

PUBLIC OPINION

Walter Lippmann

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To Faye Lippmann

Wading River, Long Island
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CHAPTER 1

*The World Outside
and the Pictures in Our Heads*

1

There is an island in the ocean where in 1914 a few Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Germans lived. No cable reaches that island, and the British mail steamer comes but once in sixty days. In September it had not yet come, and the islanders were still talking about the latest newspaper which told about the approaching trial of Madame Caillaux for the shooting of Gaston Calmette. It was, therefore, with more than usual eagerness that the whole colony assembled at the quay on a day in mid-September to hear from the captain what the verdict had been. They learned that for over six weeks now those of them who were English and those of them who were French had been fighting in behalf of the sanctity of treaties against those of them who were Germans. For six strange weeks they had acted as if they were friends, when in fact they were enemies.

But their plight was not so different from that of most of the population of Europe. They had been mistaken for six weeks, on the continent the interval may have been only six days or six hours. There was an interval. There was a moment when the picture of Europe on which men were conducting their business as usual, did not in any way correspond to the Europe which was about to make a jumble of their lives. There was a time for each man when he was still adjusted to an environment that no longer existed. All over the world as late as July 25th men were making goods that they would not be able to ship, buying goods they would not be able to import, careers were being planned, enterprises contemplated, hopes and expectations entertained, all in the belief that the world as known was the world as it was. Men were writing books describing that world. They trusted the picture in their heads. And then over four years later, on a Thursday morning, came the news of an armistice, and people gave vent to

their unutterable relief that the slaughter was over. Yet in the five days before the real armistice came, though the end of the war had been celebrated, several thousand young men died on the battlefields. Looking back we can see how indirectly we know the environment in which nevertheless we live. We can see that the news of it comes to us now fast, now slowly; but that whatever we believe to be a true picture, we treat as if it were the environment itself. It is harder to remember that about the beliefs upon which we are now acting, but in respect to other peoples and other ages we flatter ourselves that it is easy to see when they were in deadly earnest about ludicrous pictures of the world. We insist, because of our superior hindsight, that the world as they needed to know it, and the world as they did know it, were often two quite contradictory things. We can see, too, that while they governed and fought, traded and reformed in the world as they imagined it to be, they produced results, or failed to produce any, in the world as it was. They started for the Indies and found America. They diagnosed evil and hanged old women. They thought they could grow rich by always selling and never buying. A caliph, obeying what he conceived to be the Will of Allah, burned the library at Alexandria.

Writing about the year 389, St. Ambrose stated the case for the prisoner in Plato's cave who resolutely declines to turn his head. "To discuss the nature and position of the earth does not help us in our hope of the life to come. It is enough to know what Scripture states. 'That He hung up the earth upon nothing' (Job xxvi.7). Why then argue whether He hung it up in air or upon the water, and raise a controversy as to how the thin air could sustain the earth; or why, if upon the waters, the earth does not go crashing down to the bottom . . . ? Not because the earth is in the middle, as if suspended on even balance, but because the majesty of God constrains it by the law of His will, does it endure stable upon the unstable and the void."¹

It does not help us in our hope of the life to come. It is enough to know what Scripture states. Why then argue? But a century and a half after St. Ambrose, opinion was still troubled, on this occasion by the problem of the antipodes. A monk named Cosmas, famous for his scientific attainments, was therefore deputed to write a Christian Topography, or "Christian Opinion concerning the World."² It is clear that he knew exactly what was expected of him, for he based all his conclusions on the Scriptures as he read them. It appears, then, that the world is a flat parallelogram, twice as broad from east to west

1. Hexaëmeron, i. cap 6, quoted in *The Mediaeval Mind*, by Henry Osborn Taylor, Vol. I, p. 73.

2. Lecky, *Rationalism in Europe*, Vol. I, pp. 276-8.

as it is long from north to south. In the center is the earth surrounded by ocean, which is in turn surrounded by another earth, where men lived before the deluge. This other earth was Noah's port of embarkation. In the north is a high conical mountain around which revolve the sun and moon. When the sun is behind the mountain it is night. The sky is glued to the edges of the outer earth. It consists of four high walls which meet in a concave roof, so that the earth is the floor of the universe. There is an ocean on the other side of the sky, constituting the "waters that are above the firmament." The space between the celestial ocean and the ultimate roof of the universe belongs to the blest. The space between the earth and sky is inhabited by the angels. Finally, since St. Paul said that all men are made to live upon the "face of the earth," how could they live on the back where the Antipodes are supposed to be? "With such a passage before his eyes, a Christian, we are told, should not 'even speak of the Antipodes.'"¹

Far less should he go to the Antipodes; nor should any Christian prince give him a ship to try; nor would any pious mariner wish to try. For Cosmas there was nothing in the least absurd about his map. Only by remembering his absolute conviction that this was the map of the universe can we begin to understand how he would have dreaded Magellan or Peary or the aviator who risked a collision with the angels and the vault of heaven by flying seven miles up in the air. In the same way we can best understand the furies of war and politics by remembering that almost the whole of each party believes absolutely in its picture of the opposition, that it takes as fact, not what is, but what it supposes to be the fact. And that therefore, like Hamlet, it will stab Polonius behind the rustling curtain, thinking him the king, and perhaps like Hamlet add:

"Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
I took thee for thy better; take thy fortune."

2

Great men, even during their lifetime, are usually known to the public only through a fictitious personality. Hence the modicum of truth in the old saying that no man is a hero to his valet. There is only a modicum of truth, for the valet, and the private secretary, are often immersed in the fiction themselves. Royal personages are, of course, constructed personalities. Whether they themselves believe in their public character, or whether they merely permit the chamberlain to stage-manage it, there are at least two distinct selves, the public and regal self, the private and human. The biographies of great people

1. *Id.*

fall more or less readily into the histories of these two selves. The official biographer reproduces the public life, the revealing memoir the other. The Charnwood Lincoln, for example, is a noble portrait, not of an actual human being, but of an epic figure, replete with significance, who moves on much the same level of reality as Aeneas or St. George. Oliver's Hamilton is a majestic abstraction, the sculpture of an idea, "an essay" as Mr. Oliver himself calls it, "on American union." It is a formal monument to the statecraft of federalism, hardly the biography of a person. Sometimes people create their own facade when they think they are revealing the interior scene. The Repington diaries and Margot Asquith's are a species of self-portraiture in which the intimate detail is most revealing as an index of how the authors like to think about themselves.

But the most interesting kind of portraiture is that which arises spontaneously in people's minds. When Victoria came to the throne, says Mr. Strachey,¹ "among the outside public there was a great wave of enthusiasm. Sentiment and romance were coming into fashion; and the spectacle of the little girl-queen, innocent, modest, with fair hair and pink cheeks, driving through her capital, filled the hearts of the beholders with raptures of affectionate loyalty. What, above all, struck everybody with overwhelming force was the contrast between Queen Victoria and her uncles. The nasty old men, debauched and selfish, pigheaded and ridiculous, with their perpetual burden of debts, confusions, and disreputabilities—they had vanished like the snows of winter and here at last, crowned and radiant, was the spring."

M. Jean de Pierrefeu² saw hero-worship at first hand, for he was an officer on Joffre's staff at the moment of that soldier's greatest fame:

"For two years, the entire world paid an almost divine homage to the victor of the Marne. The baggage-master literally bent under the weight of the boxes, of the packages and letters which unknown people sent him with a frantic testimonial of their admiration. I think that outside of General Joffre, no commander in the war has been able to realize a comparable idea of what glory is. They sent him boxes of candy from all the great confectioners of the world, boxes of champagne, fine wines of every vintage, fruits, game, ornaments and utensils, clothes, smoking materials, inkstands, paperweights. Every territory sent its speciality. The painter sent his picture, the sculptor his statuette, the dear old lady a comforter or socks, the shepherd in his hat carved a pipe for his sake. All the manufacturers of the world who were

1. Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, p. 72.

2. Jean de Pierrefeu, *G. Q. G. Trois ans au Grand Quartier Général*, pp. 94-95.

hostile to Germany shipped their products, Havana its cigars, Portugal its port wine. I have known a hairdresser who had nothing better to do than to make a portrait of the General out of hair belonging to persons who were dear to him; a professional penman had the same idea, but the features were composed of thousands of little phrases in tiny characters which sang the praise of the General. As to letters, he had them in all scripts, from all countries, written in every dialect, affectionate letters, grateful, overflowing with love, filled with adoration. They called him Savior of the World, Father of his Country, Agent of God, Benefactor of Humanity, etc. . . . And not only Frenchmen, but Americans, Argentinians, Australians, etc. etc. . . . Thousands of little children, without their parents' knowledge, took pen in hand and wrote to tell him their love: most of them called him Our Father. And there was poignancy about their effusions, their adoration, these sighs of deliverance that escaped from thousands of hearts at the defeat of barbarism. To all these naïf little souls, Joffre seemed like St. George crushing the dragon. Certainly he incarnated for the conscience of mankind the victory of good over evil, of light over darkness.

Lunatics, simpletons, the half-crazy and the crazy turned their darkened brains toward him as toward reason itself. I have read the letter of a person living in Sydney, who begged the General to save him from his enemies; another, a New Zealander, requested him to send some soldiers to the house of a gentleman who owed him ten pounds and would not pay.

Finally, some hundreds of young girls, overcoming the timidity of their sex, asked for engagements, their families not to know about it; others wished only to serve him."

This ideal Joffre was compounded out of the victory won by him, his staff and his troops, the despair of the war, the personal sorrows, and the hope of future victory. But beside hero-worship there is the exorcism of devils. By the same mechanism through which heroes are incarnated, devils are made. If everything good was to come from Joffre, Foch, Wilson, or Roosevelt, everything evil originated in the Kaiser Wilhelm, Lenin and Trotsky. They were as omnipotent for evil as the heroes were omnipotent for good. To many simple and frightened minds there was no political reverse, no strike, no obstruction, no mysterious death or mysterious conflagration anywhere in the world of which the causes did not wind back to these personal sources of evil.

Worldwide concentration of this kind on a symbolic personality is rare enough to be clearly remarkable, and every author has a weakness for the striking and irrefutable example. The vivisection of war

reveals such examples, but it does not make them out of nothing. In a more normal public life, symbolic pictures are no less government of behavior, but each symbol is far less inclusive because there are so many competing ones. Not only is each symbol charged with less feeling because at most it represents only a part of the population, but even within that part there is infinitely less suppression of individual difference. The symbols of public opinion, in times of moderate security, are subject to check and comparison and argument. They come and go, coalesce and are forgotten, never organizing perfectly the emotion of the whole group. There is, after all, just one human activity left in which whole populations accomplish the union sacrée. It occurs in those middle phases of a war when fear, pugnacity, and hatred have secured complete dominion of the spirit, either to crush every other instinct or to enlist it, and before weariness is felt.

At almost all other times, and even in war when it is deadlocked, a sufficiently greater range of feelings is aroused to establish conflict, choice, hesitation, and compromise. The symbolism of public opinion usually bears, as we shall see,¹ the marks of this balancing of interest. Think, for example, of how rapidly, after the armistice, the precarious and by no means successfully established symbol of Allied Unity disappeared, how it was followed almost immediately by the breakdown of each nation's symbolic picture of the other: Britain the Defender of Public Law, France watching at the Frontier of Freedom, America the Crusader. And think then of how within each nation the symbolic picture of itself frayed out, as party and class conflict and personal ambition began to stir postponed issues. And then of how the symbolic pictures of the leaders gave way, as one by one, Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, ceased to be the incarnation of human hope, and became merely the negotiators and administrators for a disillusioned world.

Whether we regret this as one of the soft evils of peace or applaud it as a return to sanity is obviously no matter here. Our first concern with fictions and symbols is to forget their value to the existing social order, and to think of them simply as an important part of the machinery of human communication. Now in any society that is not completely self-contained in its interests and so small that everyone can know all about everything that happens, ideas deal with events that are out of sight and hard to grasp. Miss Sherwin of Gopher Prairie,² is aware that a war is raging in France and tries to conceive it. She has never been to France, and certainly she has never been

1. Part 5.

2. See Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street*.

along what is now the battlefield. Pictures of French and German soldiers she has seen, but it is impossible for her to imagine three million men. No one, in fact, can imagine them, and the professionals do not try. They think of them as, say, two hundred divisions. But Miss Sherwin has no access to the order of battle maps, and so if she is to think about the war, she fastens upon Joffre and the Kaiser as if they were engaged in a personal duel. Perhaps if you could see what she sees with her mind's eye, the image in its composition might be not unlike an Eighteenth Century engraving of a great soldier. He stands there boldly unruffled and more than life size, with a shadowy army of tiny little figures winding off into the landscape behind. Nor it seems are great men oblivious to these expectations. M. de Pierrefeu tells of a photographer's visit to Joffre. The General was in his "middle-class office, before the worktable without papers, where he sat down to write his signature. Suddenly it was noticed that there were no maps on the walls. But since according to popular ideas it is not possible to think of a general without maps, a few were placed in position for the picture, and removed soon afterwards."¹

The only feeling that anyone can have about an event he does not experience is the feeling aroused by his mental image of that event. That is why until we know what others think they know, we cannot truly understand their acts. I have seen a young girl, brought up in a Pennsylvania mining town, plunged suddenly from entire cheerfulness into a paroxysm of grief when a gust of wind cracked the kitchen window-pane. For hours she was inconsolable, and to me incomprehensible. But when she was able to talk, it transpired that if a window-pane broke it meant that a close relative had died. She was, therefore, mourning for her father, who had frightened her into running away from home. The father was, of course, quite thoroughly alive as a telegraphic inquiry soon proved. But until the telegram came, the cracked glass was an authentic message to that girl. Why it was authentic only a prolonged investigation by a skilled psychiatrist could show. But even the most casual observer could see that the girl, enormously upset by her family troubles, had hallucinated a complete fiction out of one external fact, a remembered superstition, and a turmoil of remorse, and fear and love for her father.

Abnormality in these instances is only a matter of degree. When an Attorney-General, who has been frightened by a bomb exploded on his doorstep, convinces himself by the reading of revolutionary literature that a revolution is to happen on the first of May 1926, we recognize that much the same mechanism is at work. The war, of course,

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

furnished many examples of this pattern: the casual fact, the creative imagination, the will to believe, and out of these three elements, a counterfeit of reality to which there was a violent instinctive response. For it is clear enough that under certain conditions men respond as powerfully to fictions as they do to realities, and that in many cases they help to create the very fictions to which they respond. Let him cast the first stone who did not believe in the Russian army that passed through England in August, 1914, did not accept any tale of atrocities without direct proof, and never saw a plot, a traitor, or a spy where there was none. Let him cast a stone who never passed on as the real inside truth what he had heard someone say who knew no more than he did.

In all these instances we must note particularly one common factor. It is the insertion between man and his environment of a pseudo-environment. To that pseudo-environment his behavior is a response. But because it is behavior, the consequences, if they are acts, operate not in the pseudo-environment where the behavior is stimulated, but in the real environment where action eventuates. If the behavior is not a practical act, but what we call roughly thought and emotion, it may be a long time before there is any noticeable break in the texture of the fictitious world. But when the stimulus of the pseudo-fact results in action on things or other people, contradiction soon develops. Then comes the sensation of butting one's head against a stone wall, of learning by experience, and witnessing Herbert Spencer's tragedy of the murder of a Beautiful Theory by a Gang of Brutal Facts, the discomfort in short of a maladjustment. For certainly, at the level of social life, what is called the adjustment of man to his environment takes place through the medium of fictions.

By fictions I do not mean lies. I mean a representation of the environment which is in lesser or greater degree made by man himself. The range of fiction extends all the way from complete hallucination to the scientists' perfectly self-conscious use of a schematic model, or his decision that for his particular problem accuracy beyond a certain number of decimal places is not important. A work of fiction may have almost any degree of fidelity, and so long as the degree of fidelity can be taken into account, fiction is not misleading. In fact, human culture is very largely the selection, the rearrangement, the tracing of patterns upon, and the stylizing of, what William James called "the random irradiations and resettlements of our ideas."¹ The alternative to the use of fictions is direct exposure to the ebb and flow of sensation. That is not a real alternative, for however refreshing it is to see at times

1. James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 638.

The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads [11]
with a perfectly innocent eye, innocence itself is not wisdom, though a source and corrective of wisdom.

For the real environment is altogether too big, too complex, and too fleeting for direct acquaintance. We are not equipped to deal with so much subtlety, so much variety, so many permutations and combinations. And although we have to act in that environment, we have to reconstruct it on a simpler model before we can manage with it. To traverse the world men must have maps of the world. Their persistent difficulty is to secure maps on which their own need, or someone else's need, has not sketched in the coast of Bohemia.

4

The analyst of public opinion must begin then, by recognizing the triangular relationship between the scene of action, the human picture of that scene, and the human response to that picture working itself out upon the scene of action. It is like a play suggested to the actors by their own experience, in which the plot is transacted in the real lives of the actors, and not merely in their stage parts. The moving picture often emphasizes with great skill this double drama of interior motive and external behavior. Two men are quarreling, ostensibly about some money, but their passion is inexplicable. Then the picture fades out and what one or the other of the two men sees with his mind's eye is reenacted. Across the table they were quarreling about money. In memory they are back in their youth when the girl jilted him for the other man. The exterior drama is explained: the hero is not greedy; the hero is in love.

A scene not so different was played in the United States Senate. At breakfast on the morning of September 29, 1919, some of the Senators read a news dispatch in the *Washington Post* about the landing of American marines on the Dalmatian coast. The newspaper said:

FACTS NOW ESTABLISHED

The following important facts appear already established. The orders to Rear Admiral Andrews commanding the American naval forces in the Adriatic, came from the British Admiralty via the War Council and Rear Admiral Knapps in London. The approval or disapproval of the American Navy Department was not asked. . . .

WITHOUT DANIEL'S KNOWLEDGE

Mr. Daniels was admittedly placed in a peculiar position when cables reached here stating that the forces over which he is presumed to have exclusive control were carrying on what

granted. They are saying in effect either that society is the sort of thing which corresponds to their idea of what is normal, or the sort of thing which corresponds to their idea of what is free. Both ideas are merely public opinions, and while the psychoanalyst as physician may perhaps assume them, the sociologist may not take the products of existing public opinion as criteria by which to study public opinion.

7

The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported, and imagined. Man is no Aristotelian god contemplating all existence at one glance. He is the creature of an evolution who can just about span a sufficient portion of reality to manage his survival, and snatch what on the scale of time are but a few moments of insight and happiness. Yet this same creature has invented ways of seeing what no naked eye could see, of hearing what no ear could hear, of weighing immense masses and infinitesimal ones, of counting and separating more items than he can individually remember. He is learning to see with his mind vast portions of the world that he could never see, touch, smell, hear, or remember. Gradually he makes for himself a trustworthy picture inside his head of the world beyond his reach.

Those features of the world outside which have to do with the behavior of other human beings, in so far as that behavior crosses ours, is dependent upon us, or is interesting to us, we call roughly public affairs. The pictures inside the heads of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purposes, and relationships, are their public opinions. Those pictures which are acted upon by groups of people, or by individuals acting in the name of groups, are Public Opinion with capital letters. And so in the chapters which follow we shall inquire first into some of the reasons why the picture inside so often misleads men in their dealings with the world outside. Under this heading we shall consider first the chief factors which limit their access to the facts. They are the artificial censorships, the limitations of social contact, the comparatively meager time available in each day for paying attention to public affairs, the distortion arising because events have to be compressed into very short messages, the difficulty of making a small vocabulary express a complicated world, and finally the fear of facing those facts which would seem to threaten the established routine of men's lives.

The analysis then turns from these more or less external limitations to the question of how this trickle of messages from the outside is affected by the stored up images, the preconceptions, and prejudices which interpret, fill them out, and in their turn powerfully direct the

play of our attention, and our vision itself. From this it proceeds to examine how in the individual person the limited messages from outside, formed into a pattern of stereotypes, are identified with his own interests as he feels and conceives them. In the succeeding sections it examines how opinions are crystallized into what is called Public Opinion, how a National Will, a Group Mind, a Social Purpose, or whatever you choose to call it, is formed.

The first five parts constitute the descriptive section of the book. There follows an analysis of the traditional democratic theory of public opinion. The substance of the argument is that democracy in its original form never seriously faced the problem which arises because the pictures inside people's heads do not automatically correspond with the world outside. And then, because the democratic theory is under criticism by socialist thinkers, there follows an examination of the most advanced and coherent of these criticisms, as made by the English Guild Socialists. My purpose here is to find out whether these reformers take into account the main difficulties of public opinion. My conclusion is that they ignore the difficulties, as completely as did the original democrats, because they, too, assume, and in a much more complicated civilization, that somehow mysteriously there exists in the hearts of men a knowledge of the world beyond their reach.

I argue that representative government, either in what is ordinarily called politics, or in industry, cannot be worked successfully, no matter what the basis of election, unless there is an independent, expert organization for making the unseen facts intelligible to those who have to make the decisions. I attempt, therefore, to argue that the serious acceptance of the principle that personal representation must be supplemented by representation of the unseen facts would alone permit a satisfactory decentralization, and allow us to escape from the intolerable and unworkable fiction that each of us must acquire a competent opinion about all public affairs. It is argued that the problem of the press is confused because the critics and the apologists expect the press to realize this fiction, expect it to make up for all that was not foreseen in the theory of democracy, and that the readers expect this miracle to be performed at no cost or trouble to themselves. The newspapers are regarded by democrats as a panacea for their own defects, whereas analysis of the nature of news and of the economic basis of journalism seems to show that the newspapers necessarily and inevitably reflect, and therefore, in greater or lesser measure, intensify, the defective organization of public opinion. My conclusion is that public opinions must be organized for the press if they are to be sound, not by the press as is the case today. This organization I conceive to be in the first instance the task of a political science that has won its proper

INTRODUCTION

place as formulator, in advance of real decision, instead of apologist, critic, or reporter after the decision has been made. I try to indicate that the perplexities of government and industry are conspiring to give political science this enormous opportunity to enrich itself and to serve the public. And, of course, I hope that these pages will help a few people to realize that opportunity more vividly, and therefore to pursue it more consciously.

PART 2

Approaches to the World Outside

CHAPTER 2. CENSORSHIP AND PRIVACY

CHAPTER 3. CONTACT AND OPPORTUNITY

CHAPTER 4. TIME AND ATTENTION

CHAPTER 5. SPEED, WORDS, AND CLEARNESS

Army, Knights of Columbus, Jewish Welfare Board, not to mention the independent work of patriotic societies, like the League to Enforce Peace, the League of Free Nations Association, the National Security League, nor the activity of the publicity bureaus of the Allies and of the submerged nationalities.

Probably this is the largest and the most intensive effort to carry quickly a fairly uniform set of ideas to all the people of a nation. The older proselyting worked more slowly, perhaps more surely, but never so inclusively. Now if it required such extreme measures to reach everybody in time of crisis, how open are the more normal channels to men's minds? The Administration was trying, and while the war continued it very largely succeeded, I believe, in creating something that might almost be called one public opinion all over America. But think of the dogged work, the complicated ingenuity, the money and the personnel that were required. Nothing like that exists in time of peace, and as a corollary there are whole sections, there are vast groups, ghettos, enclaves and classes that hear only vaguely about much that is going on.

They live in grooves, are shut in among their own affairs, barred out of larger affairs, meet few people not of their own sort, read little. Travel and trade, the mails, the wires, and radio, railroads, highways, ships, motor cars, and in the coming generation aeroplanes, are, of course, of the utmost influence on the circulation of ideas. Each of these affects the supply and the quality of information and opinion in a most intricate way. Each is itself affected by technical, by economic, by political conditions. Every time a government relaxes the passport ceremonies or the customs inspection, every time a new railway or a new port is opened, a new shipping line established, every time rates go up or down, the mails move faster or more slowly, the cables are uncensored and made less expensive, highways built, or widened, or improved, the circulation of ideas is influenced. Tariff schedules and subsidies affect the direction of commercial enterprise, and therefore the nature of human contracts. And so it may well happen, as it did for example in the case of Salem, Massachusetts, that a change in the art of shipbuilding will reduce a whole city from a center where international influences converge to a genteel provincial town. All the immediate effects of more rapid transit are not necessarily good. It would be difficult to say, for example, that the railroad system of France, so highly centralized upon Paris, has been an unmixed blessing to the French people.

It is certainly true that problems arising out of the means of communication are of the utmost importance, and one of the most constructive features of the program of the League of Nations has been

CHAPTER 3

Contact and Opportunity

1

While censorship and privacy intercept much information at its source, a very much larger body of fact never reaches the whole public at all, or only very slowly. For there are very distinct limits upon the circulation of ideas.

A rough estimate of the effort it takes to reach "everybody" can be had by considering the Government's propaganda during the war. Remembering that the war had run over two years and a half before America entered it, that millions upon millions of printed pages had been circulated and untold speeches had been delivered, let us turn to Mr. Creel's account of his fight "for the minds of men, for the conquest of their convictions" in order that "the gospel of Americanism might be carried to every corner of the globe."¹

Mr. Creel had to assemble machinery which included a Division of News that issued, he tells us, more than six thousand releases, had to enlist seventy-five thousand Four Minute Men who delivered at least seven hundred and fifty-five thousand, one hundred and ninety speeches to an aggregate of over three hundred million people. Boy scouts delivered annotated copies of President Wilson's addresses to the householders of America. Fortnightly periodicals were sent to six hundred thousand teachers. Two hundred thousand lantern slides were furnished for illustrated lectures. Fourteen hundred and thirty-eight different designs were turned out for posters, window cards, newspaper advertisements, cartoons, seals and buttons. The chambers of commerce, the churches, fraternal societies, schools, were used as channels of distribution. Yet Mr. Creel's effort, to which I have not begun to do justice, did not include Mr. McAdoo's stupendous organization for the Liberty Loans, nor Mr. Hoover's far reaching propaganda about food, nor the campaigns of the Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., Salvation

1. George Creel, *How We Advertised America*.

the study given to railroad transit and access to the sea. The monopolizing of cables,¹ of ports, fuel stations, mountain passes, canals, straits, river courses, terminals, market places means a good deal more than the enrichment of a group of business men, or the prestige of a government. It means a barrier upon the exchange of news and opinion. But monopoly is not the only barrier. Cost and available supply are even greater ones, for if the cost of travelling or trading is prohibitive, if the demand for facilities exceeds the supply, the barriers exist even without monopoly.

2

The size of a man's income has considerable effect on his access to the world beyond his neighborhood. With money he can overcome almost every tangible obstacle of communication, he can travel, buy books and periodicals, and bring within the range of his attention almost any known fact of the world. The income of the individual, and the income of the community determine the amount of communication that is possible. But men's ideas determine how that income shall be spent, and that in turn affects in the long run the amount of income they will have. Thus also there are limitations, none the less real, because they are often self-imposed and self-indulgent.

There are portions of the sovereign people who spend most of their spare time and spare money on motoring and comparing motor cars, on bridge-whist and post-mortems, on moving-pictures and po.-boilers, talking always to the same people with minute variations on the same old themes. They cannot really be said to suffer from censorship, or secrecy, the high cost or the difficulty of communication. They suffer from anemia, from lack of appetite and curiosity for the human scene. There is no problem of access to the world outside. Worlds of interest are waiting for them to explore, and they do not enter.

They move, as if on a leash, within a fixed radius of acquaintances according to the law and the gospel of their social set. Among men the circle of talk in business and at the club and in the smoking car is wider than the set to which they belong. Among women the social set and the circle of talk are frequently almost identical. It is in the social set that ideas derived from reading and lectures and from the circle of talk converge, are sorted out, accepted, rejected, judged and sanctioned. There it is finally decided in each phase of a discussion which authorities and which sources of information are admissible, and which not.

Our social set consists of those who figure as people in the phrase "people are saying"; they are the people whose approval matters most

1. Hence the wisdom of taking Yap seriously.

Contact and Opportunity

intimately to us. In big cities among men and women of wide interests and with the means for moving about, the social set is not so rigidly defined. But even in big cities, there are quarters and nests of villages containing self-sufficing social sets. In smaller communities there may exist a freer circulation, a more genuine fellowship from after breakfast to before dinner. But few people do not know, nevertheless, which set they really belong to, and which not.

Usually the distinguishing mark of a social set is the presumption that the children may intermarry. To marry outside the set involves, at the very least, a moment of doubt before the engagement can be approved. Each social set has a fairly clear picture of its relative position in the hierarchy of social sets. Between sets at the same level, association is easy, individuals are quickly accepted, hospitality is normal and unembarrassed. But in contact between sets that are "higher" or "lower," there is always reciprocal hesitation, a faint malaise, and a consciousness of difference. To be sure in a society like that of the United States, individuals move somewhat freely out of one set into another, especially where there is no racial barrier and where economic position changes so rapidly.

Economic position, however, is not measured by the amount of income. For in the first generation, at least, it is not income that determines social standing, but the character of a man's work, and it may take a generation or two before this fades out of the family tradition. Thus banking, law, medicine, public utilities, newspapers, the church, large retailing, brokerage, manufacture, are rated at a different social value from salesmanship, superintendence, expert technical work, nursing, school teaching, shop keeping; and those, in turn, are rated as differently from plumbing, being a chauffeur, dressmaking, subcontracting, or stenography, as these are from being a butler, lady's maid, a moving-picture operator, or a locomotive engineer. And yet the financial return does not necessarily coincide with these gradations.

3

Whatever the tests of admission, the social set when formed is not a mere economic class, but something which more nearly resembles a biological clan. Membership is intimately connected with love, marriage and children, or, to speak more exactly, with the attitudes and desires that are involved. In the social set, therefore, opinions encounter the canons of Family Tradition, Respectability, Propriety, Dignity, Taste and Form, which make up the social set's picture of itself, a picture assiduously implanted in the children. In this picture a large space is tacitly given to an authorized version of what each set is called upon inwardly to accept as the social standing of the others.

CHAPTER 6

Stereotypes

1

Each of us lives and works on a small part of the earth's surface, moves in a small circle, and of these acquaintances knows only a few intimately. Of any public event that has wide effects we see at best only a phase and an aspect. This is as true of the eminent insiders who draft treaties, make laws, and issue orders, as it is of those who have treaties framed for them, laws promulgated to them, orders given at them. Inevitably our opinions cover a bigger space, a longer reach of time, a greater number of things, than we can directly observe. They have, therefore, to be pieced together out of what others have reported and what we can imagine.

Yet even the eyewitness does not bring back a naive picture of the scene.¹ For experience seems to show that he himself brings something

1. E.g. cf. Edmond Locard, *L'Enquête Criminelle et les Méthodes Scientifiques*. A great deal of interesting material has been gathered in late years on the credibility of the witness, which shows, as an able reviewer of Dr. Locard's book says in *The Times* (London) *Literary Supplement* (August 18, 1921), that credibility varies as to classes of witnesses and classes of events, and also as to type of perception. Thus, perceptions of touch, odor, and taste have low evidential value. Our hearing is defective and arbitrary when it judges the source and direction of sound, and in listening to the talk of other people "words which are not heard will be supplied by the witness in all good faith. He will have a theory of the purport of the conversation, and will arrange the sounds he heard to fit it." Even visual perceptions are liable to great error, as in identification, recognition, judgment of distance, estimates of numbers, for example, the size of a crowd. In the untrained observer, the sense of time is highly variable. All these original weaknesses are complicated by tricks of memory, and the incessant creative quality of the imagination. Cf. also Sherrington, *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System*, pp. 318-327.

The late Professor Hugo Münsterberg wrote a popular book on this subject called *On the Witness Stand*.

to the scene which later he takes away from it, that oftener than not what he imagines to be the account of an event is really a transfiguration of it. Few facts in consciousness seem to be merely given. Most facts in consciousness seem to be partly made. A report is the joint product of the knower and known, in which the rôle of the observer is always selective and usually creative. The facts we see depend on where we are placed, and the habits of our eyes.

An unfamiliar scene is like the baby's world, "one great, blooming, buzzing confusion."¹ This is the way, says Mr. John Dewey,² that any new thing strikes an adult, so far as the thing is really new and strange. "Foreign languages that we do not understand always seem jibberings, babblings, in which it is impossible to fix a definite, clear-cut, individualized group of sounds. The countryman in the crowded street, the landlubber at sea, the ignoramus in sport at a contest between experts in a complicated game, are further instances. Put an inexperienced man in a factory, and at first the work seems to him a meaningless medley. All strangers of another race proverbially look alike to the visiting stranger. Only gross differences of size or color are perceived by an outsider in a flock of sheep, each of which is perfectly individualized to the shepherd. A diffusive blur and an indiscriminately shifting suction characterize what we do not understand. The problem of the acquisition of meaning by things, or (stated in another way) of forming habits of simple apprehension, is thus the problem of introducing (a) *definiteness* and *distinction* and (2) *consistency* or *stability* of meaning into what is otherwise vague and wavering."

But the kind of definiteness and consistency introduced depends upon who introduces them. In a later passage³ Dewey gives an example of how differently an experienced layman and a chemist might define the word metal. "Smoothness, hardness, glossiness, and brilliancy, heavy weight for its size . . . the serviceable properties of capacity for being hammered and pulled without breaking, of being softened by heat and hardened by cold, of retaining the shape and form given, of resistance to pressure and decay, would probably be included" in the layman's definition. But the chemist would likely as not ignore these esthetic and utilitarian qualities, and define a metal as "any chemical element that enters into combination with oxygen so as to form a base."

For the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define

1. Wm. James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, p. 488.

2. John Dewey, *How We Think*, p. 121.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 133.

first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture. Of the great men who assembled at Paris to settle the affairs of mankind, how many were there who were able to see much of the Europe about them, rather than their commitments about Europe? Could anyone have penetrated the mind of M. Clemenceau, would he have found there images of the Europe of 1919, or a great sediment of stereotyped ideas accumulated and hardened in a long and pugnacious existence? Did he see the Germans of 1919, or the German type as he had learned to see it since 1871? He saw the type, and among the reports that came to him from Germany, he took to heart those reports, and, it seems, those only, which fitted the type that was in his mind. If a junker blustered, that was an authentic German; if a labor leader confessed the guilt of the empire, he was not an authentic German.

At a Congress of Psychology in Göttingen an interesting experiment was made with a crowd of presumably trained observers.¹

"Not far from the hall in which the Congress was sitting there was a public fête with a masked ball. Suddenly the door of the hall was thrown open and a clown rushed in madly pursued by a negro, revolver in hand. They stopped in the middle of the room fighting; the clown fell, the negro leapt upon him, fired, and then both rushed out of the hall. The whole incident hardly lasted twenty seconds.

"The President asked those present to write immediately a report since there was sure to be a judicial inquiry. Forty reports were sent in. Only one had less than 20% of mistakes in regard to the principal facts; fourteen had 20% to 40% of mistakes; twelve from 40% to 50%; thirteen more than 50%. Moreover in twenty-four accounts 10% of the details were pure inventions and this proportion was exceeded in ten accounts and diminished in six. Briefly a quarter of the accounts were false.

"It goes without saying that the whole scene had been arranged and even photographed in advance. The ten false reports may then be relegated to the category of tales and legends; twenty-four accounts are half legendary, and six have a value approximating to exact evidence."

Thus out of forty trained observers writing a responsible account of a scene that had just happened before their eyes, more than a majority saw a scene that had not taken place. What then did they

1. A. von Gennep, *La formation des légendes*, pp. 158-159. Cited by F. van Langenhove, *The Growth of a Legend*, pp. 120-122.

see? One would suppose it was easier to tell what had occurred, than to invent something which had not occurred. They saw their stereotype of such a brawl. All of them had in the course of their lives acquired a series of images of brawls, and these images flickered before their eyes. In one man these images displaced less than 20% of the actual scene, in thirteen men more than half. In thirty-four out of the forty observers the stereotypes preempted at least one-tenth of the scene.

A distinguished art critic has said¹ that "what with the almost numberless shapes assumed by an object. . . . What with our insensitiveness and inattention, things scarcely would have for us features and outlines so determined and clear that we could recall them at will, but for the stereotyped shapes art has lent them." The truth is even broader than that, for the stereotyped shapes lent to the world come not merely from art, in the sense of painting and sculpture and literature, but from our moral codes and our social philosophies and our political agitations as well. Substitute in the following passage of Mr. Berenson's the words 'politics,' 'business,' and 'society,' for the word 'art' and the sentences will be no less true: ". . . unless years devoted to the study of all schools of art have taught us also to see with our own eyes, we soon fall into the habit of moulding whatever we look at into the forms borrowed from the one art with which we are acquainted. There is our standard of artistic reality. Let anyone give us shapes and colors which we cannot instantly match in our paltry stock of hackneyed forms and tints, and we shake our heads at his failure to reproduce things as we know they certainly are, or we accuse him of insincerity."

Mr. Berenson speaks of our displeasure when a painter "does not visualize objects exactly as we do," and of the difficulty of appreciating the art of the Middle Ages because since then "our manner of visualizing forms has changed in a thousand ways."² He goes on to show how in regard to the human figure we have been taught to see what we do see. "Created by Donatello and Masaccio, and sanctioned by the

1. Bernard Berenson, *The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, pp. 60, et seq.

2. Cf. also his comment on *Dante's Visual Images, and his Early Illustrators in The Study and Criticism of Italian Art* (First Series), p. 13: "We cannot help dressing Virgil as a Roman, and giving him a 'classical profile' and 'statuesque carriage,' but Dante's visual image of Virgil was probably no less mediaeval, no more based on a critical reconstruction of antiquity, than his entire conception of the Roman poet. Fourteenth Century illustrators make Virgil look like a mediaeval scholar, dressed in cap and gown, and there is no reason why Dante's visual image of him should have been other than this."

Humanists, the new canon of the human figure, the new cast of features . . . presented to the ruling classes of that time the type of human being most likely to win the day in the combat of human forces . . . Who had the power to break through this new standard of vision and, out of the chaos of things, to select shapes more definitely expressive of reality than those fixed by men of genius? No one had such power. People had perforce to see things in that way and in no other, and to see only the shapes depicted, to love only the ideals presented. . . ."¹

2

If we cannot fully understand the acts of other people, until we know what they think they know, then in order to do justice we have to appraise not only the information which has been at their disposal, but the minds through which they have filtered it. For the accepted types, the current patterns, the standard versions, intercept information on its way to consciousness. Americanization, for example, is superficially at least the substitution of American for European stereotypes. Thus the peasant who might see his landlord as if he were the lord of the manor, his employer as he saw the local magnate, is taught by Americanization to see the landlord and employer according to American standards. This constitutes a change of mind, which is, in effect, when the inoculation succeeds, a change of vision. His eye sees differently. One kindly gentleman has confessed that the stereotypes are of such overweening importance, that when hers are not indulged, she at least is unable to accept the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. "We are strangely affected by the clothes we wear. Garments create a mental and social atmosphere. What can be hoped for the Americanism of a man who insists on employing a London tailor? One's very food affects his Americanism. What kind of American consciousness can grow in the atmosphere of sauerkraut and Limburger cheese? Or what can you expect of the Americanism of the man whose breath always reeks of garlic?"²

This lady might well have been the patron of a pageant which a friend of mine once attended. It was called the Melting Pot, and it was given on the Fourth of July in an automobile town where many foreign-born workers are employed. In the center of the baseball park at second base stood a huge wooden and canvas pot. There were flights of steps up to the rim on two sides. After the audience had settled itself, and the band had played, a procession came through an opening

1. *The Central Italian Painters*, pp. 66-67.

2. Cited by Mr. Edward Hale Bierstadt, *New Republic*, June 1, 1921, p. 21.

at one side of the field. It was made up of men of all the foreign nationalities employed in the factories. They wore their native costumes, they were singing their national songs; they danced their folk dances, and carried the banners of all Europe. The master of ceremonies was the principal of the grade school dressed as Uncle Sam. He led them to the pot. He directed them up the steps to the rim, and inside. He called them out again on the other side. They came, dressed in derby hats, coats, pants, vest, stiff collar and polka dot tie, undoubtedly, said my friend, each with an Eversharp pencil in his pocket, and all singing the Star-Spangled Banner.

To the promoters of this pageant, and probably to most of the actors, it seemed as if they had managed to express the most intimate difficulty to friendly association between the older peoples of America and the newer. The contradiction of their stereotypes interfered with the full recognition of their common humanity. The people who change their names know this. They mean to change themselves, and the attitude of strangers toward them.

There is, of course, some connection between the scene outside and the mind through which we watch it, just as there are some long-haired men and short-haired women in radical gatherings. But to the hurried observer a slight connection is enough. If there are two bobbed heads and four beards in the audience, it will be a bobbed and bearded audience to the reporter who knows beforehand that such gatherings are composed of people with these tastes in the management of their hair. There is a connection between our vision and the facts, but it is often a strange connection. A man has rarely looked at a landscape, let us say, except to examine its possibilities for division into building lots, but he has seen a number of landscapes hanging in the parlor. And from them he has learned to think of a landscape as a rosy sunset, or as a country road with a church steeple and a silver moon. One day he goes to the country, and for hours he does not see a single landscape. Then the sun goes down looking rosy. At once he recognizes a landscape and exclaims that it is beautiful. But two days later, when he tries to recall what he saw, the odds are that he will remember chiefly some landscape in a parlor.

Unless he has been drunk or dreaming or insane he did see a sunset, but he saw in it, and above all remembers from it, more of what the oil painting taught him to observe, than what an impressionist painter, for example, or a cultivated Japanese would have seen and taken away with him. And the Japanese and the painter in turn will have seen and remembered more of the form they had learned, unless they happen to be the very rare people who find fresh sight for mankind. In untrained observation we pick recognizable signs out of the environment.

The signs stand for ideas, and these ideas we fill out with our stock of images. We do not so much see this man and that sunset; rather we notice that the thing is man or sunset, and then see chiefly what our mind is already full of on those subjects.

3

There is economy in this. For the attempt to see all things freshly and in detail, rather than as types and generalities, is exhausting, and among busy affairs practically out of the question. In a circle of friends, and in relation to close associates or competitors, there is no shortcut through, and no substitute for, an individualized understanding. Those whom we love and admire most are the men and women whose consciousness is peopled thickly with persons rather than with types, who know us rather than the classification into which we might fit. For even without phrasing it to ourselves, we feel intuitively that all classification is in relation to some purpose not necessarily our own; that between two human beings no association has final dignity in which each does not take the other as an end in himself. There is a taint on any contact between two people which does not affirm as an axiom the personal inviolability of both.

But modern life is hurried and multifarious, above all physical distance separates men who are often in vital contact with each other, such as employer and employee, official and voter. There is neither time nor opportunity for intimate acquaintance. Instead we notice a trait which marks a well known type, and fill in the rest of the picture by means of the stereotypes we carry about in our heads. He is an agitator. That much we notice, or are told. Well, an agitator is this sort of person, and so *he* is this sort of person. He is an intellectual. He is a plutocrat. He is a foreigner. He is a "South European." He is from Back Bay. He is a Harvard Man. How different from the statement: he is a Yale Man. He is a regular fellow. He is a West Pointer. He is an old army sergeant. He is a Greenwich Villager: what don't we know about him then, and about her? He is an international banker. He is from Main Street.

The subtlest and most pervasive of all influences are those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes. We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions, unless education has made us acutely aware, govern deeply the whole process of perception. They mark out certain objects as familiar or strange, emphasizing the difference, so that the slightly familiar is seen as very familiar, and the somewhat strange as sharply alien. They are aroused by small signs, which may vary from a true index to a vague analogy. Aroused, they flood

fresh vision with older images, and project into the world what has been resurrected in memory. Were there no practical uniformities in the environment, there would be no economy and only error in the human habit of accepting foresight for sight. But there are uniformities sufficiently accurate, and the need of economizing attention is so inevitable, that the abandonment of all stereotypes for a wholly innocent approach to experience would impoverish human life.

What matters is the character of the stereotypes, and the gullibility with which we employ them. And these in the end depend upon those inclusive patterns which constitute our philosophy of life. If in that philosophy we assume that the world is codified according to a code which we possess, we are likely to make our reports of what is going on describe a world run by our code. But if our philosophy tells us that each man is only a small part of the world, that his intelligence catches at best only phases and aspects in a coarse net of ideas, then, when we use our stereotypes, we tend to know that they are only stereotypes, to hold them lightly, to modify them gladly. We tend, also, to realize more and more clearly when our ideas started, where they started, how they came to us, why we accepted them. All useful history is antiseptic in this fashion. It enables us to know what fairy tale, what school book, what tradition, what novel, play, picture, phrase, planted one preconception in this mind, another in that mind.

4

Those who wish to censor art do not at least underestimate this influence. They generally misunderstand it, and almost always they are absurdly bent on preventing other people from discovering anything not sanctioned by them. But at any rate, like Plato in his argument about the poets, they feel vaguely that the types acquired through fiction tend to be imposed on reality. Thus there can be little doubt that the moving picture is steadily building up imagery which is then evoked by the words people read in their newspapers. In the whole experience of the race there has been no aid to visualization comparable to the cinema. If a Florentine wished to visualize the saints, he could go to the frescoes in his church, where he might see a vision of saints standardized for his time by Giotto. If an Athenian wished to visualize the gods he went to the temples. But the number of objects which were pictured was not great. And in the East, where the spirit of the second commandment was widely accepted, the portraiture of concrete things was even more meager, and for that reason perhaps the faculty of practical decision was by so much reduced. In the western world, however, during the last few centuries there has been an enormous increase in the volume and scope of secular description, the word

picture, the narrative, the illustrated narrative, and finally the moving picture and, perhaps, the talking picture.

Photographs have the kind of authority over imagination to-day, which the printed word had yesterday, and the spoken word before that. They seem utterly real. They come, we imagine, directly to us without human meddling, and they are the most effortless food for the mind conceivable. Any description in words, or even any inert picture, requires an effort of memory before a picture exists in the mind. But on the screen the whole process of observing, describing, reporting, and then imagining, has been accomplished for you. Without more trouble than is needed to stay awake the result which your imagination is always aiming at is reeled off on the screen. The shadowy idea becomes vivid; your hazy notion, let us say, of the Ku Klux Klan, thanks to Mr. Griffiths, takes vivid shape when you see the Birth of a Nation. Historically it may be the wrong shape, morally it may be a pernicious shape, but it is a shape, and I doubt whether anyone who has seen the film and does not know more about the Ku Klux Klan than Mr. Griffiths, will ever hear the name again without seeing those white horsemen.

5

And so when we speak of the mind of a group of people, of the French mind, the militarist mind, the bolshevik mind, we are liable to serious confusion unless we agree to separate the instinctive equipment from the stereotypes, the patterns, and the formulae which play so decisive a part in building up the mental world to which the native character is adapted and responds. Failure to make this distinction accounts for oceans of loose talk about collective minds, national souls, and race psychology. To be sure a stereotype may be so consistently and authoritatively transmitted in each generation from parent to child that it seems almost like a biological fact. In some respects, we may indeed have become, as Mr. Wallas says,¹ biologically parasitic upon our social heritage. But certainly there is not the least scientific evidence which would enable anyone to argue that men are born with the political habits of the country in which they are born. In so far as political habits are alike in a nation, the first places to look for an explanation are the nursery, the school, the church, not in that limbo inhabited by Group Minds and National Souls. Until you have thoroughly failed to see tradition being handed on from parents, teachers, priests, and uncles, it is a solecism of the worst order to ascribe political differences to the germ plasm.

It is possible to generalize tentatively and with a decent humility

1. Graham Wallas, *Our Social Heritage*, p. 17.

about comparative differences within the same category of education and experience. Yet even this is a tricky enterprise. For almost no two experiences are exactly alike, not even of two children in the same household. The older son never does have the experience of being the younger. And therefore, until we are able to discount the difference in nurture, we must withhold judgment about differences of nature. As well judge the productivity of two soils by comparing their yield before you know which is in Labrador and which in Iowa, whether they have been cultivated and enriched, exhausted, or allowed to run wild.

CHAPTER 7

Stereotypes as Defense

1

There is another reason, besides economy of effort, why we so often hold to our stereotypes when we might pursue a more disinterested vision. The systems of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defenses of our position in society.

They are an ordered, more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves. They may not be a complete picture of the world, but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted. In that world people and things have their well-known places, and do certain expected things. We feel at home there. We fit in. We are members. We know the way around. There we find the charm of the familiar, the normal, the dependable; its grooves and shapes are where we are accustomed to find them. And though we have abandoned much that might have tempted us before we created ourselves into that mould, once we are firmly in, it fits as snugly as an old shoe.

No wonder, then, that any disturbance of the stereotypes seems like an attack upon the foundations of the universe. It is an attack upon the foundations of *our* universe, and, where big things are at stake, we do not readily admit that there is any distinction between our universe and the universe. A world which turns out to be one in which those we honor are unworthy, and those we despise are noble, is nerve-racking. There is anarchy if our order of precedence is not the only possible one. For if the meek should indeed inherit the earth, if the first should be last, if those who are without sin alone may cast a stone, if to Caesar you render only the things that are Caesar's, then the foundations of self-respect would be shaken for those who have arranged their lives as if these maxims were not true.

A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. It is not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality.

It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection upon the world of our own sense of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy.

2

When, for example, in the fourth century B.C., Aristotle wrote his defense of slavery in the face of increasing skepticism,¹ the Athenian slaves were in great part indistinguishable from free citizens. Mr. Zimmern quotes an amusing passage from the Old Oligarch explaining the good treatment of the slaves. "Suppose it were legal for a slave to be beaten by a citizen, it would frequently happen that an Athenian might be mistaken for a slave or an alien and receive a beating;—since the Athenian people is not better clothed than the slave or alien, nor in personal appearance is there any superiority." This absence of distinction would naturally tend to dissolve the institution. If free men and slaves looked alike, what basis was there for treating them so differently? It was this confusion which Aristotle set himself to clear away in the first book of his *Politics*. With unerring instinct he understood that to justify slavery he must teach the Greeks a way of *seeing* their slaves that comported with the continuance of slavery.

So, said Aristotle, there are beings who are slaves by nature.² "He then is by nature formed a slave, who is fitted to become the chattel of another person, and on that account is so." All this really says is that whoever happens to be a slave is by nature intended to be one. Logically the statement is worthless, but in fact it is not a proposition at all, and logic has nothing to do with it. It is a stereotype, or rather it is part of a stereotype. The rest follows almost immediately. After asserting that slaves perceive reason, but are not endowed with the use of it, Aristotle insists that "it is the intention of nature to make the bodies of slaves and free men different from each other, that the one should be robust for their necessary purposes, but the other erect; useless indeed for such servile labours, but fit for civil life. . . . It is clear then that some men are free by nature, and others are slaves. . . ."

If we ask ourselves what is the matter with Aristotle's argument, we find that he has begun by erecting a great barrier between himself and the facts. When he had said that those who are slaves are by nature intended to be slaves, he at one stroke excluded the fatal ques-

1. Zimmern: *Greek Commonwealth*. See his footnote, p. 383.

2. *Politics*, Bk. I, Ch. 5.

tion whether those particular men who happened to be slaves were the particular men intended by nature to be slaves. For that question would have tainted each case of slavery with doubt. And since the fact of being a slave was not evidence that a man was destined to be one, no certain test would have remained. Aristotle, therefore, excluded entirely that destructive doubt. Those who are slaves are intended to be slaves. Each slave holder was to look upon his chattels as natural slaves. When his eye had been trained to see them that way, he was to note as confirmation of their servile character the fact that they performed servile work, that they were competent to do servile work, and that they had the muscles to do servile work.

This is the perfect stereotype. Its hallmark is that it precedes the use of reason; is a form of perception, imposes a certain character on the data of our senses before the data reach the intelligence. The stereotype is like the lavender window-panes on Beacon Street, like the door-keeper at a costume ball who judges whether the guest has an appropriate masquerade. There is nothing so obdurate to education or to criticism as the stereotype. It stamps itself upon the evidence in the very act of securing the evidence. That is why the accounts of returning travellers are often an interesting tale of what the traveller carried abroad with him on his trip. If he carried chiefly his appetite, a zeal for tiled bathrooms, a conviction that the Pullman car is the acme of human comfort, and a belief that it is proper to tip waiters, taxicab drivers, and barbers, but under no circumstances station agents and ushers, then his odyssey will be replete with good meals and bad meals, bathing adventures, compartment-train escapades, and voracious demands for money. Or if he is a more serious soul he may while on tour have found himself at celebrated spots. Having touched base, and cast one furtive glance at the monument, he buried his head in Baedeker, read every word through, and moved on to the next celebrated spot; and thus returned with a compact and orderly impression of Europe, rated one star, or two.

In some measure, stimuli from the outside, especially when they are printed or spoken words, evoke some part of a system of stereotypes, so that the actual sensation and the preconception occupy consciousness at the same time. The two are blended, much as if we looked at red through blue glasses and saw green. If what we are looking at corresponds successfully with what we anticipated, the stereotype is reinforced for the future, as it is in a man who knows in advance that the Japanese are cunning and has the bad luck to run across two dishonest Japanese.

If the experience contradicts the stereotype, one of two things happens. If the man is no longer plastic, or if some powerful interest

makes it highly inconvenient to rearrange his stereotypes, he pooh-poohs the contradiction as an exception that proves the rule, discredits the witness, finds a flaw somewhere, and manages to forget it. But if he is still curious and open-minded, the novelty is taken into the picture, and allowed to modify it. Sometimes, if the incident is striking enough, and if he has felt a general discomfort with his established scheme, he may be shaken to such an extent as to distrust all accepted ways of looking at life, and to expect that normally a thing will not be what it is generally supposed to be. In the extreme case, especially if he is literary, he may develop a passion for inverting the moral canon by making Judas, Benedict Arnold, or Caesar Borgia the hero of his tale.

3

The rôle played by the stereotype can be seen in the German tales about Belgian snipers. Those tales curiously enough were first refuted by an organization of German Catholic priests known as Pax.¹ The existence of atrocity stories is itself not remarkable, nor that the German people gladly believed them. But it is remarkable that a great conservative body of patriotic Germans should have set out as early as August 16, 1914, to contradict a collection of slanders on the enemy, even though such slanders were of the utmost value in soothing the troubled conscience of their fellow countrymen. Why should the Jesuit order in particular have set out to destroy a fiction so important to the fighting morale of Germany?

I quote from M. van Langenhove's account:

"Hardly had the German armies entered Belgium when strange rumors began to circulate. They spread from place to place, they were reproduced by the press, and they soon permeated the whole of Germany. It was said that the Belgian people, *inspired by the clergy*, had intervened perfidiously in the hostilities; had attacked by surprise isolated detachments; had indicated to the enemy the positions occupied by the troops; that old men, and even children, had been guilty of horrible atrocities upon wounded and defenseless German soldiers, tearing out their eyes and cutting off fingers, nose or ears; *that the priests from their pulpits had exhorted the people to commit these crimes, promising them as a reward the kingdom of heaven, and had even taken the lead in this barbarity.*"

"Public credulity accepted these stories. The highest powers in the state welcomed them without hesitation and endorsed them with their authority."

1. Fernand van Langenhove, *The Growth of a Legend*. The author is a Belgian sociologist.

"In this way public opinion in Germany was disturbed and a lively indignation manifested itself, directed, especially against the priests who were held responsible for the barbarities attributed to the Belgians. . . . By a natural diversion the anger to which they were a prey was directed by the Germans against the Catholic clergy generally. Protestants allowed the old religious hatred to be relighted in their minds and delivered themselves to attacks against Catholics. A new *Kulturkampf* was let loose."

"The Catholics did not delay in taking action against this hostile attitude." (Italics mine)¹

There may have been some sniping. It would be extraordinary if every angry Belgian had rushed to the library, opened a manual of international law, and had informed himself whether he had a right to take potshot at the infernal nuisance tramping through his streets. It would be no less extraordinary if an army that had never been under fire, did not regard every bullet that came its way as unauthorized, because it was inconvenient, and indeed as somehow a violation of the rules of the Kriegspiel, which then constituted its only experience of war. One can imagine the more sensitive bent on convincing themselves that the people to whom they were doing such terrible things must be terrible people. And so the legend may have been spun until it reached the censors and propagandists, who, whether they believed it or not, saw its value, and let it loose on the German civilians. They too were not altogether sorry to find that the people they were outraging were sub-human. And, above all, since the legend came from their heroes, they were not only entitled to believe it, they were unpatriotic if they did not.

But where so much is left to the imagination because the scene of action is lost in the fog of war, there is no check and no control. The legend of the ferocious Belgian priests soon tapped an old hatred. For in the minds of most patriotic protestant Germans, especially of the upper classes, the picture of Bismarck's victories included a long quarrel with the Roman Catholics. By a process of association, Belgian priests became priests, and hatred of Belgians a vent for all their hatreds. These German protestants did what some Americans did when under the stress of war they created a compound object of hatred out of the enemy abroad and all their opponents at home. Against this synthetic enemy, the Hun in Germany and the Hun within the Gate, they launched all the animosity that was in them.

The Catholic resistance to the atrocity tales was, of course, defensive. It was aimed at those particular fictions which aroused ani-

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 5-7.

opinion is primarily a moralized and codified version of the facts. I am arguing that the pattern of stereotypes at the center of our codes largely determines what group of facts we shall see, and in what light we shall see them. That is why, with the best will in the world, the news policy of a journal tends to support its editorial policy; why a capitalist sees one set of facts, and certain aspects of human nature, literally sees them; why a socialist opponent another set and other aspects, and why each regards the other as unreasonable or perverse, when the real difference between them is a difference of perception. That difference is imposed by the difference between the capitalist and socialist pattern of stereotypes. "There are no classes in America," writes an American editor. "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles," says the Communist Manifesto. If you have the editor's pattern in your mind, you will see vividly the facts that confirm it, vaguely and ineffectively those that contradict. If you have the communist pattern, you will not only look for different things, but you will see with a totally different emphasis what you and the editor happen to see in common.

And since my moral system rests on my accepted version of the facts, he who denies either my moral judgments or my version of the facts, is to me perverse, alien, dangerous. How shall I account for him? The opponent has always to be explained, and the last explanation that we ever look for is that he sees a different set of facts. Such an explanation we avoid, because it saps the very foundation of our own assurance that we have seen life steadily and seen it whole. It is only when we are in the habit of recognizing our opinions as a partial experience seen through our stereotypes that we become truly tolerant of an opponent. Without that habit, we believe in the absolutism of our own vision, and consequently in the treacherous character of all opposition. For while men are willing to admit that there are two sides to a "question," they do not believe that there are two sides to what they regard as a "fact." And they never do believe it until after long critical education, they are fully conscious of how second-hand and subjective is their apprehension of their social data.

So where two factions see vividly each its own aspect, and contrive their own explanations of what they see, it is almost impossible for them to credit each other with honesty. If the pattern fits their experience at a crucial point, they no longer look upon it as an interpretation. They look upon it as "reality." It may not resemble the reality, except that it culminates in a conclusion which fits a real experience. I may represent my trip from New York to Boston by a

straight line on a map, just as a man may regard his triumph as the end of a straight and narrow path. The road by which I actually went to Boston may have involved many detours, much turning and twisting, just as his road may have involved much besides pure enterprise, labor and thrift. But provided I reach Boston and he succeeds, the airline and the straight path will serve as ready made charts. Only when somebody tries to follow them, and does not arrive, do we have to answer objections. If we insist on our charts, and he insists on rejecting them, we soon tend to regard him as a dangerous fool, and he to regard us as liars and hypocrites. Thus we gradually paint portraits of each other. For the opponent presents himself as the man who says, evil be thou my good. He is an annoyance who does not fit into the scheme of things. Nevertheless he interferes. And since that scheme is based in our minds on incontrovertible fact fortified by irresistible logic, some place has to be found for him in the scheme. Rarely in politics or industrial disputes is a place made for him by the simple admission that he has looked upon the same reality and seen another aspect of it. That would shake the whole scheme.

Thus to the Italians in Paris Fiume was Italian. It was not merely a city that it would be desirable to include within the Italian kingdom. It was Italian. They fixed their whole mind upon the Italian majority within the legal boundaries of the city itself. The American majority having seen more Italians in New York than there are in Fiume, without regarding New York as Italian, fixed their eyes on Fiume as a central European port of entry. They saw vividly the Jugoslavs in the suburbs and the non-Italian hinterland. Some of the Italians in Paris were therefore in need of a convincing explanation of the American perversity. They found it in a rumor which started, no one knows where, that an influential American diplomat was in the snares of a Jugoslav mistress. She had been seen. . . . He had been seen. . . . At Versailles just off the boulevard. . . . The villa with the large trees.

This is a rather common way of explaining away opposition. In their more libelous form such charges rarely reach the printed page, and a Roosevelt may have to wait years, or a Harding months, before he can force an issue, and end a whispering campaign that has reached into every circle of talk. Public men have to endure a fearful amount of poisonous clubroom, dinner table, boudoir slander, repeated, elaborated, chuckled over, and regarded as delicious. While this sort of thing is, I believe, less prevalent in America than in Europe, yet rare is the American official about whom somebody is not repeating a scandal.

Out of the opposition we make villains and conspiracies. If prices go up unmercifully the profiteers have conspired; if the newspapers

misrepresent the news, there is a capitalist plot; if the rich are too rich, they have been stealing; if a closely fought election is lost, the electorate was corrupted; if a statesman does something of which you disapprove, he has been bought or influenced by some discreditable person. If workingmen are restless, they are the victims of agitators; if they are restless over wide areas, there is a conspiracy on foot. If you do not produce enough aeroplanes, it is the work of spies; if there is trouble in Ireland, it is German or Bolshevik "gold." And if you go stark, staring mad looking for plots, you see all strikes, the Plumb plan, Irish rebellion, Mohammedan unrest, the restoration of King Constantine, the League of Nations, Mexican disorder, the movement to reduce armaments, Sunday movies, short skirts, evasion of the liquor laws, Negro self-assertion, as sub-plots under some grandiose plot engineered either by Moscow, Rome, the Free Masons, the Japanese, or the Elders of Zion.

CHAPTER 10

The Detection of Stereotypes

1

Skilled diplomats, compelled to talk out loud to the warring peoples, learned how to use a large repertory of stereotypes. They were dealing with a precarious alliance of powers, each of which was maintaining its war unity only by the most careful leadership. The ordinary soldier and his wife, heroic and selfless beyond anything in the chronicles of courage, were still not heroic enough to face death gladly for all the ideas which were said by the foreign offices of foreign powers to be essential to the future of civilization. There were ports, and mines, rocky mountain passes, and villages that few soldiers would willingly have crossed No Man's Land to obtain for their allies.

Now it happened in one nation that the war party which was in control of the foreign office, the high command, and most of the press, had claims on the territory of several of its neighbors. These claims were called the Greater Ruritania by the cultivated classes who regarded Kipling, Treitschke, and Maurice Barrés as one hundred percent Ruritanian. But the grandiose idea aroused no enthusiasm abroad. So holding this finest flower of the Ruritanian genius, as their poet laureate said, to their hearts, Ruritania's statesmen went forth to divide and conquer. They divided the claim into sectors. For each piece they invoked that stereotype which some one or more of their allies found it difficult to resist, because that ally had claims for which it hoped to find approval by the use of this same stereotype.

The first sector happened to be a mountainous region inhabited by alien peasants. Ruritania demanded it to complete her natural geographical frontier. If you fixed your attention long enough on the ineffable value of what is natural, those alien peasants just dissolved into fog, and only the slope of the mountains was visible. The next sector was inhabited by Ruritanians, and on the principle that no people ought to live under alien rule, they were reannexed. Then came a city of considerable commercial importance, not inhabited by

The Enlisting of Interest

1

But the human mind is not a film which registers once and for all each impression that comes through its shutters and lenses. The human mind is endlessly and persistently creative. The pictures fade or combine, are sharpened here, condensed there, as we make them more completely our own. They do not lie inert upon the surface of the mind, but are reworked by the poetic faculty into a personal expression of ourselves. We distribute the emphasis and participate in the action.

In order to do this we tend to personalize quantities, and to dramatize relations. As some sort of allegory, except in acutely sophisticated minds, the affairs of the world are represented. Social Movements, Economic Forces, National Interests, Public Opinion are treated as persons, or persons like the Pope, the President, Lenin, Morgan or the King become ideas and institutions. The deepest of all the stereotypes is the human stereotype which imputes human nature to inanimate or collective things.

The bewildering variety of our impressions, even after they have been censored in all kinds of ways, tends to force us to adopt the greater economy of the allegory. So great is the multitude of things that we cannot keep them vividly in mind. Usually, then, we name them, and let the name stand for the whole impression. But a name is porous. Old meanings slip out and new ones slip in, and the attempt to retain the full meaning of the name is almost as fatiguing as trying to recall the original impressions. Yet names are a poor currency for thought. They are too empty, too abstract, too inhuman. And so we begin to see the name through some personal stereotype, to read into it, finally to see in it the incarnation of some human quality.

Yet human qualities are themselves vague and fluctuating. They are best remembered by a physical sign. And therefore, the human qualities

we tend to ascribe to the names of our impressions, themselves tend to be visualized in physical metaphors. The people of England, the history of England, condense into England, and England becomes John Bull, who is jovial and fat, not too clever, but well able to take care of himself. The migration of a people may appear to some as the meandering of a river, and to others like a devastating flood. The courage people display may be objectified as a rock; their purpose as a road, their doubts as forks of the road, their difficulties as ruts and rocks, their progress as a fertile valley. If they mobilize their dreadnaughts they unsheath a sword. If their army surrenders they are thrown to earth. If they are oppressed they are on the rack or under the harrow.

When public affairs are popularized in speeches, headlines, plays, moving pictures, cartoons, novels, statues or paintings, their transformation into a human interest requires first abstraction from the original, and then animation of what has been abstracted. We cannot be much interested in, or much moved by, the things we do not see. Of public affairs each of us sees very little, and therefore, they remain dull and unappetizing, until somebody, with the makings of an artist, has translated them into a moving picture. Thus the abstraction, imposed upon our knowledge of reality by all the limitations of our access and of our prejudices, is compensated. Not being omnipresent and omniscient we cannot see much of what we have to think and talk about. Being flesh and blood we will not feed on words and names and gray theory. Being artists of a sort we paint pictures, stage dramas and draw cartoons out of the abstractions.

Or, if possible, we find gifted men who can visualize for us. For people are not all endowed to the same degree with the pictorial faculty. Yet one may, I imagine, assert with Bergson that the pictorial intelligence is most closely adapted to spatial qualities.¹ A "clear" thinker is almost always a good visualizer. But for that same reason, because he is "cinematographic," he is often by that much external and insensitive. For the people who have intuition, which is probably another name for musical or muscular perception, often appreciate the quality of an event and the inwardness of an act far better than the visualizer. They have more understanding when the crucial element is a desire that is never crudely overt, and appears on the surface only in a veiled gesture, or in a rhythm of speech. Visualization may catch the stimulus and the result. But the intermediate and internal is often as badly caricatured by a visualizer, as is the in-

1. *Creative Evolution*, Chs. III, IV.

tion of the composer by an enormous soprano in the sweet maiden's part.

Nevertheless, though they have often a peculiar justice, intuitions remain highly private and largely incommunicable. But social interest depends on communication, and while a person can often steer his own life with the utmost grace by virtue of his intuitions, he usually has great difficulty in making them real to others. When he talks about them they sound like a sheaf of mist. For while intuition does give a fairer perception of human feeling, the reason with its spatial and tactile prejudice can do little with that perception. Therefore, where action depends on whether a number of people are of one mind, it is probably true that in the first instance no idea is lucid for practical decision until it has visual or tactile value. But it is also true, that no visual idea is significant to us until it has enveloped some stress of our own personality. Until it releases or resists, depresses or enhances, some craving of our own, it remains one of the objects which do not matter.

2

Pictures have always been the surest way of conveying an idea, and next in order, words that call up pictures in memory. But the idea conveyed is not fully our own until we have identified ourselves with some aspect of the picture. The identification, or what Vernon Lee has called empathy,¹ may be almost infinitely subtle and symbolic. The mimicry may be performed without our being aware of it, and sometimes in a way that would horrify those sections of our personality which support our self-respect. In sophisticated people the participation may not be in the fate of the hero, but in the fate of the whole idea to which both hero and villain are essential. But these are refinements.

In popular representation the handles for identification are almost always marked. You know who the hero is at once. And no work promises to be easily popular where the marking is not definite and the choice clear.² But that is not enough. The audience must have something to do, and the contemplation of the true, the good and the beautiful is not something to do. In order not to sit inertly in the presence of the picture, and this applies as much to newspaper stories as to fiction and the cinema, the audience must be exercised by the image. Now there are two forms of exercise which far transcend all others, both as to ease with which they are aroused, and eagerness

1. *Beauty and Ugliness*.

2. A fact which bears heavily on the character of news. Cf. Part 7.

with which stimuli for them are sought. They are sexual passion and fighting, and the two have so many associations with each other, blend into each other so intimately, that a fight about sex outranks every other theme in the breadth of its appeal. There is none so engrossing or so careless of all distinctions of culture and frontiers.

The sexual motif figures hardly at all in American political imagery. Except in certain minor ecstasies of war, in an occasional scandal, or in phases of the racial conflict with Negroes or Asiatics, to speak of it at all would seem far-fetched. Only in moving pictures, novels, and some magazine fiction are industrial relations, business competition, politics, and diplomacy tangled up with the girl and the other woman. But the fighting motif appears at every turn. Politics is interesting when there is a fight, or as we say, an issue. And in order to make politics popular, issues have to be found, even when in truth and justice, there are none,—none, in the sense that the differences of judgment, or principle, or fact, do not call for the enlistment of pugnacity.¹

But where pugnacity is not enlisted, those of us who are not directly involved find it hard to keep up our interest. For those who are involved the absorption may be real enough to hold them even when no issue is involved. They may be exercised by sheer joy in activity, or by subtle rivalry or invention. But for those to whom the whole problem is external and distant, these other faculties do not easily come into play. In order that the faint image of the affair shall mean something to them, they must be allowed to exercise the love of struggle, suspense, and victory.

Miss Patterson² insists that "suspense . . . constitutes the difference between the masterpieces in the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the pictures at the Rivoli or the Rialto Theatres." Had she made it clear that the masterpieces lack either an easy mode of identification or a theme popular for this generation, she would be wholly right in saying that this "explains why the people straggle into the Metropolitan by twos and threes and struggle into the Rialto and Rivoli by hundreds. The twos and threes look at a picture in the Art Museum for less than ten minutes—unless they chance to be art students, critics, or connoisseurs. The hundreds in the Rivoli or the Rialto look at the picture for more than an hour. As far as beauty is concerned there can be no comparison of the merits of the

1. Cf. Frances Taylor Patterson, *Cinema Craftsmanship*, pp. 31-32. "III. If the plot lacks suspense: 1. Add an antagonist, 2. Add an obstacle, 3. Add a problem, 4. Emphasize one of the questions in the minds of the spectator. . . ."

2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

two pictures. Yet the motion picture draws more people and holds them at attention longer than do the masterpieces, not through any intrinsic merit of its own, but because it depicts unfolding events, the outcome of which the audience is breathlessly waiting. It possesses the element of struggle, which never fails to arouse suspense."

In order then that the distant situation shall not be a gray flicker on the edge of attention, it should be capable of translation into pictures in which the opportunity for identification is recognizable. Unless that happens it will interest only a few for a little while. It will belong to the sights seen but not felt, to the sensations that beat on our sense organs, and are not acknowledged. We have to take sides. We have to be able to take sides. In the recesses of our being we must step out of the audience on to the stage, and wrestle as the hero for the victory of good over evil. We must breathe into the allegory the breath of our life.

3

And so, in spite of the critics, a verdict is rendered in the old controversy about realism and romanticism. Our popular taste is to have the drama originate in a setting realistic enough to make identification plausible and to have it terminate in a setting romantic enough to be desirable, but not so romantic as to be inconceivable. In between the beginning and the end the canons are liberal, but the true beginning and the happy ending are landmarks. The moving picture audience rejects fantasy logically developed, because in pure fantasy there is no familiar foothold in the age of machines. It rejects realism relentlessly pursued because it does not enjoy defeat in a struggle that has become its own.

What will be accepted as true, as realistic, as good, as evil, as desirable, is not eternally fixed. These are fixed by stereotypes, acquired from earlier experiences and carried over into judgment of later ones. And, therefore, if the financial investment in each film and in popular magazines were not so exorbitant as to require instant and widespread popularity, men of spirit and imagination would be able to use the screen and the periodical, as one might dream of their being used, to enlarge and to refine, to verify and criticize the repertory of images with which our imaginations work. But, given the present costs, the men who make moving pictures, like the church and the court painters of other ages, must adhere to the stereotypes that they find, or pay the price of frustrating expectation. The stereotypes can be altered, but not in time to guarantee success when the film is released six months from now.

The men who do alter the stereotypes, the pioneering artists

and critics, are naturally depressed and angered at managers and editors who protect their investments. They are risking everything, then why not the others? That is not quite fair, for in their righteous fury they have forgotten their own rewards, which are beyond any that their employers can hope to feel. They could not, and would not if they could, change places. And they have forgotten another thing in the unceasing war with Philistia. They have forgotten that they are measuring their own success by standards that artists and wise men of the past would never have dreamed of invoking. They are asking for circulations and audiences that were never considered by any artist until the last few generations. And when they do not get them, they are disappointed.

Those who catch on, like Sinclair Lewis in "Main Street," are men who have succeeded in projecting definitely what great numbers of other people were obscurely trying to say inside their heads. "You have said it for me." They establish a new form which is then endlessly copied until it, too, becomes a stereotype of perception. The next pioneer finds it difficult to make the public see Main Street any other way. And he, like the forerunners of Sinclair Lewis, has a quarrel with the public.

This quarrel is due not only to the conflict of stereotypes, but to the pioneering artist's reverence for his material. Whatever the plane he chooses, on that plane he remains. If he is dealing with the inwardness of an event he follows it to its conclusion regardless of the pain it causes. He will not tag his fantasy to help anyone, or cry peace where there is no peace. There is his America. But big audiences have no stomach for such severity. They are more interested in themselves than in anything else in the world. The selves in which they are interested are the selves that have been revealed by schools and by tradition. They insist that a work of art shall be a vehicle with a step where they can climb aboard, and that they shall ride, not according to the contours of the country, but to a land where for an hour there are no clocks to punch and no dishes to wash. To satisfy these demands there exists an intermediate class of artists who are able and willing to confuse the planes, to piece together a realistic-romantic compound out of the inventions of greater men, and, as Miss Patterson advises, give "what real life so rarely does—the triumphant resolution of a set of difficulties; the anguish of virtue and the triumph of sin . . . changed to the glorifications of virtue and the eternal punishment of its enemy."¹

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 46. "The hero and heroine must in general possess youth, beauty, goodness, exalted self-sacrifice, and unalterable constancy."

The ideologies of politics obey these rules. The foothold of realism is always there. The picture of some real evil, such as the German threat or class conflict, is recognizable in the argument. There is a description of some aspect of the world which is convincing because it agrees with familiar ideas. But as the ideology deals with an unseen future, as well as with a tangible present, it soon crosses imperceptibly the frontier of verification. In describing the present you are more or less tied down to common experience. In describing what nobody has experienced you are bound to let go. You stand at Armageddon, more or less, but you battle for the Lord, perhaps. . . . A true beginning, true according to the standards prevailing, and a happy ending. Every Marxist is hard as nails about the brutalities of the present, and mostly sunshine about the day after the dictatorship. So were the war propagandists: there was not a bestial quality in human nature they did not find everywhere east of the Rhine, or west of it if they were Germans. The bestiality was there all right. But after the victory, eternal peace. Plenty of this is quite cynically deliberate. For the skilful propagandist knows that while you must start with a plausible analysis, you must not keep on analyzing, because the tedium of real political accomplishment will soon destroy interest. So the propagandist exhausts the interest in reality by a tolerably plausible beginning, and then stokes up energy for a long voyage by brandishing a passport to heaven.

The formula works when the public fiction enmeshes itself with a private urgency. But once enmeshed, in the heat of battle, the original self and the original stereotype which effected the junction may be wholly lost to sight.

don, Paris, or Chicago. All the leaders in every camp did their best to limit the amount of actual war which any one soldier or civilian could vividly conceive. But, of course, among old veterans like the French troops of 1917, a great deal more is known about war than ever reaches the public. Such an army begins to judge its commanders in terms of its own suffering. And then, when another extravagant promise of victory turns out to be the customary bloody defeat, you may find that a mutiny breaks out over some comparatively minor blunder, like Nivelle's offensive of 1917, because it is a cumulative blunder. Revolutions and mutinies generally follow a small sample of a big series of evils.²

The incidence of policy determines the relation between leader and following. If those whom he needs in his plan are remote from the place where the action takes place, if the results are hidden or postponed, if the individual obligations are indirect or not yet due, above all if assent is an exercise of some pleasurable emotion, the leader is likely to have a free hand. Those programs are immediately most popular, like prohibition among teetotalers, which do not at once impinge upon private habits of the followers. That is one great reason why governments have such a free hand in foreign affairs. Most of the frictions between two states involve a series of obscure and long-winded contentions, occasionally on the frontier, but far more often in regions about which school geographies have supplied no precise ideas. In Czechoslovakia America is regarded as the Liberator; in American newspaper paragraphs and musical comedy, in American conversation by and large, it has never been finally settled whether the country we liberated is Czechoslovakia or Jugoslavia.

In foreign affairs the incidence of policy is for a very long time confined to an unseen environment. Nothing that happens out there is felt to be wholly real. And so, because in the ante-bellum period, nobody has to fight and nobody has to pay, governments go along according to their lights without much reference to their people. In local affairs the cost of a policy is more easily visible. And therefore, all but the most exceptional leaders prefer policies in which the costs are as far as possible indirect. They do not like direct taxation. They do not like to pay as they go. They like long term debts. They like to have the voters believe that the foreigner will pay. They have always been compelled to calculate prosperity in terms of the producer rather

1. The Allies suffered many bloodier defeats than that on the Chemin des Dames.

2. Cf. Pierrefeu's account, *op. cit.*, on the causes of the Soissons mutinies, and the method adopted by Pétain to deal with them. Vol. I, Part III, *et seq.*

than in terms of the consumer, because the incidence on the consumer is distributed over so many trivial items. Labor leaders have always preferred an increase of money wages to a decrease in prices. There has always been more popular interest in the profits of millionaires, which are visible but comparatively unimportant, than in the wastes of the industrial system, which are huge but elusive. A legislature dealing with a shortage of houses, such as exists when this is written, illustrates this rule, first by doing nothing to increase the number of houses, second by smiting the greedy landlord on the hip, third by investigating the profiteering builders and working men. For a constructive policy deals with remote and uninteresting factors, while a greedy landlord, or a profiteering plumber is visible and immediate.

But while people will readily believe that in an unimagined future and in unseen places a certain policy will benefit them, the actual working out of policy follows a different logic from their opinions. A nation may be induced to believe that jacking up the freight rates will make the railroads prosperous. But that belief will not make the roads prosperous, if the impact of those rates on farmers and shippers is such as to produce a commodity price beyond what the consumer can pay. Whether the consumer will pay the price depends not upon whether he nodded his head nine months previously at the proposal to raise rates and save business, but on whether he now wants a new automobile enough to pay for them.

3

Leaders often pretend that they have merely uncovered a program which existed in the minds of their public. When they believe it, they are usually deceiving themselves. Programs do not invent themselves synchronously in a multitude of minds. That is not because a multitude of minds is necessarily inferior to that of the leaders, but because thought is the function of an organism, and a mass is not an organism.

The fact is obscured because the mass is constantly exposed to suggestion. It reads not the news, but the news with an aura of suggestion about it, indicating the line of action to be taken. It hears reports, not objective as the facts are, but already stereotyped to a certain pattern of behavior. Thus the ostensible leader often finds that the real leader is a powerful newspaper proprietor. But if, as in a laboratory, one could remove all suggestion and leading from the experience of a multitude, one would, I think, find something like this: A mass exposed to the same stimuli would develop responses that could theoretically be charted in a polygon of error. There would be a certain group that felt sufficiently alike to be classified together.

There would be variants of feeling at both ends. These classifications would tend to harden as individuals in each of the classifications made their reactions vocal. That is to say, when the vague feelings of those who felt vaguely had been put into words, they would know more definitely what they felt, and would then feel it more definitely.

Leaders in touch with popular feeling are quickly conscious of these reactions. They know that high prices are pressing upon the mass, or that certain classes of individuals are becoming unpopular, or that feeling towards another nation is friendly or hostile. But, always barring the effect of suggestion which is merely the assumption of leadership by the reporter, there would be nothing in the feeling of the mass that fatally determined the choice of any particular policy. All that the feeling of the mass demands is that policy as it is developed and exposed shall be, if not logically, then by analogy and association, connected with the original feeling.

So when a new policy is to be launched, there is a preliminary bid for community of feeling, as in Mark Antony's speech to the followers of Brutus.¹ In the first phase, the leader vocalizes the prevalent opinion of the mass. He identifies himself with the familiar attitudes of his audience, sometimes by telling a good story, sometimes by brandishing his patriotism, often by pinching a grievance. Finding that he is trustworthy, the multitude milling hither and thither may turn in towards him. He will then be expected to set forth a plan of campaign. But he will not find that plan in the slogans which convey the feelings of the mass. It will not even always be indicated by them. Where the incidence of policy is remote, all that is essential is that the program shall be verbally and emotionally connected at the start with what has become vocal in the multitude. Trusted men in a familiar rôle subscribing to the accepted symbols can go a very long way on their own initiative without explaining the substance of their programs.

But wise leaders are not content to do that. Provided they think publicity will not strengthen opposition too much, and that debate will not delay action too long, they seek a certain measure of consent. They take, if not the whole mass, then the subordinates of the hierarchy sufficiently into their confidence to prepare them for what might happen, and to make them feel that they have freely willed the result. But however sincere the leader may be, there is always, when the facts are very complicated, a certain amount of illusion in these consultations. For it is impossible that all the contingencies shall be as vivid to the whole public as they are to the more ex-

1. Excellently analyzed in Martin, *The Behavior of Crowds*, pp. 130-132.

perienced and the more imaginative. A fairly large percentage are bound to agree without having taken the time, or without possessing the background, for appreciating the choices which the leader presents to them. No one, however, can ask for more. And only theorists do. If we have had our day in court, if what we had to say was heard, and then if what is done comes out well, most of us do not stop to consider how much our opinion affected the business in hand.

And therefore, if the established powers are sensitive and well-informed, if they are visibly trying to meet popular feeling, and actually removing some of the causes of dissatisfaction, no matter how slowly they proceed, provided they are seen to be proceeding, they have little to fear. It takes stupendous and persistent blundering, plus almost infinite tactlessness, to start a revolution from below. Palace revolutions, interdepartmental revolutions, are a different matter. So, too, is demagoguery. That stops at relieving the tension by expressing the feeling. But the statesman knows that such relief is temporary, and if indulged too often, unsanitary. He, therefore, sees to it that he arouses no feeling which he cannot sticue into a program that deals with the facts to which the feelings refer.

But all leaders are not statesmen, all leaders hate to resign, and most leaders find it hard to believe that bad as things are, the other fellow would not make them worse. They do not passively wait for the public to feel the incidence of policy, because the incidence of that discovery is generally upon their own heads. They are, therefore, intermittently engaged in mending their fences and consolidating their position.

The mending of fences consists in offering an occasional scape-goat, in redressing a minor grievance affecting a powerful individual or faction, rearranging certain jobs, placating a group of people who want an arsenal in their home town, or a law to stop somebody's vices. Study the daily activity of any public official who depends on election and you can enlarge this list. There are Congressmen elected year after year who never think of dissipating their energy on public affairs. They prefer to do a little service for a lot of people on a lot of little subjects, rather than to engage in trying to do a big service out there in the void. But the number of people to whom any organization can be a successful valet is limited, and shrewd politicians take care to attend either the influential, or somebody so blatantly unimportant that to pay any attention to him is a mark of sensational magnanimity. The far greater number who cannot be held by favors, the anonymous multitude, receive propaganda.

The established leaders of any organization have great natural advantages. They are believed to have better sources of information.

The books and papers are in their offices. They took part in the important conferences. They met the important people. They have responsibility. It is, therefore, easier for them to secure attention and to speak in a convincing tone. But also they have a very great deal of control over the access to the facts. Every official is in some degree a censor. And since no one can suppress information, either by concealing it or forgetting to mention it, without some notion of what he wishes the public to know, every leader is in some degree a propagandist. Strategically placed, and compelled often to choose even at the best between the equally cogent though conflicting ideals of safety for the institution, and candor to his public, the official finds himself deciding more and more consciously what facts, in what setting, in what guise he shall permit the public to know.

4

That the manufacture of consent is capable of great refinements no one, I think, denies. The process by which public opinions arise is certainly no less intricate than it has appeared in these pages, and the opportunities for manipulation open to anyone who understands the process are plain enough.

The creation of consent is not a new art. It is a very old one which was supposed to have died out with the appearance of democracy. But it has not died out. It has, in fact, improved enormously in technic, because it is now based on analysis rather than on rule of thumb. And so, as a result of psychological research, coupled with the modern means of communication, the practice of democracy has turned a corner. A revolution is taking place, infinitely more significant than any shifting of economic power.

Within the life of the generation now in control of affairs, persuasion has become a self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government. None of us begins to understand the consequences, but it is no daring prophecy to say that the knowledge of how to create consent will alter every political calculation and modify every political premise. Under the impact of propaganda, not necessarily in the sinister meaning of the word alone, the old constants of our thinking have become variables. It is no longer possible, for example, to believe in the original dogma of democracy; that the knowledge needed for the management of human affairs comes up spontaneously from the human heart. Where we act on that theory we expose ourselves to self-deception, and to forms of persuasion that we cannot verify. It has been demonstrated that we cannot rely upon intuition, conscience, or the accidents of casual opinion if we are to deal with the world beyond our reach.

"I confess that in America I saw more than America;
I sought the image of democracy itself."
Alexis de Tocqueville.

PART 6

The Image of Democracy

- CHAPTER 16. THE SELF-CENTERED MAN
CHAPTER 17. THE SELF-CONTAINED COMMUNITY
CHAPTER 18. THE ROLE OF FORCE, PATRONAGE
AND PRIVILEGE
CHAPTER 19. THE OLD IMAGE IN A NEW FORM:
GUILD SOCIALISM
CHAPTER 20. A NEW IMAGE

4

The political center of that revolution was the question of patronage. By the men who founded the government public office was regarded as a species of property, not lightly to be disturbed, and it was undoubtedly their hope that offices would remain in the hands of their social class. But the democratic theory had as one of its main principles the doctrine of the omniscient citizen. Therefore, when people began to look at the Constitution as a democratic instrument, it was certain that permanence in office would seem undemocratic. The natural ambitions of men coincided here with the great moral impulse of their age. Jefferson had popularized the idea without carrying it ruthlessly into practice, and removals on party grounds were comparatively few under the Virginian Presidents. It was Jackson who founded the practice of turning public office into patronage.

Curious as it sounds to us, the principle of rotation in office with short terms was regarded as a great reform. Not only did it acknowledge the new dignity of the average man by treating him as fit for any office, not only did it destroy the monopoly of a small social class and appear to open careers to talent, but "it had been advocated for centuries as a sovereign remedy for political corruption," and as the one way to prevent the creation of a bureaucracy.¹ The practice of rapid change in public office was the application to a great territory of the image of democracy derived from the self-contained village.

Naturally it did not have the same results in the nation that it had in the ideal community on which the democratic theory was based. It produced quite unexpected results, for it founded a new governing class to take the place of the submerged federalists. Unintentionally, patronage did for a large electorate what Hamilton's fiscal measures had done for the upper classes. We often fail to realize how much of the stability of our government we owe to patronage. For it was patronage that weaned natural leaders from too much attachment to the self-centered community, it was patronage that weakened the local spirit and brought together in some kind of peaceful cooperation, the very men who, as provincial celebrities, would, in the absence of a sense of common interest, have torn the union apart.

But of course, the democratic theory was not supposed to produce a new governing class, and it has never accommodated itself to the fact. When the democrat wanted to abolish monopoly of offices, to have rotation and short terms, he was thinking of the township where anyone could do a public service, and return humbly to his own farm. The

1. Ford, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

idea of a special class of politicians was just what the democrat did not like. But he could not have what he did like, because his theory was derived from an ideal environment, and he was living in a real one. The more deeply he felt the moral impulse of democracy, the less ready he was to see the profound truth of Hamilton's statement that communities deliberating at a distance and under different impressions could not long cooperate in the same views and pursuits. For that truth postpones anything like the full realization of democracy in public affairs until the art of obtaining common consent has been radically improved. And so while the revolution under Jefferson and Jackson produced the patronage which made the two party system, which created a substitute for the rule of the gentry, and a discipline for governing the deadlock of the checks and balances, all that happened, as it were, invisibly.

Thus, rotation in office might be the ostensible theory, in practice the offices oscillated between the henchmen. Tenure might not be a permanent monopoly, but the professional politician was permanent. Government might be, as President Harding once said, a simple thing, but winning elections was a sophisticated performance. The salaries in office might be as ostentatiously frugal as Jefferson's home-spun, but the expenses of party organization and the fruits of victory were in the grand manner. The stereotype of democracy controlled the visible government; the corrections, the exceptions and adaptations of the American people to the real facts of their environment have had to be invisible, even when everybody knew all about them. It was only the words of the law, the speeches of politicians, the platforms, and the formal machinery of administration that have had to conform to the pristine image of democracy.

5

If one had asked a philosophical democrat how these self-contained communities were to cooperate, when their public opinions were so self-centered, he would have pointed to representative government embodied in the Congress. And nothing would surprise him more than the discovery of how steadily the prestige of representative government has declined, while the power of the Presidency has grown.

Some critics have traced this to the custom of sending only local celebrities to Washington. They have thought that if Congress could consist of the nationally eminent men, the life of the capital would be more brilliant. It would be, of course, and it would be a very good thing if retiring Presidents and Cabinet officers followed the example of John Quincy Adams. But the absence of these men does not explain the plight of Congress, for its decline began when it was relatively the

most eminent branch of the government. Indeed it is more probable that the reverse is true, and that Congress ceased to attract the eminent as it lost direct influence on the shaping of national policy.

The main reason for the discredit, which is world wide, is, I think, to be found in the fact that a congress of representatives is essentially a group of blind men in a vast, unknown world. With some exceptions, the only method recognized in the Constitution or in the theory of representative government, by which Congress can inform itself, is to exchange opinions from the districts. There is no systematic, adequate, and authorized way for Congress to know what is going on in the world. The theory is that the best man of each district brings the best wisdom of his constituents to a central place, and that all these wisdoms combined are all the wisdom that Congress needs. Now there is no need to question the value of expressing local opinions and exchanging them. Congress has great value as the market-place of a continental nation. In the coatrooms, the hotel lobbies, the boarding houses of Capitol Hill, at the tea-parties of the Congressional matrons, and from occasional entries into the drawing rooms of cosmopolitan Washington, new vistas are opened, and wider horizons. But even if the theory were applied, and the districts always sent their wisest men, the sum or a combination of local impressions is not a wide enough base for national policy, and no base at all for the control of foreign policy. Since the real effects of most laws are subtle and hidden, they cannot be understood by filtering local experiences through local states of mind. They can be known only by controlled reporting and objective analysis. And just as the head of a large factory cannot know how efficient it is by talking to the foreman, but must examine cost sheets and data that only an accountant can dig out for him, so the lawmaker does not arrive at a true picture of the state of the union by putting together a mosaic of local pictures. He needs to know the local pictures, but unless he possesses instruments for calibrating them, one picture is as good as the next, and a great deal better.

The President does come to the assistance of Congress by delivering messages on the state of the Union. He is in a position to do that because he presides over a vast collection of bureaus and their agents, which report as well as act. But he tells Congress what he chooses to tell it. He cannot be heckled, and the censorship as to what is compatible with the public interest is in his hands. It is a wholly one-sided and tricky relationship, which sometimes reaches such heights of absurdity, that Congress, in order to secure an important document has to thank the enterpriser of a Chicago newspaper, or the calculated indiscretion of a subordinate official. So bad is the contact of legislators with necessary facts that they are forced to rely either on private tips

or on that legalized atrocity, the Congressional investigation, where Congressmen, starved of their legitimate food for thought, go on a wild and feverish man-hunt, and do not stop at cannibalism.

Except for the little that these investigations yield, the occasional communications from the executive departments, interested and disinterested data collected by private persons, such newspapers, periodicals, and books as Congressmen read, and a new and excellent practice of calling for help from expert bodies like the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Tariff Commission, the creation of Congressional opinion is incestuous. From this it follows either that legislation of a national character is prepared by a few informed insiders, and put through by partisan force; or that the legislation is broken up into a collection of local items, each of which is enacted for a local reason. Tariff schedules, navy yards, army posts, rivers and harbors, post offices and federal buildings, pensions and patronage: these are fed out to concave communities as tangible evidence of the benefits of national life. Being concave, they can see the white marble building which rises out of federal funds to raise local realty values and employ local contractors more readily than they can judge the cumulative cost of the pork barrel. It is fair to say that in a large assembly of men, each of whom has practical knowledge only of his own district, laws dealing with translocal affairs are rejected or accepted by the mass of Congressmen without creative participation of any kind. They participate only in making those laws that can be treated as a bundle of local issues. For a legislature without effective means of information and analysis must oscillate between blind regularity, tempered by occasional insurgency, and logrolling. And it is the logrolling which makes the regularity palatable, because it is by logrolling that a Congressman proves to his more active constituents that he is watching their interests as they conceive them.

This is no fault of the individual Congressman's, except when he is complacent about it. The cleverest and most industrious representative cannot hope to understand a fraction of the bills on which he votes. The best he can do is to specialize on a few bills, and take somebody's word about the rest. I have known Congressmen, when they were boning up on a subject, to study as they had not studied since they passed their final examinations, many large cups of black coffee, wet towels and all. They had to dig for information, sweat over arranging and verifying facts, which, in any consciously organized government, should have been easily available in a form suitable for decision. And even when they really knew a subject, their anxieties had only begun. For back home the editors, the board of trade, the central federated

union, and the women's clubs had spared themselves these labors, and were prepared to view the Congressman's performance through local spectacles.

6

What patronage did to attach political chieftains to the national government, the infinite variety of local subsidies and privileges do for self-centered communities. Patronage and pork amalgamate and stabilize thousands of special opinions, local discontents, private ambitions. There are but two other alternatives. One is government by terror and obedience, the other is government based on such a highly developed system of information, analysis, and self-consciousness that "the knowledge of national circumstances and reasons of state" is evident to all men. The autocratic system is in decay, the voluntary system is in its very earliest development; and so, in calculating the prospects of association among large groups of people, a League of Nations, industrial government, or a federal union of states, the degree to which the material for a common consciousness exists, determines how far coöperation will depend upon force, or upon the milder alternative to force, which is patronage and privilege. The secret of great state-builders, like Alexander Hamilton, is that they know how to calculate these principles.

CHAPTER 19

The Old Image in a New Form: Guild Socialism

1

Whenever the quarrels of self-centered groups become unbearable, reformers in the past found themselves forced to choose between two great alternatives. They could take the path to Rome and impose a Roman peace upon the warring tribes. They could take the path to isolation, to autonomy and self-sufficiency. Almost always they chose that path which they had least recently travelled. If they had tried out the deadening monotony of empire, they cherished above all other things the simple freedom of their own community. But if they had seen this simple freedom squandered in parochial jealousies they longed for the spacious order of a great and powerful state.

Whichever choice they made, the essential difficulty was the same. If decisions were decentralized they soon floundered in a chaos of local opinions. If they were centralized, the policy of the state was based on the opinions of a small social set at the capital. In any case force was necessary to defend one local right against another, or to impose law and order on the localities, or to resist class government at the center, or to defend the whole society, centralized or decentralized, against the outer barbarian.

Modern democracy and the industrial system were both born in a time of reaction against kings, crown government, and a regime of de-tailed economic regulation. In the industrial sphere this reaction took the form of extreme devolution, known as laissez-faire individualism. Each economic decision was to be made by the man who had title to the property involved. Since almost everything was owned by somebody, there would be somebody to manage everything. This was plural sovereignty with a vengeance.

It was economic government by anybody's economic philosophy, though it was supposed to be controlled by immutable laws of political

tough problem to deal with, for direct action would have revealed their strategic power, and some of their leaders at least would not offer up this power readily on the altar of freedom. In order to "coordinate" them, guild society would have to gather its strength, and fairly soon one would find, I think, that the radicals under guild socialism would be asking for communes strong enough to define the functions of the guilds.

But if you are going to have the government (commune) define functions, the premise of the theory disappears. It had to suppose that a scheme of functions was obvious in order that the concave shops would voluntarily relate themselves to society. If there is no settled scheme of functions in every voter's head, he has no better way under guild socialism than under orthodox democracy of turning a self-centered opinion into a social judgment. And, of course, there can be no such settled scheme, because, even if Mr. Cole and his friends devised a good one, the shop democracies from which all power derives, would judge the scheme in operation by what they learn of it and by what they can imagine. The guilds would see the same scheme differently. And so instead of the scheme being the skeleton that keeps guild society together, the attempt to define what the scheme ought to be, would be under guild socialism as elsewhere, the main business of politics. If we could allow Mr. Cole his scheme of functions we could allow him almost everything. Unfortunately he has inserted in his premise what he wishes a guild society to deduce.¹

1. I have dealt with Mr. Cole's theory rather than with the experience of Soviet Russia because, while the testimony is fragmentary, all competent observers seem to agree that Russia in 1921 does not illustrate a communist state in working order. Russia is in revolution, and what you can learn from Russia is what a revolution is like. You can learn very little about what a communist society would be like. It is, however, immensely significant that, first as practical revolutionists and then as public officials, the Russian communists have relied upon the spontaneous democracy of the Russian people, but on the discipline, special interest and the noblesse oblige of a specialized class—the loyal and indoctrinated members of the Communist party. In the "transition," on which no time limit has been set, I believe, the cure for class government and the coercive state is strictly homeopathic.

There is also the question of why I selected Mr. Cole's books rather than the much more closely reasoned "Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain" by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. I admire that book very much; but I have not been able to convince myself that it is not an intellectual tour de force. Mr. Cole seems to me far more authentically in the spirit of the socialist movement, and therefore, a better witness.

A New Image

1

The lesson is, I think, a fairly clear one. In the absence of institutions and education by which the environment is so successfully reported that the realities of public life stand out sharply against self-centered opinion, the common interests very largely elude public opinion entirely, and can be managed only by a specialized class whose personal interests reach beyond the locality. This class is irresponsible, for it acts upon information that is not common property, in situations that the public at large does not conceive, and it can be held to account only on the accomplished fact.

The democratic theory by failing to admit that self-centered opinions are not sufficient to procure good government, is involved in perpetual conflict between theory and practice. According to the theory, the full dignity of man requires that his will should be, as Mr. Cole says, expressed "in any and every form of social action." It is supposed that the expression of their will is the consuming passion of men, for they are assumed to possess by instinct the art of government. But as a matter of plain experience, self-determination is only one of the many interests of a human personality. The desire to be the master of one's own destiny is a strong desire, but it has to adjust itself to other equally strong desires, such as the desire for a good life, for peace, for relief from burdens. In the original assumptions of democracy it was held that the expression of each man's will would spontaneously satisfy not only his desire for self-expression, but his desire for a good life, because the instinct to express one's self in a good life was innate.

The emphasis, therefore, has always been on the mechanism for expressing the will. The democratic El Dorado has always been some perfect environment, and some perfect system of voting and representation, where the innate good will and instinctive statesmanship of every man could be translated into action. In limited areas and for

brief periods the environment has been so favorable, that is to say so isolated, and so rich in opportunity, that the theory worked well enough to confirm men in thinking that it was sound for all time and everywhere. Then when the isolation ended, and society became complex, and men had to adjust themselves closely to one another, the democrat spent his time trying to devise more perfect units of voting, in the hope that somehow he would, as Mr. Cole says, "get the mechanism right, and adjust it as far as possible to men's social wills." But while the democratic theorist was busy at this, he was far away from the actual interests of human nature. He was absorbed by one interest: self-government. Mankind was interested in all kinds of other things, in order, in its rights, in prosperity, in sights and sounds and in not being bored. In so far as spontaneous democracy does not satisfy their other interests, it seems to most men most of the time to be an empty thing. Because the art of successful self-government is not instinctive, men do not long desire self-government for its own sake. They desire it for the sake of the results. That is why the impulse to self-government is always strongest as a protest against bad conditions.

The democratic fallacy has been its preoccupation with the origin of government rather than with the processes and results. The democrat has always assumed that if political power could be derived in the right way, it would be beneficent. His whole attention has been on the source of power, since he is hypnotized by the belief that the great thing is to express the will of the people, first because expression is the highest interest of man, and second because the will is instinctively good. But no amount of regulation at the source of a river will completely control its behavior, and while democrats have been absorbed in trying to find a good mechanism for originating social power, that is to say a good mechanism of voting and representation, they neglected almost every other interest of men. For no matter how power originates, the crucial interest is in how power is exercised. What determines the quality of civilization is the use made of power. And that use cannot be controlled at the source.

If you try to control government wholly at the source, you inevitably make all the vital decisions invisible. For since there is no instinct which automatically makes political decisions that produce a good life, the men who actually exercise power not only fail to express the will of the people, because on most questions no will exists, but they exercise power according to opinions which are hidden from the electorate.

If, then, you root out of the democratic philosophy the whole assumption in all its ramifications that government is instinctive, and

that therefore it can be managed by self-centered opinions, what becomes of the democratic faith in the dignity of man? It takes a fresh lease of life by associating itself with the whole personality instead of with a meager aspect of it. For the traditional democrat risked the dignity of man on one very precarious assumption, that he would exhibit that dignity instinctively in wise laws and good government. Voters did not do that, and so the democrat was forever being made to look a little silly by tough-minded men. But if, instead of hanging human dignity on the one assumption about self-government, you insist that man's dignity requires a standard of living, in which his capacities are properly exercised, the whole problem changes. The criteria which you then apply to government are whether it is producing a certain minimum of health, of decent housing, of material necessities, of education, of freedom, of pleasures, of beauty, not simply whether at the sacrifice of all these things, it vibrates to the self-centered opinions that happen to be floating around in men's minds. In the degree to which these criteria can be made exact and objective, political decision, which is inevitably the concern of comparatively few people, is actually brought into relation with the interests of men.

There is no prospect, in any time which we can conceive, that the whole invisible environment will be so clear to all men that they will spontaneously arrive at sound public opinions on the whole business of government. And even if there were a prospect, it is extremely doubtful whether many of us would wish to be bothered, or would take the time to form an opinion on "any and every form of social action" which affects us. The only prospect which is not visionary is that each of us in his own sphere will act more and more on a realistic picture of the invisible world, and that we shall develop more and more men who are expert in keeping these pictures realistic. Outside the rather narrow range of our own possible attention, social control depends upon devising standards of living and methods of audit by which the acts of public officials and industrial directors are measured. We cannot ourselves inspire or guide all these acts, as the mystical democrat has always imagined. But we can steadily increase our real control over these acts by insisting that all of them shall be plainly recorded, and their results objectively measured. I should say, perhaps, that we can progressively hope to insist. For the working out of such standards and of such audits has only begun.

generated by the encounter, like fire by rubbing two sticks? Behind this classic doctrine of liberty, which American democrats embodied in their Bill of Rights, there are, in fact, several different theories of the origin of truth. One is a faith that in the competition of opinions, the truest will win because there is a peculiar strength in the truth. This is probably sound if you allow the competition to extend over a sufficiently long time. When men argue in this vein they have in mind the verdict of history, and they think specifically of heretics persecuted when they lived, canonized after they were dead. Milton's question rests also on a belief that the capacity to recognize truth is inherent in all men, and that truth freely put in circulation will win acceptance. It derives no less from the experience, which has shown that men are not likely to discover truth if they cannot speak it, except under the eye of an uncomprehending policeman.

No one can possibly overestimate the practical value of these civil liberties, nor the importance of maintaining them. When they are in jeopardy, the human spirit is in jeopardy, and should there come a time when they have to be curtailed, as during a war, the suppression of thought is a risk to civilization which might prevent its recovery from the effects of war, if the hysterics, who exploit the necessity, were numerous enough to carry over into peace the taboos of war. Fortunately, the mass of men is too tolerant long to enjoy the professional inquisitors, as gradually, under the criticism of men not willing to be terrorized, they are revealed as mean-spirited creatures who nine-tenths of the time do not know what they are talking about.¹

But in spite of its fundamental importance, civil liberty in this sense does not guarantee public opinion in the modern world. For it always assumes, either that truth is spontaneous, or that the means of securing truth exist when there is no external interference. But when you are dealing with an invisible environment, the assumption is false. The truth about distant or complex matters is not self-evident, and the machinery for assembling information is technical and expensive. Yet political science, and especially democratic political science, has never freed itself from the original assumption of Aristotle's politics sufficiently to restate the premises, so that political thought might come to grips with the problem of how to make the invisible world visible to the citizens of a modern state.

So deep is the tradition, that until quite recently, for example,

1. Cf. for example, the publications of the Lusk Committee in New York, and the public statements and prophecies of Mr. Mitchell Palmer, who was Attorney-General of the United States during the period of President Wilson's illness.

political science was taught in our colleges as if newspapers did not exist. I am not referring to schools of journalism, for they are trade schools, intended to prepare men and women for a career. I am referring to political science as expounded to future business men, lawyers, public officials, and citizens at large. In that science a study of the press and the sources of popular information found no place. It is a curious fact. To anyone not immersed in the routine interests of political science, it is almost inexplicable that no American student of government, no American sociologist, has ever written a book on news-gathering. There are occasional references to the press, and statements that it is not, or that it ought to be, "free" and "truthful." But I can find almost nothing else. And this disdain of the professionals finds its counterpart in public opinions. Universally it is admitted that the press is the chief means of contact with the unseen environment. And practically everywhere it is assumed that the press should do spontaneously for us what primitive democracy imagined each of us could do spontaneously for himself, that every day and twice a day it will present us with a true picture of all the outer world in which we are interested.

2

This insistent and ancient belief that truth is not earned, but inspired, revealed, supplied gratis, comes out very plainly in our economic prejudices as readers of newspapers. We expect the newspaper to serve us with truth however unprofitable the truth may be. For this difficult and often dangerous service, which we recognize as fundamental, we expected to pay until recently the smallest coin turned out by the mint. We have accustomed ourselves now to paying two and even three cents on weekdays, and on Sundays, for an illustrated encyclopedia and vaudeville entertainment attached, we have screwed ourselves up to paying a nickel or even a dime. Nobody thinks for a moment that he ought to pay for his newspaper. He expects the fountains of truth to bubble, but he enters into no contract, legal or moral, involving any risk, cost or trouble to himself. He will pay a nominal price when it suits him, will stop paying whenever it suits him, will turn to another paper when that suits him. Somebody has said quite aptly that the newspaper editor has to be re-elected every day.

This casual and one-sided relationship between readers and press is an anomaly of our civilization. There is nothing else quite like it, and it is, therefore, hard to compare the press with any other business or institution. It is not a business pure and simple, partly because the product is regularly sold below cost, but chiefly because the community

applies one ethical measure to the press and another to trade or manufacture. Ethically a newspaper is judged as if it were a church or a school. But if you try to compare it with these you fail; the taxpayer pays for the public school, the private school is endowed or supported by tuition fees, there are subsidies and collections for the church. You cannot compare journalism with law, medicine or engineering, for in every one of these professions the consumer pays for the service. A free press, if you judge by the attitude of the readers, means newspapers that are virtually given away.

Yet the critics of the press are merely voicing the moral standards of the community, when they expect such an institution to live on the same plane as that on which the school, the church, and the disinterested professions are supposed to live. This illustrates again the concave character of democracy. No need for artificially acquired information is felt to exist. The information must come naturally, that is to say gratis, if not out of the heart of the citizen, then gratis out of the newspaper. The citizen will pay for his telephone, his railroad rides, his motor car, his entertainment. But he does not pay openly for his news.

He will, however, pay handsomely for the privilege of having someone read about him. He will pay directly to advertise. And he will pay indirectly for the advertisements of other people, because that payment, being concealed in the price of commodities is part of an invisible environment that he does not effectively comprehend. It would be regarded as an outrage to have to pay openly the price of a good ice cream soda for all the news of the world, though the public will pay that and more when it buys the advertised commodities. The public pays for the press, but only when the payment is concealed.

3

Circulation is, therefore, the means to an end. It becomes an asset only when it can be sold to the advertiser, who buys it with revenues secured through indirect taxation of the reader.¹ The kind of circulation which the advertiser will buy depends on what he has to sell. It may be "quality" or "mass." On the whole there is no sharp divid-

1. "An established newspaper is entitled to fix its advertising rates so that its net receipts from circulation may be left on the credit side of the profit and loss account. To arrive at net receipts, I would deduct from the gross the cost of promotion, distribution, and other expenses incidental to circulation." From an address by Mr. Adolph S. Ochs, publisher of *The New York Times*, at the Philadelphia Convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of The World, June 26, 1916. Cited, Elmer Davis, *History of The New York Times*, 1851-1921, pp. 397-398.

ing line, for in respect to most commodities sold by advertising, the customers are neither the small class of the very rich nor the very poor. They are the people with enough surplus over bare necessities to exercise discretion in their buying. The paper, therefore, which goes into the homes of the fairly prosperous is by and large the one which offers most to the advertiser. It may also go into the homes of the poor, but except for certain lines of goods, an analytical advertising agent does not rate that circulation as a great asset, unless, as seems to be the case with certain of Mr. Hearst's properties, the circulation is enormous.

A newspaper which angers those whom it pays best to reach through advertisements is a bad medium for an advertiser. And since no one ever claimed that advertising was philanthropy, advertisers buy space in those publications which are fairly certain to reach their future customers. One need not spend much time worrying about the unreported scandals of the dry-goods merchants. They represent nothing really significant, and incidents of this sort are less common than many critics of the free press suppose. The real problem is that the readers of a newspaper, unaccustomed to paying the cost of news-gathering, can be capitalized only by turning them into circulation that can be sold to manufacturers and merchants. And those whom it is most important to capitalize are those who have the most money to spend. Such a press is bound to respect the point of view of the buying public. It is for this buying public that newspapers are edited and published, for without that support the newspapers cannot live. A newspaper can flout an advertiser, it can attack a powerful banking or traction interest, but if it alienates the buying public, it loses the one indispensable asset of its existence.

Mr. John L. Given,¹ formerly of the *New York Evening Sun*, stated in 1914 that out of over two thousand three hundred dailies published in the United States, there were about one hundred and seventy-five printed in cities having over one hundred thousand inhabitants. These constitute the press for "general news." They are the key papers which collect the news dealing with great events, and even the people who do not read any one of the one hundred and seventy-five depend ultimately upon them for news of the outer world. For they make up the great press associations which cooperate in the

1. *Making a Newspaper*, p. 13. This is the best technical book I know, and should be read by everyone who undertakes to discuss the press. Mr. G. B. Diblee, who wrote the volume on *The Newspaper* in the Home University Library says (p. 253), that "on the press for pressmen I only know of one good book, Mr. Given's."

exchange of news. Each is, therefore, not only the informant of its own readers, but it is the local reporter for the newspapers of other cities. The rural press and the special press by and large, take their general news from these key papers. And among these there are some very much richer than others, so that for international news, in the main, the whole press of the nation may depend upon the reports of the press associations and the special services of a few metropolitan dailies.

Roughly speaking, the economic support for general news gathering is in the price paid for advertised goods by the fairly prosperous sections of cities with more than one hundred thousand inhabitants. These buying publics are composed of the members of families, who depend for their income chiefly on trade, merchandising, the direction of manufacture, and finance. They are the clientele among whom it pays best to advertise in a newspaper. They wield a concentrated purchasing power, which may be less in volume than in aggregate for farmers and workmen; but within the radius covered by a daily newspaper they are the quickest assets.

4

They have, moreover, a double claim to attention. They are not only the best customers for the advertiser, they include the advertisers. Therefore the impression made by the newspapers on this public matters deeply. Fortunately this public is not unanimous. It may be "capitalistic" but it contains divergent views on what capitalism is, and how it is to be run. Except in times of danger, this respectable opinion is sufficiently divided to permit of considerable differences of policy. These would be greater still if it were not that publishers are themselves usually members of these urban communities, and honestly see the world through the lenses of their associates and friends.

They are engaged in a speculative business,¹ which depends on the general condition of trade, and more peculiarly on a circulation based not on a marriage contract with their readers, but on free love. The object of every publisher is, therefore, to turn his circulation from a medley of catch-as-catch-can news stand buyers into a devoted band of constant readers. A newspaper that can really depend upon the loyalty of its readers is as independent as a newspaper can be, given the economics of modern journalism.² A body of readers who stay

1. Sometimes so speculative that in order to secure credit the publisher has to go into bondage to his creditors. Information on this point is very difficult to obtain, and for that reason its general importance is often much exaggerated.

2. "It is an axiom in newspaper publishing—more readers, more independence of the influence of advertisers; fewer readers and more dependence on

by it through thick and thin is a power greater than any which the individual advertiser can wield, and a power great enough to break up a combination of advertisers. Therefore, whenever you find a newspaper betraying its readers for the sake of an advertiser, you can be fairly certain either that the publisher sincerely shares the views of the advertiser, or that he thinks, perhaps mistakenly, he cannot count upon the support of his readers if he openly resists dictation. It is a question of whether the readers, who do not pay in cash for their news, will pay for it in loyalty.

the advertiser.' It may seem like a contradiction (yet it is true) to assert: the greater the number of advertisers, the less influence they are individually able to exercise with the publisher." Adolph S. Ochs, *cf. supra*.

of industry very unreliable truths. They involve judgments about standards of living, productivity, human rights that are endlessly debatable in the absence of exact record and quantitative analysis. And as long as these do not exist in industry, the run of news about it will tend, as Emerson said, quoting from Isocrates, "to make of moles mountains, and of mountains moles."¹ Where there is no constitutional procedure in industry, and no expert sifting of evidence and the claims, the fact that is sensational to the reader is the fact that almost every journalist will seek. Given the industrial relations that so largely prevail, even where there is conference or arbitration, but no independent filtering of the facts for decision, the issue for the newspaper public will tend not to be the issue for the industry. And so to try disputes by an appeal through the newspapers puts a burden upon newspapers and readers which they cannot and ought not to carry. As long as real law and order do not exist, the bulk of the news will, unless consciously and courageously corrected, work against those who have no lawful and orderly method of asserting themselves. The bulletins from the scene of action will note the trouble that arose from the assertion, rather than the reasons which led to it. The reasons are intangible.

4

The editor deals with these bulletins. He sits in his office, reads them, rarely does he see any large portion of the events themselves. He must, as we have seen, woe at least a section of his readers every day, because they will leave him without mercy if a rival paper happens to hit their fancy. He works under enormous pressure, for the competition of newspapers is often a matter of minutes. Every bulletin requires a swift but complicated judgment. It must be understood, put in relation to other bulletins also understood, and played up or played down according to its probable interest for the public, as the editor conceives it. Without standardization, without stereotypes, without routine judgments, without a fairly ruthless disregard of subtlety, the editor would soon die of excitement. The final page is of a definite size, must be ready at a precise moment, there can be only a certain number of captions on the items, and in each caption there must be a definite number of letters. Always there is the precarious urgency of the buying public, the law of libel, and the possibility of endless trouble. The thing could not be managed at all without systematization, for in a standardized product there is economy of time and effort, as well as a partial guarantee against failure.

1. *Id.*, *supra*.

It is here that newspapers influence each other most deeply. Thus when the war broke out, the American newspapers were confronted with a subject about which they had no previous experience. Certain dailies, rich enough to pay cable tolls, took the lead in securing news, and the way that news was presented became a model for the whole press. But where did that model come from? It came from the English press, not because Northcliffe owned American newspapers, but because at first it was easier to buy English correspondence, and because, later, it was easier for American journalists to read English newspapers than it was for them to read any others. London was the cable and news center, and it was there that a certain technic for reporting the war was evolved. Something similar occurred in the reporting of the Russian Revolution. In that instance, access to Russia was closed by military censorship, both Russian and Allied, and closed still more effectively by the difficulties of the Russian language. But above all it was closed to effective news reporting by the fact that the hardest thing to report is chaos, even though it is an evolving chaos. This put the formulating of Russian news at its source in Helsingfors, Stockholm, Geneva, Paris and London, into the hands of censors and propagandists. They were for a long time subject to no check of any kind. Until they had made themselves ridiculous they created, let us admit, out of some genuine aspects of the huge Russian maelstrom, a set of stereotypes so evocative of hate and fear, that the very best instinct of journalism, its desire to go and see and tell, was for a long time crushed.¹

5

Every newspaper when it reaches the reader is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have. There are no objective standards here. There are conventions. Take two newspapers published in the same city on the same morning. The headline of one reads: "Britain pledges aid to Berlin against French aggression; France openly backs Poles." The headline of the second is "Mrs. Stillman's Other Love." Which you prefer is a matter of taste, but not entirely a matter of the editor's taste. It is a matter of his judgment as to what will absorb the half hour's attention a certain set of readers will give to his newspaper. Now the problem of securing attention is by no means equivalent to displaying the news in the perspective laid down by religious teaching or by some form of ethical culture. It is a problem

1. Cf. *A Test of the News*, by Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, assisted by Faye Lippmann, *New Republic*, August 4, 1920.

of provoking feeling in the reader, of inducing him to feel a sense of personal identification with the stories he is reading. News which does not offer this opportunity to introduce oneself into the struggle which it depicts cannot appeal to a wide audience. The audience must participate in the news, much as it participates in the drama, by personal identification. Just as everyone holds his breath when the heroine is in danger, as he helps Babe Ruth swing his bat, so in subtler form the reader enters into the news. In order that he shall enter he must find a familiar foothold in the story, and this is supplied to him by the use of stereotypes. They tell him that if an association of plumbers is called a "combine" it is appropriate to develop his hostility; if it is called a "group of leading business men" the cue is for a favorable reaction.

It is in a combination of these elements that the power to create opinion resides. Editorials reinforce. Sometimes in a situation that on the news pages is too confusing to permit of identification, they give the reader a clue by means of which he engages himself. A clue he must have if, as most of us must, he is to seize the news in a hurry. A suggestion of some sort he demands, which tells him, so to speak, where he, a man conceiving himself to be such and such a person, shall integrate his feelings with the news he reads.

"It has been said" writes Walter Bagehot,¹ "that if you can only get a middleclass Englishman to think whether there are 'snails in Sinus,' he will soon have an opinion on it. It will be difficult to make him think, but if he does think, he cannot rest in a negative, he will come to some decision. And on any ordinary topic, of course, it is so. A grocer has a full creed as to foreign policy, a young lady a complete theory of the sacraments, as to which neither has any doubt whatever."

Yet that same grocer will have many doubts about his groceries, and that young lady, marvelously certain about the sacraments, may have all kinds of doubts as to whether to marry the grocer, and if not whether it is proper to accept his attentions. The ability to rest in the negative implies either a lack of interest in the result, or a vivid sense of competing alternatives. In the case of foreign policy or the sacraments, the interest in the results is intense, while means for checking the opinion are poor. This is the plight of the reader of the general news. If he is to read it at all he must be interested, that is to say, he must enter into the situation and care about the outcome. But if he does that he cannot rest in a negative, and unless independent means of checking the lead given him by his newspaper exists, the very fact

1. On the Emotion of Conviction, *Literary Studies*, Vol. III, p. 172.

that he is interested may make it difficult to arrive at that balance of opinions which may most nearly approximate the truth. The more passionately involved he becomes, the more he will tend to resent not only a different view, but a disturbing bit of news. That is why many a newspaper finds that, having honestly evoked the partisanship of its readers, it can not easily, supposing the editor believes the facts warrant it, change position. If a change is necessary, the transition has to be managed with the utmost skill and delicacy. Usually a newspaper will not attempt so hazardous a performance. It is easier and safer to have the news of that subject taper off and disappear, thus putting out the fire by starving it.

The absence of these exact tests accounts, I think, for the character of the profession, as no other explanation does. There is a very small body of exact knowledge, which it requires no outstanding ability or training to deal with. The rest is in the journalist's own discretion. Once he departs from the region where it is definitely recorded at the County Clerk's office that John Smith has gone into bankruptcy, all fixed standards disappear. The story of why John Smith failed, his human frailties, the analysis of the economic conditions on which he was shipwrecked, all of this can be told in a hundred different ways. There is no discipline in applied psychology, as there is a discipline in medicine, engineering, or even law, which has authority to direct the journalist's mind when he passes from the news to the vague realm of truth. There are no canons to direct his own mind, and no canons that coerce the reader's judgment or the publisher's. His version of the truth is only his version. How can he demonstrate the truth as he sees it? He cannot demonstrate it, any more than Mr. Sinclair Lewis can demonstrate that he has told the whole truth about Main Street. And the more he understands his own weaknesses, the more ready he is to admit that where there is no objective test, his own opinion is in some vital measure constructed out of his own stereotypes, according to his own code, and by the urgency of his own interest. He knows that he is seeing the world through subjective lenses. He cannot deny that he too is, as Shelley remarked, a dome of many-colored glass which stains the white radiance of eternity.

And by this knowledge his assurance is tempered. He may have all kinds of moral courage, and sometimes has, but he lacks that sustaining conviction of a certain technic which finally freed the physical sciences from theological control. It was the gradual development of an irrefragable method that gave the physicist his intellectual freedom as against all the powers of the world. His proofs were so clear, his evidence so sharply superior to tradition, that he broke away finally from all control. But the journalist has no such support in his own conscience or in fact. The control exercised over him by the opinions of his employers and his readers, is not the control of truth by prejudice, but of one opinion by another opinion that it is not demonstrably less true. Between Judge Gary's assertion that the unions will destroy American institutions, and Mr. Gompers' assertion that they are agencies of the rights of man, the choice has, in large measure, to be governed by the will to believe.

The task of deflating these controversies, and reducing them to a point where they can be reported as news, is not a task which the reporter can perform. It is possible and necessary for journalists to bring home to people the uncertain character of the truth on which

CHAPTER 24

News, Truth, and a Conclusion

As we begin to make more and more exact studies of the press, much will depend upon the hypothesis we hold. If we assume with Mr. Sinclair, and most of his opponents, that news and truth are two words for the same thing, we shall, I believe, arrive nowhere. We shall prove that on this point the newspaper lied. We shall prove that on that point Mr. Sinclair's account lied. We shall demonstrate that Mr. Sinclair lied when he said that somebody lied, and that somebody lied when he said Mr. Sinclair lied. We shall vent our feelings, but we shall vent them into air.

The hypothesis, which seems to me the most fertile, is that news and truth are not the same thing, and must be clearly distinguished.¹ The function of news is to signalize an event, the function of truth is to bring to light the hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other, and make a picture of reality on which men can act. Only at those points, where social conditions take recognizable and measurable shape, do the body of truth and the body of news coincide. That is a comparatively small part of the whole field of human interest. In this sector, and only in this sector, the tests of the news are sufficiently exact to make the charges of perversion or suppression more than a partisan judgment. There is no defense, no extenuation, no excuse whatever, for stating six times that Lenin is dead, when the only information the paper possesses is a report that he is dead from a source repeatedly shown to be unreliable. The news, in that instance, is not "Lenin Dead" but "Helsingfors Says Lenin is Dead." And a newspaper can be asked to take the responsibility of not making Lenin more dead than the source of the news is reliable; if there is one subject on which editors are most responsible it is in their judgment of the reliability of the source. But when it comes to dealing, for example, with stories of what the Russian people want, no such test exists.

1. When I wrote *Liberty and the News*, I did not understand this distinction clearly enough to state it, but cf. p. 89 ff.

their opinions are founded, and by criticism and agitation to prod social science into making more usable formulations of social facts, and to prod statesmen into establishing more visible institutions. The press, in other words, can fight for the extension of reportable truth. But as social truth is organized to-day, the press is not constituted to furnish from one edition to the next the amount of knowledge which the democratic theory of public opinion demands. This is not due to the Brass Check, as the quality of news in radical papers shows, but to the fact that the press deals with a society in which the governing forces are so imperfectly recorded. The theory that the press can itself record those forces is false. It can normally record only what has been recorded for it by the working of institutions. Everything else is argument and opinion, and fluctuates with the vicissitudes, the self-consciousness, and the courage of the human mind.

If the press is not so universally wicked, nor so deeply conspiring, as Mr. Sinclair would have us believe, it is very much more frail than the democratic theory has as yet admitted. It is too frail to carry the whole burden of popular sovereignty, to supply spontaneously the truth which democrats hoped was inborn. And when we expect it to supply such a body of truth we employ a misleading standard of judgment. We misunderstand the limited nature of news, the illimitable complexity of society; we overestimate our own endurance, public spirit, and all-round competence. We suppose an appetite for uninteresting truths which is not discovered by any honest analysis of our own tastes.

If the newspapers, then, are to be charged with the duty of translating the whole public life of mankind, so that every adult can arrive at an opinion on every moot topic, they fail, they are bound to fail, in any future one can conceive they will continue to fail. It is not possible to assume that a world, carried on by division of labor and distribution of authority, can be governed by universal opinions in the whole population. Unconsciously the theory sets up the single reader as theoretically omniscient, and puts upon the press the burden of accomplishing whatever representative government, industrial organization, and diplomacy have failed to accomplish. Acting upon everybody for thirty minutes in twenty-four hours, the press is asked to create a mystical force called Public Opinion that will take up the slack in public institutions. The press has often mistakenly pretended that it could do just that. It has at great moral cost to itself, encouraged a democracy, still bound to its original premises, to expect newspapers to supply spontaneously for every organ of government, for every social problem, the machinery of information which these do not normally supply themselves. Institutions, having failed to furnish themselves with instruments of knowledge, have become a

bundle of "problems," which the population as a whole, reading the press as a whole, is supposed to solve.

The press, in other words, has come to be regarded as an organ of direct democracy, charged on a much wider scale, and from day to day, with the function often attributed to the initiative, referendum, and recall. The Court of Public Opinion, open day and night, is to lay down the law for everything all the time. It is not workable. And when you consider the nature of news, it is not even thinkable. For the news, as we have seen, is precise in proportion to the precision with which the event is recorded. Unless the event is capable of being named, measured, given shape, made specific, it either fails to take on the character of news, or it is subject to the accidents and prejudices of observation.

Therefore, on the whole, the quality of the news about modern society is an index of its social organization. The better the institutions, the more all interests concerned are formally represented, the more issues are disentangled, the more objective criteria are introduced, the more perfectly an affair can be presented as news. At its best the press is a servant and guardian of institutions; at its worst it is a means by which a few exploit social disorganization to their own ends. In the degree to which institutions fail to function, the unscrupulous journalist can fish in troubled waters, and the conscientious one must gamble with uncertainties.

The press is no substitute for institutions. It is like the beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision. Men cannot do the work of the world by this light alone. They cannot govern society by episodes, incidents, and eruptions. It is only when they work by a steady light of their own, that the press, when it is turned upon them, reveals a situation intelligible enough for a popular decision. The trouble lies deeper than the press, and so does the remedy. It lies in social organization based on a system of analysis and record, and in all the corollaries of that principle; in the abandonment of the theory of the omniscient citizen, in the decentralization of decision, in the coordination of decision by comparable record and analysis. If at the centers of management there is a running audit, which makes work intelligible to those who do it, and those who superintend it, issues when they arise are not the mere collisions of the blind. Then, too, the news is uncovered for the press by a system of intelligence that is also a check upon the press.

That is the radical way. For the troubles of the press, like the troubles of representative government, be it territorial or functional, like the troubles of industry, be it capitalist, cooperative, or communist, go back to a common source: to the failure of self-governing

people to transcend their casual experience and their prejudice, by inventing, creating, and organizing a machinery of knowledge. It is because they are compelled to act without a reliable picture of the world, that governments, schools, newspapers and churches make such small headway against the more obvious failings of democracy, against violent prejudice, apathy, preference for the curious trivial as against the dull important, and the hunger for sideshows and three legged calves. This is the primary defect of popular government, a defect inherent in its traditions, and all its other defects can, I believe, be traced to this one.

PART 8

Organized Intelligence

CHAPTER 25. THE ENTERING WEDGE

CHAPTER 26. INTELLIGENCE WORK

CHAPTER 27. THE APPEAL TO THE PUBLIC

CHAPTER 28. THE APPEAL TO REASON

hypothesis might be given a fair test without shaking the foundations of society.

The wedge has been driven, not only by some directors of industry and some statesmen who had to have help, but by the bureaus of municipal research,¹ the legislative reference libraries, the specialized lobbies of corporations and trade unions and public causes, and by voluntary organizations like the League of Women Voters, the Consumers' League, the Manufacturers' Associations; by hundreds of trade associations, and citizens' unions; by publications like the *Searchlight* on Congress and the *Survey*; and by foundations like the General Education Board. Not all by any means are disinterested. That is not the point. All of them do begin to demonstrate the need for interposing some form of expertness between the private citizen and the vast environment in which he is entangled.

1. The number of these organizations in the United States is very great. Some are alive, some half dead. They are in rapid flux. Lists of them supplied to me by Dr. L. D. Upson of the Detroit Bureau of Governmental Research, Miss Rebecca B. Rankin of the Municipal Reference Library of New York City, Mr. Edward A. Fitzpatrick, Secretary of the State Board of Education (Wisconsin), Mr. Savel Zimand of the Bureau of Industrial Research (New York City), run into the hundreds.

CHAPTER 26

Intelligence Work

1

The practice of democracy has been ahead of its theory. For the theory holds that the adult electors taken together make decisions out of a will that is in them. But just as there grew up governing hierarchies which were invisible in theory, so there has been a large amount of constructive adaptation, also unaccounted for in the image of democracy. Ways have been found to represent many interests and functions that are normally out of sight.

We are most conscious of this in our theory of the courts, when we explain their legislative powers and their vetoes on the theory that there are interests to be guarded which might be forgotten by the elected officials. But the Census Bureau, when it counts, classifies, and correlates people, things, and changes, is also speaking for unseen factors in the environment. The Geological Survey makes mineral resources evident, the Department of Agriculture represents in the councils of the nation factors of which each farmer sees only an infinitesimal part. School authorities, the Tariff Commission, the consular service, the Bureau of Internal Revenue give representation to persons, ideas, and objects which would never automatically find themselves represented in this perspective by an election. The Children's Bureau is the spokesman of a whole complex of interests and functions not ordinarily visible to the voter, and, therefore, incapable of becoming spontaneously a part of his public opinions. Thus the printing of comparative statistics of infant mortality is often followed by a reduction of the death rate of babies. Municipal officials and voters did not have, before publication, a place in their picture of the environment for those babies. The statistics made them visible, as visible as if the babies had elected an alderman to air their grievances.

In the State Department the government maintains a Division of Far Eastern Affairs. What is it for? The Japanese and the Chinese Governments both maintain ambassadors in Washington. Are they

not qualified to speak for the Far East? They are its representatives. Yet nobody would argue that the American Government could learn all that it needed to know about the Far East by consulting these ambassadors. Supposing them to be as candid as they know how to be, they are still limited channels of information. Therefore, to supplement them we maintain embassies in Tokio and Peking, and consular agents at many points. Also, I assume, some secret agents. These people are supposed to send reports which pass through the Division of Far Eastern Affairs to the Secretary of State. Now what does the Secretary expect of the Division? I know one who expected it to spend its appropriation. But there are Secretaries to whom special revelation is denied, and they turn to their divisions for help. The last thing they expect to find is a neat argument justifying the American position.

What they demand is that the experts shall bring the Far East to the Secretary's desk, with all the elements in such relation that it is as if he were in contact with the Far East itself. The expert must translate, simplify, generalize, but the inference from the result must apply in the East, not merely on the premises of the report. If the Secretary is worth his salt, the very last thing he will tolerate in his experts is the suspicion that they have a "policy." He does not want to know from them whether they like Japanese policy in China. He wants to know what different classes of Chinese and Japanese, English, Frenchmen, Germans, and Russians, think about it, and what they are likely to do because of what they think. He wants all that represented to him as the basis of his decision. The more faithfully the Division represents what is not otherwise represented, either by the Japanese or American ambassadors, or the Senators and Congressmen from the Pacific coast, the better Secretary of State he will be. He may decide to take his policy from the Pacific Coast, but he will take his view of Japan from Japan.

2

It is no accident that the best diplomatic service in the world is the one in which the divorce between the assembling of knowledge and the control of policy is most perfect. During the war in many British Embassies and in the British Foreign Office there were nearly always men, permanent officials or else special appointees, who quite successfully discounted the prevailing war mind. They discarded the niggardole of being pro and con, of having favorite nationalities, and pet aversions, and undelivered perorations in their bosoms. They left that to the political chiefs. But in an American Embassy I once heard an ambassador say that he never reported anything to Washington which would not cheer up the folks at home. He charmed all those who met

him, helped many a stranded war worker, and was superb when he unveiled a monument.

He did not understand that the power of the expert depends upon separating himself from those who make the decisions, upon not caring, in his expert self, what decision is made. The man who, like the ambassador, takes a line, and meddles with the decision, is soon discounted. There he is, just one more on that side of the question. For when he begins to care too much, he begins to see what he wishes to see, and by that fact ceases to see what he is there to see. He is there to represent the unseen. He represents people who are not voters, functions of voters that are not evident, events that are out of sight, mute people, unborn people, relations between things and people. He has a constituency of intangibles. And intangibles cannot be used to form a political majority, because voting is in the last analysis a test of strength, a sublimated battle, and the expert represents no strength available in the immediate. But he can exercise force by disturbing the line up of the forces. By making the invisible visible, he confronts the people who exercise material force with a new environment, sets ideas and feelings at work in them, throws them out of position, and so, in the profoundest way, affects the decision.

Men cannot long act in a way that they know is a contradiction of the environment as they conceive it. If they are bent on acting in a certain way they have to reconceive the environment, they have to censor out, to rationalize. But if in their presence, there is an insistent fact which is so obtrusive that they cannot explain it away, one of three courses is open. They can perversely ignore it, though they will cripple themselves in the process, will overact their part and come to grief. They can take it into account but refuse to act. They pay in internal discomfort and frustration. Or, and I believe this to be the most frequent case, they adjust their whole behavior to the enlarged environment.

The idea that the expert is an ineffectual person because he lets others make the decisions is quite contrary to experience. The more subtle the elements that enter into the decision, the more irresponsible power the expert wields. He is certain, moreover, to exercise more power in the future than ever he did before, because increasingly the relevant facts will elude the voter and the administrator. All governing agencies will tend to organize bodies of research and information, which will throw out tentacles and expand, as have the intelligence departments of all the armies in the world. But the experts will remain human beings. They will enjoy power, and their temptation will be to appoint themselves censors, and so absorb the real function of decision. Unless their function is correctly defined they will tend to pass on the

facts they think appropriate, and to pass down the decisions they approve. They will tend, in short, to become a bureaucracy.

The only institutional safeguard is to separate as absolutely as it is possible to do so the staff which executes from the staff which investigates. The two should be parallel but quite distinct bodies of men, recruited differently, paid if possible from separate funds, responsible to different heads, intrinsically uninterested in each other's personal success. In industry, the auditors, accountants, and inspectors should be independent of the manager, the superintendents, foremen, and in time, I believe, we shall come to see that in order to bring industry under social control the machinery of record will have to be independent of the boards of directors and the shareholders.

3

But in building the intelligence sections of industry and politics, we do not start on cleared ground. And, apart from insisting on this basic separation of function, it would be cumbersome to insist too precisely on the form which in any particular instance the principle shall take. There are men who believe in intelligence work, and will adopt it; there are men who do not understand it, but cannot do their work without it; there are men who will resist. But provided the principle has a foothold somewhere in every social agency it will make progress, and the way to begin is to begin. In the federal government, for example, it is not necessary to straighten out the administrative tangle and the illogical duplications of a century's growth in order to find a neat place for the intelligence bureaus which Washington so badly needs. Before election you can promise to rush bravely into the breach. But when you arrive there all out of breath, you find that each absurdity is invested with habits, strong interests, and chummy Congressmen. Attack all along the line and you engage every force of reaction. You go forth to battle, as the poet said, and you always fall. You can lop off an antiquated bureau here, a covey of clerks there, you can combine two bureaus. And by that time you are busy with the tariff and the railroads, and the era of reform is over. Besides, in order to effect a truly logical reorganization of the government, such as all candidates always promise, you would have to disturb more passions than you have time to quell. And any new scheme, supposing you had one ready, would require officials to man it. Say what one will about officeholders, even Soviet Russia was glad to get many of the old ones back; and these old officials, if they are too ruthlessly treated, will sabotage utopia itself.

No administrative scheme is workable without good will, and good

will about strange practices is impossible without education. The better way is to introduce into the existing machinery, wherever you can find an opening, agencies that will hold up a mirror week by week, month by month. You can hope, then, to make the machine visible to those who work it, as well as to the chiefs who are responsible, and to the public outside. When the office-holders begin to see themselves,—or rather when the outsiders, the chiefs, and the subordinates all begin to see the same facts, the same damning facts if you like, the obstruction will diminish. The reformer's opinion that a certain bureau is inefficient is just his opinion, not so good an opinion in the eyes of the bureau, as its own. But let the work of that bureau be analysed and recorded, and then compared with other bureaus and with private corporations, and the argument moves to another plane.

There are ten departments at Washington represented in the Cabinet. Suppose, then, there was a permanent intelligence section for each. What would be some of the conditions of effectiveness? Beyond all others that the intelligence officials should be independent both of the Congressional Committees dealing with that department, and of the Secretary at the head of it; that they should not be entangled either in decision or in action. Independence, then, would turn mainly on three points: on funds, tenure, and access to the facts. For clearly if a particular Congress or departmental official can deprive them of money, dismiss them, or close the files, the staff becomes its creature.

4

The question of funds is both important and difficult. No agency of research can be really free if it depends upon annual doles from what may be a jealous or a parsimonious congress. Yet the ultimate control of funds cannot be removed from the legislature. The financial arrangement should insure the staff against left-handed, joker and rider attack, against sly destruction, and should at the same time provide for growth. The staff should be so well entrenched that an attack on its existence would have to be made in the open. It might, perhaps, work behind a federal charter creating a trust fund, and a sliding scale over a period of years based on the appropriation for the department to which the intelligence bureau belonged. No great sums of money are involved anyway. The trust fund might cover the overhead and capital charges for a certain minimum staff, the sliding scale might cover the enlargements. At any rate the appropriation should be put beyond accident, like the payment of any long term obligation. This is a much less serious way of "tying the hands of Congress" than

is the passage of a Constitutional amendment or the issuance of government bonds. Congress could repeal the charter. But it would have to repeal it, not throw monkey wrenches into it.

Tenure should be for life, with provision for retirement on a liberal pension, with sabbatical years set aside for advanced study and training, and with dismissal only after a trial by professional colleagues. The conditions which apply to any non-profit-making intellectual career should apply here. If the work is to be salient, the men who do it must have dignity, security, and, in the upper ranks at least, that freedom of mind which you find only where men are not too immediately concerned in practical decision.

Access to the materials should be established in the organic act. The bureau should have the right to examine all papers, and to question any official or any outsider. Continuous investigation of this sort would not at all resemble the sensational legislative inquiry and the spasmodic fishing expedition which are now a common feature of our government. The bureau should have the right to propose accounting methods to the department, and if the proposal is rejected, or violated after it has been accepted, to appeal under its charter to Congress.

In the first instance each intelligence bureau would be the connecting link between Congress and the Department, a better link, in my judgment, than the appearance of cabinet officers on the floor of both House and Senate, though the one proposal in no way excludes the other. The bureau would be the Congressional eye on the execution of its policy. It would be the departmental answer to Congressional criticism. And then, since operation of the Department would be permanently visible, perhaps Congress would cease to feel the need of that minute legislation born of distrust and a false doctrine of the separation of powers, which does so much to make efficient administration difficult.

5

But, of course, each of the ten bureaus could not work in a watertight compartment. In their relation one to another lies the best chance for that "coordination" of which so much is heard and so little seen. Clearly the various staffs would need to adopt, wherever possible, standards of measurement that were comparable. They would exchange their records. Then if the War Department and the Post Office both buy lumber, hire carpenters, or construct brick walls they need not necessarily do them through the same agency, for that might mean cumbersome over-centralization; but they would be able to use the same measure for the same things, be conscious of the comparisons, and

be treated as competitors. And the more competition of this sort the better.

For the value of competition is determined by the value of the standards used to measure it. Instead, then, of asking ourselves whether we believe in competition, we should ask ourselves whether we believe in that for which the competitors compete. No one in his senses expects to "abolish competition," for when the last vestige of emulation had disappeared, social effort would consist in mechanical obedience to a routine, tempered in a minority by native inspiration. Yet no one expects to work out competition to its logical conclusion in a murderous struggle of each against all. The problem is to select the goals of competition and the rules of the game. Almost always the most visible and obvious standard of measurement will determine the rules of the game: such as money, power, popularity, applause, or Mr. Veblen's "conspicuous waste." What other standards of measurement does our civilization normally provide? How does it measure efficiency, productivity, service, for which we are always clamoring?

By and large there are no measures, and there is, therefore, not so much competition to achieve these ideals. For the difference between the higher and the lower motives is not, as men often assert, a difference between altruism and selfishness.¹ It is a difference between acting for easily understood aims, and for aims that are obscure and vague. Exhort a man to make more profit than his neighbor, and he knows at what to aim. Exhort him to render more social service, and how is he to be certain what service is social? What is the test, what is the measure? A subjective feeling, somebody's opinion. Tell a man in time of peace that he ought to serve his country and you have uttered a pious platitude. Tell him in time of war, and the word service has a meaning; it is a number of concrete acts, enlistment, or buying bonds, or saving food, or working for a dollar a year, and each one of these services he sees definitely as part of a concrete purpose to put at the front an army larger and better armed, than the enemy's.

So the more you are able to analyze administration and work out elements that can be compared, the more you invent quantitative measures for the qualities you wish to promote, the more you can turn competition to ideal ends. If you can contrive the right index numbers² you can set up a competition between individual workers

1. Cf. Ch. 12.

2. I am not using the term index numbers in its purely technical meaning, but to cover any device for the comparative measurement of social phenomena.

in a shop; between shops; between factories; between schools;¹ between government departments; between regiments; between divisions; between ships; between states; counties; cities; and the better your index numbers the more useful the competition.

6

The possibilities that lie in the exchange of material are evident. Each department of government is all the time asking for information that may already have been obtained by another department, though perhaps in a somewhat different form. The State Department needs to know, let us say, the extent of the Mexican oil reserves, their relation to the rest of the world's supply, the present ownership of Mexican oil lands, the importance of oil tot warships now under construction or planned, the comparative costs in different fields. How does it secure such information to-day? The information is probably scattered through the Departments of Interior, Justice, Commerce, Labor and Navy. Either a clerk in the State Department looks up Mexican oil in a book of reference, which may or may not be accurate, or somebody's private secretary telephones somebody else's private secretary, asks for a memorandum, and in the course of time a messenger arrives with an armful of unintelligible reports. The Department should be able to call on its own intelligence bureau to assemble the facts in a way suited to the diplomatic problem up for decision. And these facts the diplomatic intelligence bureau would obtain from the central clearing house.²

This establishment would pretty soon become a focus of information of the most extraordinary kind. And the men in it would be made aware of what the problems of government really are. They would deal with problems of definition, of terminology, of statistical technique, of logic; they would traverse concretely the whole gamut of the social sciences. It is difficult to see why all this material, except a few diplomatic and military secrets, should not be open to the scholars of the country. It is there that the political scientist would find the real nuts to crack and the real researches for his students to make. The work need not all be done in Washington, but it could be done in reference to Washington. The central agency would, thus,

1. See, for example, *An Index Number for State School Systems* by Leonard P. Ayers, Russell Sage Foundation, 1920. The principle of the quota was very successfully applied in the Liberty Loan Campaigns and under very much more difficult circumstances by the Allied Maritime Transport Council.

2. There has been a vast development of such services among trade associations. The possibilities of a perverted use were revealed by the New York Building Trades investigation of 1921.

have in it the makings of a national university. The staff could be recruited there for the bureaus from among college graduates. They would be working on these selected after consultation between the curators of the national university and teachers scattered over the country. If the association was as flexible as it ought to be, there would be, as a supplement to the permanent staff, a steady turnover of temporary and specialist appointments from the universities, and exchange lecturers called out from Washington. Thus the training and the recruiting of the staff would go together. A part of the research itself would be done by students, and political science in the universities would be associated with politics in America.

7

In its main outlines the principle is equally applicable to state governments, to cities, and to rural counties. The work of comparison and interchange could take place by federations of state and city and county bureaus. And within those federations any desirable regional combination could be organized. So long as the accounting systems were comparable, a great deal of duplication would be avoided. Regional coordination is especially desirable. For legal frontiers often do not coincide with the effective environments. Yet they have a certain basis in custom that it would be costly to disturb. By coordinating their information several administrative areas could reconcile autonomy of decision with cooperation. New York City, for example, is already an unwieldy unit for good government from the City Hall. Yet for many purposes, such as health and transportation, the metropolitan district is the true unit of administration. In that district, however, there are large cities, like Yonkers, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Hoboken, Bayonne. They could not all be managed from one center, and yet they should act together for many functions. Ultimately perhaps some such flexible scheme of local government as Sidney and Beatrice Webb have suggested may be the proper solution.¹ But the first step would be a coordination, not of decision and action, but of information and research. Let the officials of the various municipalities see their common problems in the light of the same facts:

8

It would be idle to deny that such a network of intelligence bureaus in politics and industry might become a dead weight and a perpetual irritation. One can easily imagine its attraction for men in

1. "The Reorganization of Local Government" (Ch. IV), in *A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain*.

search of soft jobs, for pedants, for meddlers. One can see red tape, mountains of papers, questionnaires ad nauseam, seven copies of every document, endorsements, delays, lost papers, the use of form 136 instead of form 29b, the return of the document because pencil was used instead of ink, or black ink instead of red ink. The work could be done very badly. There are no fool-proof institutions.

But if one could assume that there was circulation through the whole system between government departments, factories, offices, and the universities; a circulation of men, a circulation of data and of criticism, the risks of dry rot would not be so great. Nor would it be true to say that these intelligence bureaus will complicate life. They will tend, on the contrary, to simplify, by revealing a complexity now so great as to be humanly unmanageable. The present fundamentally invisible system of government is so intricate that most people have given up trying to follow it, and because they do not try, they are tempted to think it comparatively simple. It is, on the contrary, elusive, concealed, opaque. The employment of an intelligence system would mean a reduction of personnel per unit of result, because by making available to all the experience of each, it would reduce the amount of trial and error; and because by making the social process visible, it would assist the personnel to self-criticism. It does not involve a great additional band of officials, if you take into account the time now spent vainly by special investigating committees, grand juries, district attorneys, reform organizations, and bewildered office holders, in trying to find their way through a dark muddle.

If the analysis of public opinion and of the democratic theories in relation to the modern environment is sound in principle, then I do not see how one can escape the conclusion that such intelligence work is the clue to betterment. I am not referring to the few suggestions contained in this chapter. They are merely illustrations. The task of working out the technic is in the hands of men trained to do it, and not even they can to-day completely foresee the form, much less the details. The number of social phenomena which are now recorded is small, the instruments of analysis are very crude, the concepts often vague and uncriticized. But enough has been done to demonstrate, I think, that unseen environments can be reported effectively, that they can be reported to divergent groups of people in a way which is neutral to their prejudice, and capable of overcoming their subjectivism.

If that is true, then in working out the intelligence principle men will find the way to overcome the central difficulty of self-government, the difficulty of dealing with an unseen reality. Because of that difficulty, it has been impossible for any self-governing community to reconcile its need for isolation with the necessity for wide contact, to

reconcile the dignity and individuality of local decision with security and wide coordination, to secure effective leaders without sacrificing responsibility, to have useful public opinions without attempting universal public opinions on all subjects. As long as there was no way of establishing common versions of unseen events, common measures for separate actions, the only image of democracy that would work, even in theory, was one based on an isolated community of people whose political faculties were limited, according to Aristotle's famous maxim, by the range of their vision.

But now there is a way out, a long one to be sure, but a way. It is fundamentally the same way as that which has enabled a citizen of Chicago, with no better eyes than an Athenian, to see and hear over great distances. It is possible to-day, it will become more possible when more labor has gone into it, to reduce the discrepancies between the conceived environment and the effective environment. As that is done, federalism will work more and more by consent, less and less by coercion. For while federalism is the only possible method of union among self-governing groups,¹ federalism swings either towards imperial centralization or towards parochial anarchy wherever the union is not based on correct and commonly accepted ideas of federal matters. These ideas do not arise spontaneously. They have to be pieced together by generalization based on analysis, and the instruments for that analysis have to be invented and tested by research.

No electoral device, no manipulation of areas, no change in the system of property, goes to the root of the matter. You cannot take more political wisdom out of human beings than there is in them. And no reform, however sensational, is truly radical, which does not consciously provide a way of overcoming the subjectivism of human opinion based on the limitation of individual experience. There are systems of government, of voting, and representation which extract more than others. But in the end knowledge must come not from the conscience but from the environment with which that conscience deals. When men act on the principle of intelligence they go out to find the facts and to make their wisdom. When they ignore it, they go inside themselves and find only what is there. They elaborate their prejudice, instead of increasing their knowledge.

1. Cf. H. J. Laski, *The Foundations of Sovereignty*, and other Essays, particularly the Essay of this name, as well as the Problems of Administrative Areas, *The Theory of Popular Sovereignty*, and *The Pluralistic State*.

towards the responsible administrator. An intelligence system has value, of course, as a source of general information, and as a check on the daily press. But that is secondary. Its real use is as an aid to representative government and administration both in politics and industry. The demand for the assistance of expert reporters in the shape of accountants, statisticians, secretariats, and the like, comes not from the public, but from men doing public business, who can no longer do it by rule of thumb. It is in origin and in ideal an instrument for doing public business better, rather than an instrument for knowing better how badly public business is done.

2

As a private citizen, as a sovereign voter, no one could attempt to digest these documents. But as one party to a dispute, as a committee-man in a legislature, as an officer in government, business, or a trade union, as a member of an industrial council, reports on the specific matter at issue will be increasingly welcome. The private citizen interested in some cause would belong, as he does now, to voluntary societies which employed a staff to study the documents, and make reports that served as a check on officialdom. There would be some study of this material by newspaper men, and a good deal by experts and by political scientists. But the outsider, and every one of us is an outsider to all but a few aspects of modern life, has neither time, nor attention, nor interest, nor the equipment for specific judgment. It is on the men inside, working under conditions that are sound, that the daily administrations of society must rest.

The general public outside can arrive at judgments about whether these conditions are sound only on the result after the event, and on the procedure before the event. The broad principles on which the action of public opinion can be continuous are essentially principles of procedure. The outsider can ask experts to tell him whether the relevant facts were duly considered; he cannot in most cases decide for himself what is relevant or what is due consideration. The outsider can perhaps judge whether the groups interested in the decision were properly heard, whether the ballot, if there was one, was honestly taken, and perhaps whether the result was honestly accepted. He can watch the procedure when the news indicates that there is something to watch. He can raise a question as to whether the procedure itself is right, if its normal results conflict with his ideal of a good life.¹ But if he tries in every case to substitute himself for the procedure, to bring in Public Opinion like a providential uncle in the crisis of a

1. Cf. Chapter 20.

The Appeal to the Public

1

In real life no one acts on the theory that he can have a public opinion on every public question, though this fact is often concealed where a person thinks there is no public question because he has no public opinion. But in the theory of our politics we continue to think more literally than Lord Bryce intended, that "the action of Opinion is continuous,"¹ even though "its action . . . deals with broad principles only."² And then because we try to think of ourselves having continuous opinions, without being altogether certain what a broad principle is, we quite naturally greet with an anguished yawn an argument that seems to involve the reading of more government reports, more statistics, more curves and more graphs. For all these are in the first instance just as confusing as partisan rhetoric, and much less entertaining.

The amount of attention available is far too small for any scheme in which it was assumed that all the citizens of the nation would, after devoting themselves to the publications of all the intelligence bureaus, become alert, informed, and eager on the multitude of real questions that never do fit very well into any broad principle. I am not making that assumption. Primarily, the intelligence bureau is an instrument of the man of action, of the representative charged with decision, of the worker at his work, and if it does not help them, it will help nobody in the end. But in so far as it helps them to understand the environment in which they are working, it makes what they do visible. And by that much they become more responsible to the general public.

The purpose, then, is not to burden every citizen with expert opinions on all questions, but to push that burden away from him

1. *Modern Democracies*, Vol. I, p. 159.

2. *Id.*, footnote, p. 158.

play, he will confound his own confusion. He will not follow any train of thought consecutively.

For the practice of appealing to the public on all sorts of intricate matters means almost always a desire to escape criticism from those who know by enlisting a large majority which has had no chance to know. The verdict is made to depend on who has the loudest or the most entrancing voice, the most skilful or the most brazen publicity man, the best access to the most space in the newspapers. For even when the editor is scrupulously fair to "the other side," fairness is not enough. There may be several other sides, unmentioned by any of the organized, financed and active partisans.

The private citizen, beset by partisan appeals for the loan of his Public Opinion, will soon see, perhaps, that these appeals are not a compliment to his intelligence, but an imposition on his good nature and an insult to his sense of evidence. As his civic education takes account of the complexity of his environment, he will concern himself about the equity and the sanity of procedure, and even this he will in most cases expect his elected representative to watch for him. He will refuse himself to accept the burden of these decisions, and will turn down his thumbs in most cases on those who, in their hurry to win, rush from the conference table with the first dope for the reporters.

Only by insisting that problems shall not come up to him until they have passed through a procedure, can the busy citizen of a modern state hope to deal with them in a form that is intelligible. For issues, as they are stated by a partisan, almost always consist of an intricate series of facts, as he has observed them, surrounded by a large fatty mass of stereotyped phrases charged with his emotion. According to the fashion of the day, he will emerge from the conference room insisting that what he wants is some soul-filling idea like Justice, Welfare, Americanism, Socialism. On such issues the citizen outside can sometimes be provoked to fear or admiration, but to judgment never. Before he can do anything with the argument, the fat has to be boiled out of it for him.

3

That can be done by having the representative inside carry on discussion in the presence of someone, chairman or mediator, who forces the discussion to deal with the analyses supplied by experts. This is the essential organization of any representative body dealing with distant matters. The partisan voices should be there, but the partisans should find themselves confronted with men, not personally involved, who control enough facts and have the dialectical skill to

sort out what is real perception from what is stereotype, pattern and elaboration. It is the Socratic dialogue, with all of Socrates's energy for breaking through words to meanings, and something more than that, because the dialectic in modern life must be done by men who have explored the environment as well as the human mind.

There is, for example, a grave dispute in the steel industry. Each side issues a manifesto full of the highest ideals. The only public opinion that is worth respect at this stage is the opinion which insists that a conference be organized. For the side which says its cause is too just to be contaminated by conference there can be little sympathy, since there is no such cause anywhere among mortal men. Perhaps those who object to conference do not say quite that. Perhaps they say that the other side is too wicked; they cannot shake hands with traitors. All that public opinion can do then is to organize a hearing by public officials to hear the proof of wickedness. It cannot take the partisans' word for it. But suppose a conference is agreed to, and suppose there is a neutral chairman who has at his beck and call the consulting experts of the corporation, the union, and, let us say, the Department of Labor.

Judge Gary states with perfect sincerity that his men are well paid and not overworked, and then proceeds to sketch the history of Russia from the time of Peter the Great to the murder of the Czar. Mr. Foster rises, states with equal sincerity that the men are exploited, and then proceeds to outline the history of human emancipation from Jesus of Nazareth to Abraham Lincoln. At this point the chairman calls upon the intelligence men for wage tables in order to substitute for the words "well paid" and "exploited" a table showing what the different classes are paid. Does Judge Gary think they are all well paid? He does. Does Mr. Foster think they are all exploited? No, he thinks that groups C, M, and X are exploited. What does he mean by exploited? He means they are not paid a living wage. They are, says Judge Gary. What can a man buy on that wage, asks the chairman. Nothing, says Mr. Foster. Everything he needs, says Judge Gary. The chairman consults the budgets and price statistics of the government.¹ He rules that X can meet an average budget, but that C and M cannot. Judge Gary serves notice that he does not regard the official statistics as sound. The budgets are too high, and prices have come down. Mr. Foster also serves notice of exception. The budget is too

1. See an article on "The Cost of Living and Wage Cuts," in the *New Republic*, July 27, 1921, by Dr. Leo Wolman, for a brilliant discussion of the naive use of such figures and "pseudo-principles." The warning is of particular importance because it comes from an economist and statistician who has himself done so much to improve the technic of industrial disputes.

low, prices have gone up. The chairman rules that this point is not within the jurisdiction of the conference, that the official figures stand, and that Judge Gary's experts and Mr. Foster's should carry their appeals to the standing committee of the federated intelligence bureaus.

Nevertheless, says Judge Gary, we shall be ruined if we change these wage scales. What do you mean by ruined, asks the chairman, produce your books. I can't, they are private, says Judge Gary. What is private does not interest us, says the chairman, and, therefore, issues a statement to the public announcing that the wages of workers in groups C and M are so-and-so much below the official minimum living wage, and that Judge Gary declines to increase them for reasons that he refuses to state. After a procedure of that sort, a public opinion in the eulogistic sense of the term¹ can exist.

The value of expert mediation is not that it sets up opinion to coerce the partisans, but that it disintegrates partisanship. Judge Gary and Mr. Foster may remain as little convinced as when they started, though even they would have to talk in a different strain. But almost everyone else who was not personally entangled would save himself from being entangled. For the entangling stereotypes and slogans to which his reflexes are so ready to respond are by this kind of dialectic untangled.

4

On many subjects of great public importance, and in varying degree among different people for more personal matters, the threads of memory and emotion are in a snarl. The same word will connote any number of different ideas: emotions are displaced from the images to which they belong to names which resemble the names of these images. In the uncriticized parts of the mind there is a vast amount of association by mere clang, contact, and succession. There are stray emotional attachments, there are words that were names and are masks. In dreams, reveries, and panic, we uncover some of the disorder, enough to see how the naive mind is composed, and how it behaves when not disciplined by wakeful effort and external resistance. We see that there is no more natural order than in a dusty old attic. There is often the same incongruity between fact, idea, and emotion as there might be in an opera house, if all the wardrobes were dumped in a heap and all the scores mixed up, so that Madame Butterfly in a Valkyr's dress waited lyrically for the return of Faust. "At Christmas-tide," says an editorial, "old memories soften the heart. Holy teachings are remembered afresh as thoughts run back to childhood. The

1. As used by Mr. Lowell in his *Public Opinion and Popular Government*.

world does not seem so bad when seen through the mist of half-happy, half-sad recollections of loved ones now with God. No heart is untouched by the mysterious influence. . . . The country is honeycombed with red propaganda—but there is a good supply of ropes, muscles and lampposts . . . while this world moves the spirit of liberty will burn in the breast of man."

The man who found these phrases in his mind needs help. He needs a Socrates who will separate the words, cross-examine him until he has defined them, and made words the names of ideas. Made them mean a particular object and nothing else. For these tense syllables have got themselves connected in his mind by primitive association, and are bundled together by his memories of Christmas, his indignation as a conservative, and his thrills as the heir to a revolutionary tradition. Sometimes the snarl is too huge and ancient for quick unravelling. Sometimes, as in modern psychotherapy, there are layers upon layers of memory teaching back to infancy, which have to be separated and named.

The effect of naming, the effect, that is, of saying that the labor groups C and M, but not X, are underpaid, instead of saying that Labor is Exploited, is incisive. Perceptions recover their identity, and the emotion they arouse is specific, since it is no longer reinforced by large and accidental connections with everything from Christmas to Moscow. The disentangled idea with a name of its own, and an emotion that has been scrutinized, is ever so much more open to correction by new data in the problem. It had been imbedded in the whole personality, had affiliations of some sort with the whole ego: a challenge would reverberate through the whole soul. After it has been thoroughly criticized, the idea is no longer *me* but *that*. It is objectified, it is at arm's length. Its fate is not bound up with my fate, but with the fate of the outer world upon which I am acting.

5

Re-education of this kind will help to bring our public opinions into grip with the environment. That is the way the enormous censoring, stereotyping, and dramatizing apparatus can be liquidated. Where there is no difficulty in knowing what the relevant environment is, the critic, the teacher, the physician, can unravel the mind. But where the environment is as obscure to the analyst as to his pupil, no analytic technic is sufficient. Intelligence work is required. In political and industrial problems the critic as such can do something, but unless he can count upon receiving from expert reporters a valid picture of the environment, his dialectic cannot go far.

Therefore, though here, as in most other matters, "education" is

the supreme remedy, the value of this education will depend upon the evolution of knowledge. And our knowledge of human institutions is still extraordinarily meager and impressionistic. The gathering of social knowledge is, on the whole, still haphazard; not, as it will have to become, the normal accompaniment of action. And yet the collection of information will not be made, one may be sure, for the sake of its ultimate use. It will be made because modern decision requires it to be made. But as it is being made, there will accumulate a body of data which political science can turn into generalization, and build up for the schools into a conceptual picture of the world. When that picture takes form, civic education can become a preparation for dealing with an unseen environment.

As a working model of the social system becomes available to the teacher, he can use it to make the pupil acutely aware of how his mind works on unfamiliar facts. Until he has such a model, the teacher cannot hope to prepare men fully for the world they will find. What he can do is to prepare them to deal with that world with a great deal more sophistication about their own minds. He can, by the use of the case method, teach the pupil the habit of examining the sources of his information. He can teach him, for example, to look in his newspaper for the place where the dispatch was filed, for the name of the correspondent, the name of the press service, the authority given for the statement, the circumstances under which the statement was secured. He can teach the pupil to ask himself whether the reporter saw what he describes, and to remember how that reporter described other events in the past. He can teach him the character of censorship, of the idea of privacy, and furnish him with knowledge of past propaganda. He can, by the proper use of history, make him aware of the stereotype, and can educate a habit of introspection about the imagery evoked by printed words. He can, by courses in comparative history and anthropology, produce a life-long realization of the way codes impose a special pattern upon the imagination. He can teach men to catch themselves making allegories, dramatizing relations, and personifying abstractions. He can show the pupil how he identifies himself with these allegories, how he becomes interested, and how he selects the attitude, heroic, romantic, economic which he adopts while holding a particular opinion.

The study of error is not only in the highest degree prophylactic, but it serves as a stimulating introduction to the study of truth. As our minds become more deeply aware of their own subjectivism, we find a zest in objective method that is not otherwise there. We see vividly, as normally we should not, the enormous mischief and casual cruelty of our prejudices. And the destruction of a prejudice, though

painful at first, because of its connection with our self-respect, gives an immense relief and a fine pride when it is successfully done. There is a radical enlargement of the range of attention. As the current categories dissolve, a hard, simple version of the world breaks up. The scene turns vivid and full. There follows an emotional incentive to hearty appreciation of scientific method, which otherwise it is not easy to arouse, and is impossible to sustain. Prejudices are so much easier and more interesting. For if you teach the principles of science as if they had always been accepted, their chief virtue as a discipline, which is objectivity, will make them dull. But teach them at first as victories over the superstitions of the mind, and the exhilaration of the chase and of the conquest may carry the pupil over that hard transition from his own self-bound experience to the phase where his curiosity has matured, and his reason has acquired passion.