law should not reach "all the

details, trivialities, or incidents of private life." Law should enter as little as possible into the domain of everyday life. Howell attacks those in the working classes who "seek repose under the baneful fungi of legislative protection and regulation."

In his long chapter on "State Socialism in the Antipodes," Charles Fairfield states that experiments in socialism in Australia have been subsidized by the home country: "Experiments in crypto-socialism, tried upon a society at base, free, commercial, modern, English, would long ago have broken down on the financial side had it not been that the legendary repute of those lands for natural wealth, such as gold, wool, fruitful soil and a fine climate, has tempted investors in Europe to fling their money at the heads of Australasian borrowers. Latterly, as the frightful cost and necessarily unproductive results of State Socialism became apparent to Colonial ministers, they have, to prevent a collapse of the whole thing, been driven to apply for ever-recurring loans in Europe—on false pretences." He concludes that "socialism today in the Antipodes seems to me to preach willing disciples the despicable gospel of shirking, laziness, mendicancy, and moral cowardice. The further consciousness among all classes there, that triumphant and popular State Socialism depends for its existence on absorbing money from abroad, without reasonable prospect of ever being able to repay it, seems to me bad also."

Edmund Vincent contributed the chapter on "The Discontent of the Working Classes." It is safe to say "that in spite of the endeavours of the Tilletts, the Wilsons, and the Manns to induce men to believe that they are being ill-treated, the men who are content with their employment and with the rate of wages paid to them vastly outnumber the malcontents; but the last-named are, of course, the men who make the most noise." Most men, including workers, reject social-

ism: "Such men feel that to surrender their liberty of action, to resign themselves to living upon one dead level, to lay aside hope and ambition, would be to relinquish their humanity."

Editor Mackay's contribution, "Investment," attempts to demonstrate that "the State cannot successfully perform the duty of investment for its members. State property is always ill-managed; it does not disappear automatically when it becomes effete; and its universality would deprive citizens of the school of experience where, more than anything else, their character acquires the due admixture of energy and self-control."

In a chapter entitled "Free Education," B. H. Alford writes: "What moves me against Free Education is that it is a new departure; the application of an enervating doctrine to the roots of English discipline. The State would virtually say to thousands of parents, 'You have failed, and the rate-payers shall remove from you the last remnant of educational duties, and undertake to teach your children for you. . . .' I appeal to parents to suspect that the political parties vie with each other in thrusting upon them. Is it not a bribe?"

Auberon Herbert ends the book with a chapter on "The True Line of Deliverance." He criticizes the trade union concept of class war: "I urge Trade Unionists and all workmen . . . to get rid of war. Seek to get rid of the war-organization, which is a terrible hindrance to all developments of a higher kind. Give up attacking capital. Leave capital to reduce its own reward, which it will do far more effectually than you can do, by competition with itself."

Jeffrey Paul, of Bowling Green University, contributes a useful Foreword that introduces the reader to this excellent document.

Reviewed by
ANTHONY TRAWICK BOUSCAREN

The Revolution of Conservatism

Post-Conservative America: People, Politics, and Ideology in a Time of Crisis, by Kevin P. Phillips, *New York: Random House, 1982. xxiv + 261 pp. \$14.50.*

THE BASIC THESIS of Mr. Kevin Phillips' *Post-Conservative America* is by now familiar to most literate conservatives. American conservatism, Phillips argues, has failed to respond adequately to continuing, deeply fixed resentments and frustrations within mainstream American society. These frustrations are being aggravated and will continue to build during the 1980s as uncontrollable inflation, demographic changes, the obsolescence of the American constitutional and political systems, and a revolution in life-styles and political values continue. The result will be the emergence of a right-wing radicalism that will bear little resemblance to "Old Right" conservatism of either traditionalist or libertarian orientations, to "neo-conservatism," or even to much of the current "New Right" movements. Phillips goes so far as to suggest that the United States in the 1980s will resemble the Weimar Republic of the 1930s, and that racial, ethnic, regional, and sectarian identities will play an overt and important role in our politics. The Reagan Administration will not answer or satisfy these frustrations, since the President and his advisers have misunderstood the election of 1980 as a demand for Coolidge Era free market and pro-business Republicanism and not as a vocalization of new forces and values. Phillips therefore sees the post-Reagan American right as a potentially serious movement that will abandon many of the *haute-bourgeois* and constitutionalist themes of conventional conservatism and espouse a more populist, radical, authoritarian, nationalist, and even racialist politics.

In general, I concur with Phillips' predictions. Indeed there is a remarkable similarity between his analysis and that of an essay I contributed to Robert W. Whitaker's collection, *The New Right Papers*, published ear-

lier in 1982. Not surprisingly, the American left has denounced both Phillips and me for advocating "fascism." To this charge I can say only what I (and Phillips) advocate is not fascism and what we *predict may become* fascism or something like it—against our wishes. Nevertheless, I disagree with, or at least question, some of the analysis by which Phillips reaches his conclusions, and I would argue that once his mode of analysis is corrected, his perception of a rising American fascism is considerably diminished.

As Phillips admits in his "Introduction," in explaining his methods of analysis:

Ideas count, yes. But they are only one factor in a list that also includes population change, economics, ethnic and religious tribalisms and sheer voter frustration. . . . Concerned with elites, regional antagonisms and popular frustrations, my framework attaches somewhat less importance to forces like the conservative intellectual movement, neo-conservatism and supply-side economic theory than the other schemes might.

I have no serious quarrel with this emphasis on material and psychic rather than ideological causes, but Phillips' real problem arises from his lack of any "framework," any system by which he can assign priority to demography, economic trends, popular ideas, and mass psychology. Consequently, his analysis tends to exhibit an appearance of arbitrary selection of facts, theories, hypotheses, and historical analogies. He is probably correct, for example, that the West is undergoing a "price revolution" similar to that experienced by the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but he has no way of showing how important this inflationary cycle is going to be for our political future, nor does he consider very deeply the many differences that distinguish the late twentieth century (and its response to inflation) from the early modern period. The result is a well-informed and indeed learned book with many imaginative insights and suggestions, but not very convincing to those who demand rigorous argumentation.

A key element in Phillips' prediction of a coming reaction is his belief that the Water-