

## **Seminář: John Dewey: Demokracie jako způsob života**

### **Krize demokracie jako krize veřejnosti**

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#### **CHAPTER IV**

##### **THE ECLIPSE OF THE PUBLIC**

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Optimism about democracy is to-day under a cloud. We are familiar with denunciation and criticism which, however, often reveal their emotional source in their peevish and indiscriminating tone. Many of them suffer from the same error into which earlier laudations fell. They assume that democracy is the product of an idea, of a single and consistent intent. Carlyle was no admirer of democracy, but in a lucid moment he said; "Invent the printing press and democracy is inevitable." Add to this: Invent the railway, the telegraph, mass manufacture and concentration of population in urban centers, and some form of democratic government is, humanly speaking, inevitable. Political democracy as it exists to-day calls for adverse criticism in abundance. But the criticism is only an exhibition of querulousness and spleen or of a superiority complex, unless it takes cognizance of the conditions out of which popular government has issued. All intelligent political criticism is comparative. It deals not with all-or-none situations, but with practical alternatives; an absolutistic indiscriminate attitude, whether in praise or blame, testifies to the heat of feeling rather than the light of thought.

American democratic polity was developed out of genuine community life, that is, association in local and small centers where industry was mainly agricultural and where production was carried on mainly with hand tools. It took form when English political habits and legal institutions worked under pioneer conditions. The forms of association were stable, even though their units were mobile and migratory. Pioneer conditions put a high premium upon personal work, skill, ingenuity, initiative and adaptability, and upon neighborly Sociability. The township or some not much larger area was the political unit, the town meeting the political medium, and roads, schools, the peace of

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the community, were the political objectives. The state was a sum of such units, and the national state a federation—unless perchance a confederation—of states. The imagination of the founders did not travel far beyond what could be accomplished and understood in a congeries of self-governing communities. The machinery provided for the selection of the chief executive of the federal union is illustrative evidence. The electoral college assumed that citizens would choose men locally known for their high standing; and that these men when chosen would gather together for consultation to name some one known to them for his probity and public spirit and knowledge. The rapidity with which the scheme fell into disuse is evidence of the transitoriness of the state of affairs that was predicated. But at the outset there was no dream of the time when the very names of the presidential electors would be unknown to the mass of the voters, when they would plump for a "ticket" arranged in a more or less private caucus, and when the electoral college would be an impersonal registering machine, such

that it would be treachery to employ the personal judgment which was originally contemplated as the essence of the affair.

The local conditions under which our institutions took shape is well indicated by our system, apparently so systemless, of public education. Any one who has tried to explain it to a European will understand what is meant. One is asked, say, what method of administration is followed, what is the course of study and what the authorized methods of teaching. The American member to the dialogue replies that in this state, or more likely county, or town, or even some section of a town called a district, matters stand thus and thus; somewhere else, so and so. The participant from this side is perhaps thought by the foreigner to be engaged in concealing his ignorance; and it would certainly take a veritable cyclopedic knowledge to state the matter in its entirety. The impossibility of making any moderately generalized reply renders it almost indispensable to resort to a historical account in order to be intelligible. A little colony, the members of which are probably mostly known to one another in advance, settle in what is almost, or quite, a wilderness. From belief in its benefits and by tradition, chiefly religious, they wish their children to know at least how to read, write and figure. Families can only rarely provide a tutor; the neighbors over a certain area, in

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New England an area smaller even than the township, combine in a "school district." They get a school house built, perhaps by their own labor, and hire a teacher by means of a committee, and the teacher is paid from the taxes. Custom determines the limited course of study, and tradition the methods of the teacher, modified by whatever personal insight and skill he may bring to bear. The wilderness is gradually subdued; a network of highways, then of railways, unite the previously scattered communities. Large cities grow up; studies grow more numerous and methods more carefully scrutinized. The larger unit, the state, but not the federal state, provides schools for training teachers and their qualifications are more carefully looked into and tested. But subject to certain quite general conditions imposed by the state-legislature, but not the national state, local maintenance and control remain the rule. The community pattern is more complicated, but is not destroyed. The instance seems richly instructive as to the state of affairs under which our borrowed, English, political institutions were reshaped and forwarded.

We have inherited, in short, local town-meeting practices and ideas. But we live and act and have our being in a continental national state. We are held together by non-political bonds, and the political forms are stretched and legal institutions patched in an ad hoc and improvised manner to do the work they have to do. Political structures fix the channels in which non-political, industrialized currents flow. Railways, travel and transportation, commerce, the mails, telegraph and telephone, newspapers, create enough similarity of ideas and sentiments to keep the thing going as a whole, for they create interaction and interdependence. The unprecedented thing is that states, as distinguished from military empires, can exist over such a wide area. The notion of maintaining a unified state, even nominally self-governing, over a country as extended as the United States and consisting of a large and racially diversified population would once have seemed the wildest of fancies. It was assumed that such a state could be found only in territories hardly larger than a city state and with a homogeneous population. It seemed almost self-evident to Plato—as to Rousseau later—that a genuine state could hardly be larger than the number of persons capable of personal acquaintance with one another. Our modern state-unity is due to the consequences of technology employed so as to

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facilitate the rapid and easy circulation of opinions and information, and so as to generate constant and intricate interaction far beyond the limits of face-to-face communities. Political and legal forms

have only piece meal and haltingly, with great lag, accommodated them selves to the industrial transformation. The elimination of distance, at the base of which are physical agencies, has called into being the new form of political association.

The wonder of the performance is the greater because of the odds against which it has been achieved. The stream of immigrants which has poured in is so large and heterogeneous that under conditions which formerly obtained it would have disrupted any semblance of trmity as surely as the migratory invasion of alien hordes once upset the social equilibrium of the European continent. No deliberately adopted measures could have accomplished what has actually happened. Mechanical forces have operated, and it is no cause for surprise if the effect is more mechanical than vital. The recqtion of new dements of population in large number from heterogeneous peoples, often hostile to one another at home, and the welding them into even an outward show of unity is an extraordinary feat. In many respects, the consolidation has occurred so rapidly and ruthlessly that much of value has been lost which different peoples might have contributed. The creation of political unity has also promoted social and intellectual uniformity, a standardization favorable to mediocrity. Opinion has been regimented as well as outward behavior. The temper and flavor of the pioneer have evaporated with extraordinary rapidity; their precipitate, as is often noted, is apparent only in the wild-west romance and the movie. What Bagdiot called the cake of custom formed with increasing acceleration, and the cake is too often flat and soggy. Mass production is not confined to the factory.

The resulting political integration has confounded the expectations of earlier critics of popular government as much as it must surprise its early backers if they are gazing from on high upon the present scene. The critics predicted disintegration, instability. They foresaw the new society falling apart, dissolving into mutually repellent animated grains of sand. They, too, took seriously the theory of "Individualism" as the basis of democratic government. A stratification of society into immemorial classes within which each person performed his stated duties ac-

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ording to his fixed position seemed to them the only warrant of stability. They had no faith that human beings rdeased from the pressure of this system could hold together in any unity. Hence they prophesied a flux of governmental regimes, as individuals formed factions, seized power, and then lost it as some newly improvised faction proved stronger. Had the facts conformed to the theory of Individualism, they would doubtless have been right. But, like the authors of the theory, they ignored the technological forces making for consolidation.

In spite of attained integration, or ratherperhaps be cause of its nature, the Public seems to be lost ; it is certainly bewildered.' The government, officials and their activities, are plainly with us. Legislatures make laws with luxurious abandon; subordinate officials engage in a losing struggle to enforce some of them ; judges on the bench deal as best they can with the steadily mounting pile of disputes that come before them. But where is the public which these officials are supposed to represent ? How much more is it than geographical names and official titles? The United States, the state of Ohio or New York, the county of this and the city of that? Is the public much more than what a cynical diplomat once called Italy: a geographical expression? Just as philosophers once imputed a substance to qualities and traits in order that the latter might have something in which to inhere and thereby gain a conceptual solidity and consistency which they lacked on their face, so perhaps our political "common-sense" philosophy imputes a public only to support and substantiate the behavior of officials. How can the latter be public officers, we despairingly ask, unless there is a public? If a public exists, it is surely as uncertain about its own whereabouts as philosophers since Hume have been about the residence and make-up of the self. The number of voters who take advantage of their majestic right is steadily

decreasing in proportion to those who might use it. The ratio of actual to digible voters is now about one-half. In spite of somewhat frantic appeal and organized effort, the endeavor to bring voters to a sense of their privileges and duties has so far been noted for failure. A few preach the impotence of

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all politics; the many nonchanlatly practice abstinence and indulge in indirect action. Skepticism regarding the efficacy of voting is openly expressed, not only in the theories of intellectuals, but in the words of lowbrow masses : ‘What difference does it make whether I vote or not? Things go on just the same anyway. My vote never changed anything.’ Those somewhat more reflective add: “It is nothing but a fight between the ins and the outs. The only difference made by an election is as to who get the jobs, draw the salaries and shake down the plum tree.”

Those still more inclined to generalization assert that the whole apparatus of political activities is a kind of protective coloration to conceal the fact that big business rules the governmental roost in any case. Business is the order of the day, and the attempt to stop or deflect its course is as futile as Mrs. Partington essaying to sweep back the tides with a broom. Most of those who hold these opinions would profess to be shocked if the doctiine of economic determinism were argumentatively expounded to them, but they act upon a virtual belief in it. Nor is acceptance of the doctrine limited to radical socialists. It is implicit in the attitude of men of big business and financial interests, who revile the former as destructive “Bolshevists.” For it is their firm bdief that “prosperity”—a word which has taken on religious color—is the great need of the country, that they are its authors and guardians, and hence by right the determiners of polity. Their denunciations of the “materialism” of socialists is based simply upon the fact that the latter want a different distribution of material force and well-being than that which satisfies those now in control.

The unfitness of whatever public exists, with respect to the government which is nominally its organ, is made manifest in the extra-legal agencies which have grown up. Intermediary groups are closest to the political conduct of affairs. It is interesting to. compare the English literature of the eighteenth century regarding factions with the status actually occupied by parties. Factionalism was decried by all thinkers as the chief enemy to political stability. Their voice of condemna tion is reechoed in the writing of early nineteenth-century American writers on politics. Extensive and consolidated factions tmder the name of parties are now not only a matter of course, but popular imagination can conceive of no other way by which officials may be selected

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and governmental affairs carried on. The centralizing movement has reached a point where even a third party can lead only a spasmodic and precarious existence\* Instead of individuals who in the privacy of their consciousness make choices which are carried into effect by personal volition, there are citizens who have the blessed opportunity to vote for a ticket of men mostly unknown to them, and which is made up for them by an under-cover machine in a caucus whose operations constitute a kind of political predestination. There are those who speak as if ability to choose between two tickets were a high exercise of individual freedom. But it is hardly the kind of liberty contemplated by the authors of the individualistic doctrine. “Nature abhors a vacuum.” When the public is as uncertain and obscure as it is to-day, and hence as remote from government, bosses with their political machines fill the void between government and the public. Who pulls the strings which move the bosses and generates power to run the machines is a matter of surmise rather than of record, save for an occasional overt scandal.

Quite aside, however, from the allegation that "Big Business" plays the tune and pulls the strings to which bosses dance, it is true that parties are not creators of policies to any large extent at the present time. For parties yield in piece-meal accommodation to social currents, irrespective of professed principles. As these lines are written a weekly periodical remarks: "Since the end of the Civil War practically all the more important measures which have been embodied in federal legislation have been reached without a national decision, which turned upon the issue and which divided the two major parties." Reform of civil service, regulation of railways, popular election of senators, national income tax, suffrage for women, and prohibition are supported to substantiate the statement. Hence its other remark appears justified: „American party politics seem at times to be a device for preventing issues which may excite popular feeling and involve bitter controversies from being put up to the American people."

A negatively corroborating fact is seen in the fate of the Child Labor amendment. The need of giving to Congress power to regulate child labor, denied it by decisions of the Supreme Court, had been asserted in the platforms of all political parties; the idea was endorsed by the last three of the presidents belonging to the party in power. Yet so far, the proposed amendment to the

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Constitution has not begun to secure the needed support. Political parties may rule, but they do not govern. The public is so confused and eclipsed that it cannot even use the organs through which it is supposed to mediate political action and polity.

The same lesson is taught by the breakdown of the theory of the responsibility of elected representatives to the electorate, to say nothing of their alleged liability to be called before the bar of the private judgment of individuals. It is at least suggestive that the terms of the theory are best met in legislation of the "porkbarrel" type. There a representative may be called to account for failure to meet local desire, or be rewarded for pertinacity and success in fulfilling its wishes. But only rarely is the theory home out in important matters, although occasionally it works. But the instances are so infrequent that any skilled political observer could enumerate them by name. The reason for the lack of personal liability to the electorate is evident. The latter is composed of rather amorphous groups. Their political ideas and beliefs are mostly in abeyance between elections. Even in times of political excitement, artificially accelerated, their opinions are moved collectively by the current of the group rather than by independent personal judgment. As a rule, what decides the fate of a person who comes up for election is neither his political excellence nor his political defects. The current runs for or against the party in power and the individual candidate sinks or swims as runs the current. At times there is a general consensus of sentiment, a definite trend in favor of "progressive legislation" or a desire for a "return to normalcy." But even then only exceptional candidates get by on any basis of personal responsibility to the electorate. The "tidal wave" swamps some; the "landslide" carries others into office. At other times, habit, party finds, the skill of managers of the machine, the portrait of a candidate with his firm jaw, his lovely wife and children, and a multitude of other irrelevancies, determine the issue.

These scattered comments are not made in the belief that they convey any novel truth. Such things are familiar; they are the common-places of the political scene. They could be extended indefinitely by any careful observer of the scene. The significant thing is that familiarity has bred indifference if not contempt. Indifference is the evidence of current apathy, and apathy is testimony to the fact that the public is so bewildered that it cannot

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find itself. The remarks are not made with a view to drawing a conclusion. They are offered with a view to outlining a problem: What is the public? If there is a public, what are the obstacles in the way of its recognizing and articulating itself? Is the public a myth? Or does it come into being only in periods of marked social transition when crucial alternative issues stand out, such as that between throwing one's lot in with the conservation of established institutions or with forwarding new tendencies? In a reaction against dynastic rule which has come to be felt as despotically oppressive? In a transfer of social power from agrarian classes to industrial?

Is not the problem at the present time that of securing experts to manage administrative matters, other than the framing of policies? It may be urged that the present confusion and apathy are due to the fact that the real energy of society is now directed in all nonpolitical matters by trained specialists who manage things, while politics are carried on with a machinery and ideas formed in the past to deal with quite another sort of situation\* There is no particular public concerned in finding expert school instructors, competent doctors, or business managers. Nothing called a public intervenes to instruct physicians in the practice of the healing art or merchants in the art of salesmanship. The conduct of these callings and others characteristic of our time are decided by science and pseudo-science. The important governmental affairs at present, it may be argued, are also technically complicated matters to be conducted properly by experts. And if at present people are not educated to the recognition of the importance of finding experts and of entrusting administration to them, it may plausibly be asserted that the prime obstruction lies in the superstitious belief that there is a public concerned to determine the formation and execution of general social policies. Perhaps the apathy of the electorate is due to the irrelevant artificiality of the issues with which it is attempted to work up factitious excitement. Perhaps this artificiality is in turn mainly due to the survival of political beliefs and machinery from a period when science and technology were so immature as not to permit of a definite technique for handling definite social situations and meeting specific social needs. The attempt to decide by law that the legends of a primitive Hebrew people regarding the genesis of man are more authoritative than the results of scientific in-

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quiry might be cited as a typical example of the sort of thing which is bound to happen when the accepted doctrine is that a public organized for political purposes, rather than experts guided by specialized inquiry, is the filial umpire and arbiter of issues.

The questions of most concern at present may be said to be matters like sanitation, public health, healthful and adequate housing, transportation, planning of cities, regulation and distribution of immigrants, selection and management of personnel, right methods of instruction and preparation of competent teachers, scientific adjustment of taxation, efficient management of funds, and so on. These are technical matters, as much so as the construction of an efficient engine for purposes of traction or locomotion. Like it they are to be settled by inquiry into facts; and as the inquiry can be carried on only by those especially equipped, so the results of inquiry can be utilized only by trained technicians. What has counting heads, decision by majority and the whole apparatus of traditional government to do with such things? Given such considerations, and the public and its organization for political ends is not only a ghost, but a ghost which walks and talks, and obscures, confuses and misleads governmental action in a disastrous way.

Personally I am far from thinking that such considerations, pertinent as they are to administrative activities, cover the entire political field. They ignore forces which have to be composed and resolved before technical and specialized action can come into play. But they aid in giving definiteness and point to a fundamental question: What, after all, is the public under present conditions? What are the

reasons for its eclipse? What hinders it from finding and identifying itself? By what means shall its inchoate and amorphous estate be organized into effective political action relevant to present social needs and opportunities? What has happened to the Public in the century and a half since the theory of political democracy was urged with such assurance and hope?

Previous discussion has brought to light some conditions out of which the public is generated. It has also set forth some of the causes through which a "new age of human relationships" has been brought into being. These two arguments form the premises which, when they are related to each other, will provide our

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answer to the questions just raised. Indirect, extensive, enduring and serious consequences of conjoint and interacting behavior call a public into existence having a common interest in controlling these consequences. But the machine age has so enormously expanded, multiplied, intensified and complicated the scope of the indirect consequences, have formed such immense and consolidated unions in action, on an impersonal rather than a community basis, that the resultant public cannot identify and distinguish itself. And this discovery is obviously an antecedent condition of any effective organization on its part. Such is our thesis regarding the eclipse which the public idea and interest have undergone. There are too many publics and too much of public concern for our existing resources to cope with. The problem of a democratically organized public is primarily and essentially an intellectual problem, in a degree to which the political affairs of prior ages offer no parallel.

Our concern at this time is to state how it is that the machine age in developing the Great Society has invaded and partially disintegrated the small communities of former times without generating a Great Community. The facts are familiar enough; our especial affair is to point out their connections with the difficulties under which the organization of a democratic public is laboring. For the very familiarity with the phenomena conceals their significance and blinds us to their relation to immediate political problems.

The scope of the Great War furnishes an urgent as well as convenient starting point for the discussion. The extent of that war is unparalleled, because the conditions involved in it are so new. The dynastic conflicts of the seventeenth century are called by the same name: we have only one word, "war." The sameness of the word too easily conceals from us the difference in significance. We think of all wars as much the same thing, only the last one was horrible beyond others. Colonies were drawn in: self-governing ones entered voluntarily; possessions were levied upon for troops; alliances were formed with remote countries in spite of diversities of race and culture, as in the cases of Great Britain and Japan, Germany and Turkey. Literally every continent upon the globe was involved. Indirect effects were as broad as direct. Not merely soldiers, but finance, industry and opinion were mobilized and consolidated. Neutrality was a precarious affair.

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There was a critical epoch in the history of the world when the Roman Empire assembled in itself the lands and peoples of the Mediterranean basin. The World War stands out as an indubitable proof that what then happened for a region has now happened for the world, only there is now no comprehensive political organization to include the various divided yet interdependent countries. Any one who even partially visualizes the scene has a convincing reminder of the meaning of the Great Society: that it exists, and that it is not integrated.

Extensive, enduring, intricate and serious indirect consequences of the conjoint activity of a comparatively few persons traverse the globe. The similes of the stone cast into the pool, ninepins in a row, the spark which kindles a vast conflagration, are pale in comparison with the reality. The spread of the war seemed like the movement of an uncontrolled natural catastrophe. The consolidation of peoples in enclosed, nominally independent, national states has its counterpart in the fact that their acts affect groups and individuals in other states all over the world. The connections and ties which transferred energies set in motion in one spot to all parts of the earth were not tangible and visible; they do not stand out as do politically bounded states. But the war is there to show that they are as real, and to prove that they are not organized and regulated. It suggests that existing political and legal forms and arrangements are incompetent to deal with the situation. For the latter is the joint product of the existing constitution of the political state and the working of non-political forces not adjusted to political forms. We cannot expect the causes of a disease to combine effectually to cure the disease they create. The need is that the nonpolitical forces organize themselves to transform existing political structures : that the divided and troubled publics integrate.

In general, the non-political forces are the expressions of a technological age injected into an inherited political scheme which operates to deflect and distort their normal operation. The industrial and commercial relations that created the situation of which the war is a manifestation are as evident in small things as great. They were exhibited, not only in the struggle for raw materials, for distant markets, and in staggering national debts, but in local and unimportant phenomena. Travelers finding themselves away from home could not get their letters of credit cashed even

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in countries not then at war. Stockmarkets closed on one hand, and profiteers piled up their millions on the other. One instance may be cited from domestic affairs\* The plight of the farmer since the war has created a domestic political issue. A great demand was generated for food and other agricultural products; prices rose. In addition to this economic stimulus, farmers were objects of constant political exhortation to increase their crops. Inflation and temporary prosperity followed. The end of active warfare came. Impoverished countries could not buy and pay for foodstuffs up to even a pre-war level.

Taxes were enormously increased. Currencies were depreciated ; the world's gold supply centered here. The stimulus of war and of national extravagance piled up the inventories of factories and merchants. Wages and the prices of agricultural implements increased. When deflation came it found a restricted market, increased costs of production, and farmers burdened with mortgages lightly assumed during the period of frenzied expansion.

This instance is not cited because it is peculiarly important in comparison with other consequences which have happened, especially in Europe. It is relatively insignificant by contrast with them, and in contrast with the arousal of nationalistic sentiments which has everywhere taken place since the war in so-called backward countries. But it shows the ramifying consequences of our intricate and interdependent economic relations, and it shows how little prevision and regulation exist. The farming population could hardly have acted with knowledge of the consequences of the fundamental relations in which they were implicated. They could make a momentary and improvised response to them, but they could not manage their affairs in controlled adaptation to the course of events. They present themselves as hapless subjects of overwhelming operations with which they were hardly acquainted and over which they had no more control than over the vicissitudes of climate.

The illustration cannot be objected to on the ground that it rests upon the abnormal situation of war. The war itself was a normal manifestation of the underlying unintegrated state of society. The local face-to-face community has been invaded by forces so vast, so remote in initiation, so far-reaching in



scope and so complexly indirect in operation, that they are, from the standpoint of the members of local social units, unknown. Man,

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as has been often remarked, has difficulty in getting on either with or without his fellows, even in neighborhoods. He is not more successful in getting on with them when they act at a great distance in ways invisible to him. An inchoate public is capable of organization only when indirect consequences are perceived, and when it is possible to project agencies which order their occurrence. At present, many consequences are felt rather than perceived; they are suffered, but they cannot be said to be known, for they are not, by those who experience them, referred to their origins. It goes, then, without saying that agencies are not established which cansdize the streams of social action and thereby regulate them. Hence the publics are amorphous and unarticulated.

There was a time when a man might entertain a few general political principles and apply them with some confidence. A citizen believed in states\* rights or in a centralized federal government; in free trade or protection. It did not involve much mental strain to imagine that by throwing in his lot with one party or another he could so express his views that his belief would count in government. For the average voter to-day the tariff question is a complicated medley of infinite detail, schedules of rates specific and ad valorem on countless things, many of which he does not recognize by name, and with respect to which he can form no judgment. Probably not one voter in a thousand even reads the scores of pages in which the rates of toll are enumerated and he would not be much wiser if he did. The average man gives it up as a bad job. At election time, appeal to some time-worn slogan may galvanize him into a temporary notion that he has convictions on an important subject, but except for manufacturers and dealers who have some interest at stake in this or that schedule, belief lacks the qualities which attach to beliefs about matters of personal concern. Industry is too complex and intricate.

Again the voter may by personal predilection or inherited bdief incline towards magnifying the scope of local governments and inveigh against the evils of centralization. But he is vehemently sure of social evils attending the liquor traffic. He finds that the prohibitory law of his locality, township, county or state, is largdy nullified by the importation of liquor from outside, made easy by modem means of transportation. So he becomes an advocate of a national amendment giving the central

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government power to regulate the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks. This brings in its train a necessary extension of federal officials and powers. Thus to-day, the south, the traditional home of the states' rights doctrine, is the chief supporter of national prohibition and Volstead Act. It would not be possible to say how many voters have thought of the relation between their professed general principle and their special position on the liquor question: probably not many. On the other hand, life-long Hamiltonians, proclaimers of the dangers of particularistic local autonomy, are opposed to prohibition. Hence they play a tune ad hoc on the Jeifersonian flute. Gibes at inconsistency are, however, as irrelevant as they are easy. The social situation has been so changed by the factors of an industrial age that traditional general principles have little practical meaning. They persist as emotional cries rather than as reasoned ideas.

The same criss-crossing occurs with reference to regulation of railways. The opponent of a strong federal government finds, being a farmer or shipper, that rates are too high ; he also finds that railways pay little attention to state boundaries, that lines once local are parts of vast systems and that state legislation and administration are ineffectual for his purpose. He calls for national regulation. Some

partisan of the powers of the central government, on the other hand, being an investor in stocks and bonds, finds that his income is likely to be unfavorably affected by federal action and he promptly protests against the vexatious tendency to appeal to national aid, which has now become in his eyes a foolish paternalism. The developments of industry and commerce have so complicated affairs that a clear-cut,\* generally applicable, standard of judgment becomes practically impossible. The forest cannot be seen for the trees nor the trees for the forest.

A striking example of the shift of the actual tenor of doctrines—^that is, of their consequences in application—^is presented in the history of the doctrine of Individualism, interpreted to signify a miniTnnin of governmental “interference\*\* with industry and trade. At the outset, it was held by “progressives“, by those who were protesting against the inherited regime of rules of law and administration. Vested interests, on the contrary, were mainly in favor of the old status. To-day the industrial-property regime being established, the doctrine is the indtlectual

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bulwark of the standpatter and reactionary. He it is that now wants to be let alone, and who utters the war-cry of liberty for private industry, thrift, contract and their pecuniary fruit. In the United States the name “liberal,” as a party designation, is still employed to designate a progressive in political matters. In most other countries, the “liberal“ party is that which represents established and vested commercial and financial interests in protest against governmental regulation. The irony of history is nowhere more evident than in the reversal of the practical meaning of the term “liberalism“ in spite of a literal continuity of theory.

Political apathy, which is a natural product of the discrepancies between actual practices and trsultional machinery, ensues from inability to identify one’s self with definite issues. These are hard to find and locate in the Tast complexities of current life. When traditional war-cries have lost their import in practical policies which are consonant with them, they are readily dismissed as bonk. Only habit and tradition, rather than reasoned conviction, together with a vague faith in doing one’s civic duty, send to the polls a considerable percentage of the fifty per cent, who still vote. And of them it is a common remark that a large number vote against something or somebody rather than for anything or anybody, except when powerful agencies create a scare. The old principles do not fit contemporary life as it is lived, however well they may have expressed the vital interests of the times in which they arose. Thousands feel their hollowness even if they cannot make their feeling articulate. The confusion which has resulted from the size and ramifications of social activities has rendered men skeptical of the efficiency of political action. Who is sufficient unto these things? Men fed that they are caught in the sweqp of forces too vast to understand or master. Thought is brought to a standstill and action paralyzed. Even the specialist finds it difficult to trace the chain of “cause and effect“; and even he operates only after the event, looking backward, while meantime social activities have moved on to effect a new state of affairs.

Similar considerations account for depreciation of the machinerj of democratic political action in contrast with a rising appreciation of the need of expert administrators. For example, one of the by-products of the war was the investment of the government at Muscle Shoals for the manufacture of nitrogen, a

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chemical product of great importance to the farmer, as well as to armies in the fidd. The disposition and utilization of the plant have become matters of political dispute. The questions involved, questions of science, agriculture, industry and finance, are highly technical. How many voters are competent to

measure all the factors involved in arriving at a decision? And if they were competent after studying it, how many have the time to devote to it? It is true that this matter does not come before the electorate directly, but the technical difficulty of the problem is reflected in the confused paralysis of the legislators whose business it is to deal with it. The confused situation is further complicated by the invention of other and cheaper methods of producing nitrates. Again, the rapid development of hydro-electric and super-power is a matter of public concern. In the long run, few questions exceed it in importance. Aside from business corporations which have a direct interest in it and some engineers, how many citizens have the data or the ability to secure and estimate the facts involved in its settlement? One further illustration: Two things which intimately concern a local public are street-railway transportation and the marketing of food products. But the history of municipal politics shows in most cases a flare-up of intense interest followed by a period of indifference. Results come home to the masses of the people. But the very size, heterogeneity and nobility of urban populations, the vast capital required, the technical character of the engineering problems involved, soon tire the attention of the average voter. I think the three instances are fairly typical. The ramification of the issues before the public is so wide and intricate, the technical matters involved are so specialized, the details are so many and so shifting, that the public cannot for any length of time identify and hold itself. It is not that there is no public, no large body of persons having a common interest in the consequences of social transactions. There is too much public, a public too diffused and scattered and too intricate in composition. And there are too many publics, for conjoint actions which have indirect, serious and enduring consequences are multitudinous beyond comparison, and each one of them crosses the others and generates its own group of persons especially affected with little to hold these different publics together in an integrated whole.

The picture is not complete without taking into account the

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many competitors with effective political interest. Political concerns have, of course, always had strong rivals. Persons have always been, for the most part, taken up with their more immediate work and play. The power of "bread and the circus" to divert attention from public matters is an old story. But now the industrial conditions which have enlarged, complicated and multiplied public interests have also multiplied and intensified formidable rivals to them. In countries where political life has been most successfully conducted in the past, there was a class specially set aside, as it were, who made political affairs their special business. Aristotle could not conceive a body of citizens competent to carry on politics consisting of others than those who had leisure, that is, of those who were relieved from all other preoccupations, especially that of making a livelihood. Political life, till recent times, bore out his belief. Those who took an active part in politics were "gentlemen," persons who had had property and money long enough, and enough of it, so that its further pursuit was vulgar and beneath their station. To-day, so great and powerful is the sweep of the industrial current, the person of leisure is usually an idle person. Persons have their own business to attend to, and "business" has its own precise and specialized meaning. Politics thus tends to become just another "business": the especial concern of bosses and the managers of the machine.

The increase in the number, variety and cheapness of amusements represents a powerful diversion from political concern. The members of an inchoate public have too many ways of enjoyment, as well as of work, to give much thought to organization into an effective public. Man is a consuming and sportive animal as well as a political one. What is significant is that access to means of amusement has been rendered easy and cheap beyond anything known in the past. The present era of "prosperity" may not be enduring. But the movie, radio, cheap reading matter and motor car with all they stand for have come to stay. That they did not originate in deliberate desire to divert attention from political

interests does not lessen their effectiveness in that direction. The political dements in the constitution of the human being, those having to do with citizenship, are crowded to one side. In most circles it is hard work to sustain conversation on a political theme; and once initiated, it is quickly dismissed with a yawn. Let there be introduced the topic of the

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mechanism and accomplishment of various makes of motor cars or the respective merits of actresses, and the dialogue goes on at a lively pace. The thing to be remembered is that this cheapened and multiplied access to amusement is the product of the machine age, intensified by the business tradition which causes provision of means for an enjoyable passing of time to be one of the most profitable of occupations.

One phase of the workings of a technological age, with its unprecedented command of natural energies, while it is implied in what has been said, needs explicit attention. The older publics, in being local communities, largely homogeneous with one another, were also, as the phrase goes, static. They changed, of course, but barring war, catastrophe and great migrations, the modifications were gradual. They proceeded slowly and were largely unperceived by those undergoing them. The newer forces have created mobile and fluctuating associational forms. The common complaints of the disintegration of family life may be placed in evidence. The movement from rural to urban assemblies is also the result and proof of this mobility. Nothing stays long put, not even the associations by which business and industry are carried on. The mania for motion and speed is a symptom of the restless in stability of social life, and it operates to intensify the causes from which it springs. Steel replaces wood and masonry for buildings; ferro-concrete modifies steel, and some invention may work a further revolution. Muscle Shoals was acquired to produce nitrogen, and new methods have already made antiquated the supposed need of great accumulation of water power. Any selected illustration suffers because of the heterogeneous mass of cases to select from. How can a public be organized, we may ask, when literally it does not stay in place? Only deep issues or those which can be made to appear such can find a common denominator among all the shifting and unstable relationships. Attachment is a very different function of life from affection. Affections will continue as long as the heart beats. But attachment requires something more than organic causes. The very things which stimulate and intensify affections may undermine attachments. For these are bred in tranquil stability; they are nourished in constant relationships. Acceleration of mobility disturbs them at their root. And without abiding attachments

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associations are too shifting and shaken to permit a public readily to locate and identify itself.

The new era of human relationships in which we live is one marked by mass production for remote markets, by cable and telephone, by cheap printing, by railway and steam navigation. Only geographically did Columbus discover a new world. The actual new world has been generated in the last hundred years. Steam and electricity have done more to alter the conditions under which men associate together than all the agencies which affected human relationships before our time. There are those who lay the blame for all the evils of our lives on steam, electricity and machinery, It is always convenient to have a devil as well as a savior to bear the responsibilities of humanity. In reality, the trouble springs rather from the ideas and absence of ideas in connection with which technological factors operate. Mental and moral beliefs and ideals change more slowly than outward conditions. If the ideals associated with the higher life of our cultural past have been impaired, the fault is primarily with them. Ideals and standards formed without regard to the means by which they are to be achieved and incarnated in flesh are bound to be thin and wavering. Since the aims, desires and purposes

created by a machine age do not connect with tradition, there are two sets of rival ideals, and those which have actual instrumentalities at their disposal have the advantage. Because the two are rivals and because the older ones retain their glamor and sentimental prestige in literature and religion, the newer ones are perforce harsh and narrow. For the older symbols of ideal life still engage thought and command loyalty. Conditions have changed, but every aspect of life, from religion and education to property and trade, shows that nothing approaching a transformation has taken place in ideas and ideals. Symbols control sentiment and thought, and the new age has no symbols consonant with its activities. Intellectual instrumentalities for the formation of an organized public are more inadequate than its overt means. The ties which hold men together in action are numerous, tough and subtle. But they are invisible and intangible. We have the physical tools of communication as never before. The thoughts and aspirations congruous with them are not communicated, and hence are not common. Without such communication the

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public will remain shadowy and formless, seeking spasmodically for itself, but seizing and holding its shadow rather than its substance. Till the Great Society is converted into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse. Communication can alone create a great community. Our Babel is not one of tongues but of the signs and symbols without which shared experience is impossible.