



## Max M. Kampelman Papers

### **Copyright Notice:**

This material may be protected by copyright law (U.S. Code, Title 17). Researchers are liable for any infringement. For more information, visit [www.mnhs.org/copyright](http://www.mnhs.org/copyright).

kampelman, max m.  
duck nests vs. penicillin

Dr. Don Charles DeVault, Ph.D. in Chemistry, former instructor at the University of California and at Stanford University, author of ten scholarly research papers published at the age of 28 was seized in his laboratory last month and arrested by federal marshalls as he was engaged in research to improve the methods of assaying penicillin.

He was charged with refusing to perform work of national importance.

Dr. DeVault, a soft spoken, mild mannered scientist with a conviction that he must use his scientific training in the interests of humanity, is a conscientious objector. For the past <sup>two</sup> ~~three~~ years he has been the victim of religious persecution by the bureaucracy of a war-minded state which has imprisoned him, forced him to work in such jobs as ditch-digging, truck driving, peeling the bark off logs and building duck ponds and has prevented at every step his efforts to utilize his scientific skills. In the struggle against that persecution, he has pitted his scientific zeal and a sensitive determined conscience.

In December, 1943, after Dr. DeVault had served a portion of a prison sentence for refusing to report to the Army on the grounds that his conscientious scruples prevented him from participating in war in any form, he was paroled to a Civilian Public Service labor camp for conscientious objectors at Mancos, Colorado.

At the camp, he was forced to perform outside labor at unskilled jobs from 7:30-5:00 every day, six days a week. Determined, however, to keep his research skill from wasting completely, Dr. DeVault and another chemist paroled to CPS, used whatever spare time they had building a makeshift laboratory beside their beds in a 40 man dormitory and growing molds for penicillin. Outside friends sent them badly needed chemical glassware.

But even here, the government wasn't satisfied and Dr. DeVault met difficulties. The camp director was prone to turn out the lights in the dormitory while the men worked at night and on two occasions, he made the scientists move their apparatus from one location to another, causing them to lose, each time, a week of valuable work from the experiments. Finally, he was ordered to leave the camp at Mancos, separate from his fellow scientist, abandon his equipment and transfer to a CPS camp in Germfask, Michigan, where Selective Service is concentrating conscientious objectors who will not cooperate with its forced labor system.

The transfer meant the loss of months of work. But again Dr. DeVault started from the beginning. The men he left behind at Mancos carefully packed and shipped the equipment to him. Using his spare time and with the aid of other COs in camp, he re-assembled his equipment and constructed a new laboratory.

An aspirator for stirring mold cultures was constructed from the bellows of an old player piano.

An orange crate was used to make an incubation box for growing cultures.

For a refrigerator to preserve mold specimens, he dug a hole in the ground. He used old boards for apparatus racks.

Out of the \$5 monthly allowance given by the government to the men for the purchase of personal supplies (They receive no salary for their 51 hours of work a week.), he purchased chemicals indispensable to his work. He then spent all of his accumulated furlough time, 6 days, remaining in camp doing full time work on his experiments and even paying for his meals in camp during that time.

Finally, the point was reached in his experiments where Dr. DeVault found it necessary to spend full time at his work if it was to materialize. In a statement to the camp director he announced that he was "beginning to enter grounds which do not seem to have been covered previously by other workers, at least according to the published papers available". Rather than report for work building duck nests for 51 hours a week, he said: "Henceforth I shall be reporting for work on penicillin or related subjects".

Dr. DeVault's case is not unique. As he himself has stated: "My case is not different from thousands of others in CPs".

There are about 10,000 conscientious objectors being kept by the government, with few exceptions, at drudge-like tasks in prison, labor camps and as attendants in mental institutions at no wage. By risking imprisonment himself, Dr. DeVault is giving emphasis to the problem and to his belief that society should make better use of the talents of the men in Civilian Public Service.

more

"The situation is a very serious one", he recently wrote. "I am prevented from being useful...~~and~~ I cannot help but worry about the problem".

"It is not that we object to making sacrifices, because we do not. It is the uselessness of the particular sacrifices that the authorities designate for us", he said. For most assignees, he continued, "assignment to CPS only prevents them from doing work of national or international importance and becomes in effect a punishment for being conscientiously opposed to doing destructive work".

Dr. DeVault is out on bail and awaits trial. His fellow COs at Gormfask are now raising funds to hire a lawyer and defend him in court. They and the newly formed labor union for the men in all CPS, the Civilian Public Service Union, are working to enlist the cooperation of non-pacifist progressives and the labor movement in bringing the whole question of civilian conscription, payless labor camps and vicious waste of valuable manpower to a head. The Workers Defense League is now planning to enroll labor support to request the President, who established the system by executive order, to abandon Civilian Public Service in favor of the more democratic system in use in England and Canada which exempts COs and permits them to serve society as free men.

Progressives and the labor movement can have but one stand on this question. While some men are in chains, the rest of us are not free.

\* \* \*

by MAX M. KAMPELMAN

Can freedom of conscience and war be reconciled?

Many Americans are proud of the fact that during this war, they have been reconciled. Let us look at the facts and see for ourselves.

There are today more than 7,000 young men who are "by reason of religious training and belief" "conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form" and who are, in lieu of service in the armed forces, doing "work of national importance under civilian direction" in scores of work camps and hospitals throughout the United States. They are there because Congress was persuaded, after learning from the bitter experience of the last war when many thousands of conscientious objectors were brutally treated for remaining steadfast to their religious convictions, that the same blot on our democracy would not occur again.

Just how is the conscientious objector being treated during this war?

Unlike England, which provides in many cases for absolute exemption, our Selective Service regulations require the local draft boards to assign every conscientious objector with a 4E classification to a Civilian Public Service camp, usually a former CCC camp, where he works 51 hours a week in forestry or soil conservation.



A number of the men have managed to get "detached service", after serving at least three months in a camp, to mental institutions, where they act as orderlies or to hospitals as "guinea pigs" for medical experiments. The majority, however, are still in work camps, financed and administered by the traditional Peace Churches - the Brethren, Mennonites and Quakers.

Let us look at a typical CPS camp, one administered by the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers).

There are about 150 of us in this camp, belonging to 29 different religious and irreligious denominations. The oldest CO here is past 45, anxiously awaiting his long overdue release from Selective Service which never comes. The youngest camper, oddly, happens to be his nephew, age 18.

We are by occupation farmers, engineers, actors, lawyers, writers, factory workers, professors, physicians, artists, scientists, labor organizers, students, economists, social workers, accountants, storekeepers, ministers who refused to be deferred and accept a 4D classification and Jehovah Witnesses who were denied a 4D classification - and every other occupation in which you will find "typical Americans". We are here because we refused to become part of a machine which demanded that we participate in killing. But aside from that, we are of as many different opinions as we have numbers.

There is the man whose world panacea takes the form of socialism, a la Daniel DeLeon and his argumentative companions who subscribe to socialism, a la Norman Thomas.

There is the "back to the farm" decentralist economist who opposes labor unionism as another form of "bigness" in

economic institutions and his friend in the next bed who answers him drawing from his experiences as a steel worker, head of his shop's union lodge and three years as a student at Yale Law School.

There are the vegetarian atheists and the religious fundamentalists. There is the objector who refuses to set his watch to war time and his work partner who is permitted by "Servants! Obey in all things those who are masters" (Colossians 3:22) to obey any order so long as it does not require him to kill.

Not to be forgotten too is the member of the Church of God who quotes scriptures at the drop of a hat and the Pentecostalist who is perpetually happy because he is "serving the Lord Jesus Christ, my Master"; both of whom look askance at their fellow Negro who enjoys playing pool, discussing vital social issues of the day and denouncing capitalism.

Some think that salvation will come by changing the system, which will then change man. Opposed are those who insist man must first be changed by giving him religious faith before he can create the Utopian State.

There are those who look to the consumers to organize and assume control; others look to the workers. Both actively participate in the affairs of the camp co-op store, operated on Rochdale principles and run completely on the honor system with no clerk, an open cash register and open shelves.

Most of us are consciously bucking a system. We want to help build a better world based on "Peace and Plenty". We want to serve humanity and aid the downtrodden masses wherever they may be and wherever we can best serve, China, India, Africa, Europe.



We want to prepare ourselves to meet the needs of a barren post-war world. Instead, we are experimenting with grasses and trees. Selective Service prefers to have us plant seeds for fear we may plant thoughts.

Early last year, through the intervention of President and Mrs. Roosevelt, the State Department agreed to provide passports and Selective Service agreed to permit a limited number of CPS men to study for and then undertake a foreign relief and reconstruction program, all expenses to be paid by the peace churches themselves. Hundreds of men volunteered, even though it meant spending at least a year after the war abroad and all without wages.

Then, with many in the midst of eager study and a unit already in South Africa en route to China, reactionary poll-taxer Representative Joe Starnes of Alabama, responding to American Legion pressure and anti-Mrs. Roosevelt feeling, suddenly and quietly attached a rider to the 1944 War Department Appropriation Bill which prohibited men in Civilian Public Service from participating in the foreign relief program by providing that no War Department funds could be used for that purpose.

It should be noted here that even though, by statute, the "work of national importance" is to be "under civilian direction", the Selective Service officials in charge of the program are army officers on the payroll of the War Department.

The bill passed with little if any notice of the rider. To date, all attempts to repeal the rider have died in committee.

The disappointment to many of the men was great. They began to ask themselves again whether, by their presence in camp, they were not acquiescing, for the sake of comfort, to the

totalitarianism of war conscription many of them felt they should resist. They wondered whether to remain mute in the face of an increasingly punitive attitude on the part of Selective Service and its army officialdom which insisted that COs had no civilian "rights", only "privileges". And they worried lest their experiences become example for post-war conscription and affect American democratic institutions.

Looking back to 1940, they saw that when the CPS program was first agreed upon by Clarence Dykstra, then civilian head of Selective Service and the pacifist churches, the latter agreed to demonstrate that conscientious objectors were ready, willing and able to serve their country for a year at no cost to the government. They were going to demonstrate to society their sincerity of purpose by rendering great service and by paying their own way in the process, even though many of the COs were not members of the peace churches and had not authorized the churches to speak in their behalf.

The churches, therefore, assumed the complete financial and administrative responsibility of running the CPS camps and, except for two government camps in Colorado and Oregon created recently at the insistence of those who refused to "accept charity" from the church, still have that responsibility.

But service for a year became service "for the duration" plus and conscientious objectors in CPS still receive no wages.

The picture, therefore, shows more than 7,000 Americans, 47% of whom have dependents, all of whom by law have full civilian rights, working at hard labor 51 hours a week for government agencies and on a number of privately owned farms, at no salary, except for a monthly allowance of \$2.50-\$5.00, with a few on

some forms of "detached service" getting as much as \$15 for an allowance to cover their expenses.

Our neighbors, drafted as we were, but serving instead as privates in the armed forces, receive \$50 a month. The CCC boys, our predecessors in many of the camps, received \$1 a day. Even Axis prisoners of war in this country get 80¢ a day. Yet 7,000 Americans are being kept in "involuntary servitude" for remaining true to their conscience.

But the picture isn't complete. It doesn't mention the many conscientious objectors, desperately in need of funds or sorely frustrated due to a system which did not make use of what they had to offer society, who are leaving camp to join the army as non-combatant soldiers. (The U.S. Army has never released the figures showing how many conscientious objectors there are in the army who, like Lew Ayres, the former film star, chose to serve in the medical corps rather than in CPS camps.)

It doesn't show the many hundreds more who walked out of camp and into jail because they came to believe that they were, in effect, actually prisoners in camp with a few more privileges, which they do not deserve, and better company than is ordinarily to be found in jail.

There, they join in person as well as in spirit, their fellow "prisoners of conscience" labelled as criminals by our law because their draft boards, with varying interpretations of "religious", refused to recognize their conscientious objection - a most unfair discrimination in a country which believes in freedom of conscience rather than in the special privilege of certain religious denominations.



In jail too, they find many hundreds of others, recognized by their local draft boards as sincere conscientious objectors, who chose jail rather than camp as their only means of protesting the evils of conscription which violate their humanitarian principles as much as war itself.

And in jail, they again meet up with the same brutalitarian evils of Jim Crow and other forms of racial discrimination boring away at our democratic institutions on the outside. They meet ironclad medieval sadistic disciplinary techniques in many of our federal penitentiaries which stress punishment for the sake of punishment rather than correction.

And they protest.

They cannot cooperate with evil and so with their strong spirit they resist it and any attempts to coerce them into submission. Their only available weapons consistent with their principled dedication to non-violent resistance, when all else fails, are hunger and work strikes. On two separate occasions, to break up racial segregation in the dining hall at the Federal Correctional Institution, Danbury, Connecticut and to end censorship (contra distinction to inspection for police purposes) at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, their efforts were successful. As this article is being written, a third group at the Medical Center of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Springfield, Missouri, have succeeded in revealing to the public eye incredible evidence of savagery and torture of inmates at the prison hospital there. (New York World Telegram, February 9-11, 1944)

In all, our democracy faces the tragic blot in this war of having imprisoned more than 2,000 sincere Americans of deep

libertarian principle, whose only crime was refusing to compromise with their conscience.

Here then, is a clearer picture of conscience in wartime.

Are we still proud?

Have freedom of conscience and war been reconciled?



One of the most significant economic developments of the era is silently and yet solidly appearing on the American scene in the form of the Committee for Economic Development. The CED, formed in 1942 as a postwar planning organization for industry under the chairmanship of President Paul Hoffman of Studebaker Corporation, using a sophisticated and literate approach, has within the past year become the most influential business group in Washington, surpassing in importance the stuffy reactionary National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Specimens of that new approach can be gleaned from the October issue of Fortune, which published the CED's 12-point program for industry in America, written by its vice-chairman William Benton, vice-president of the University of Chicago. It admits the right of labor to bargain collectively, favors a broadening program of social security and even calls for government controls over business and expenditures on public works to prevent inflation and depression.

"Businessmen must rid themselves of hostility to evolution and change in the responsibilities of government in the discharge of its proper function. Without government, business cannot do the job after this war that must be done", says the statement.

Nevertheless, in spite of that different approach, the CED is more of a supplement to than a rival of the NAM and the Chamber.

The CED, having at its disposal millions of dollars, has been attempting to promote economic literacy among businessmen by fostering the formation of several thousand businessmen's post-war planning committees all over the nation and by releasing handsome looking brochures and ingeniously designed charts. The CED claims a membership of 50,000 businessmen in more than 2,000 cities.

Toward its end, it has, with fabulous salaries, attracted from the government and from the universities some of the most prominent economists, many of whom have been associated in the past with progressive economic thinking.

Gardiner Means, formerly of the Bureau of Budget; Howard Meyers, a statistical light in the WPA; Harold Groves, tax expert of the Treasury Dep't and of the University of Wisconsin; and Sumner Slichter of Harvard, are some of the men whom CED now has in its employ.

With a barrage of such talent and through its high powered publicity campaign, it has convinced a number of important people in Washington, according to Labor Press Associates, that business can provide "high level employment" if government will only cultivate a "favorable climate for business". An example of



~~Businessmen's Initiative~~

the sort of "climate" they prefer is their tax program, currently receiving a great deal of attention in Congress, which calls for the gradual elimination of corporation taxes because they impede the incentive of business to provide jobs.

Here lies the danger of the CED. Its program is perfumed "big business" capitalist enterprise dressed up in the latest styles but with the same basic character defects. Under it there must still be unemployment. Behind it are the same business interests which have controlled our economic oligarchy in the past and now, as "New Deal businessmen", control the government which is to do the planning.

It is not strange that the CED is in the main "friendly" to labor, so long as labor "cooperates" with industry, for closely connected with its domestic program are its expansionist schemes for American industry. A basic tenet of its platform is its insistence that the United States must help develop a "world environment providing a maximum opportunity for private enterprise in international trade". The business men are willing to bear a relatively high labor cost if they can make it up through foreign exploitation, the only way American business can expand.

The new form of "liberal private capitalism" which is emerging, therefore, is tending toward a State-regulated economy, with big business controlling the state. This is so even though businessmen oppose government intervention in their domestic affairs, for their expansionist schemes require them to seek the support

of the State in foreign trade and foreign trade cannot exist apart from the economy as a whole. Their happy solution, therefore, is a State which they control.

This development was made clear in a recent speech by one of the "New Deal businessmen" in government, William L. Batt, vice-chairman of the War Production Board and U.S. Representative on the Combined Allied Raw Materials Board. He said: "Whatever may be one's conviction as to the part which government should play in business at home, it seems to me inevitable that the course of development in foreign trade must lean substantially on assistance from agencies of government. For the conduct of our business at home we can make our own rules when and as we want, but we can't make the rules for other countries. Businessmen abroad, when they are trading with us, are likely to have the fullest possible assistance of their governments. It seems to me quite clear that unless American businessmen cooperate with and have the same support from their government, we shall be at a great disadvantage. That calls for the strongest possible organization in those agencies of the United States government which have to do with foreign trade, and a desire on the part of business to work with them".

This trend has already expressed itself in what government and business insist will be our post-war military needs. As a great power, it is said, America will require a "continuing war economy". This means permanent conscription to provide the full employment (as against "high level") which business alone cannot guarantee, strategic sea bases, vital air fields, the control of



raw material supplies and the establishment of basic metal and oil reserves.

Thus there was proposed the Saudi Arabian pipeline scheme, to be financed by the government and operated by Standard Oil; the raw material stockpile scheme of Batt, WPB and the State Department, whereby the government would import vital minerals and metals for stockpile purposes, while shutting down and subsidizing mineral and metal sources at home.

What does ~~and~~ all this mean to America?

It means nurturing the economic germs which bring war.

It means the eventual merger of government and industry into a great "Monopoly State", even if the march toward that merger is punctuated with rallying cries glorifying "free enterprise".

Is this inevitable?

No. Not if out of the 1944 elections there develops the organization of a Progressive-Farmer-Labor Party, somewhat on the lines of the Canadian Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, which will rely on the strength of a developing cooperative movement, an awakening labor movement and those elements in all major and minor political parties whose devotion to democracy leads them to renounce "free enterprise" in favor of "cooperative commonwealth".



OUGHT THE WISEST TO RULE?

The problem of leadership under any form of government and particularly in the complicated society of today may well be, as Plato suggests, to find those of well balanced minds and temperaments with the capacity and disposition to look upon public questions in their intrinsic rather than in their superficial aspects; the wisest, if you will.

To so state the problem, however, does not fully answer the question posed or sufficiently explore its implications.

Granting for the moment the desirability of an affirmative answer to our problem, we have yet to face an auxiliary question: What sort of political organization is likely to bring forth and maintain a following for such a leadership?

A full answer to the problem also requires a clear understanding of the concepts "rule" and "leadership", for it is the thesis of this paper that the wisest ought to rule only if the term is restricted in definition to being synonymous with responsible governmental leadership and devoid of connotations of unbridled authority.

We deal first with the latter point raised. It takes us to the very core of societal organization.

Men, says Plato, are unequal. His notion of political justice and ideal state, therefore, are based upon a true order of inequality as he understands it. His society, consisting of unequal men as it does, will be one of classes.

What is the true order of inequality? There are those with superior minds capable of exercising reason; those, representing the human will, who are most competent as warriors; and those whose activities are on the level of human appetites and who work, farm and engage in trade. Since the universe itself is ruled by reason in that it is ordered, human nature, which is parallel to the nature of the universe, should also be ruled by reason. Reason, therefore, as represented by the wisest, long trained in philosophy, should rule men's affairs and determine their status. The wise philosopher should be king. Next in the order of class superiority are the warriors who will enforce judgments at home and abroad. The workers, farmers and merchants, third class citizens of the ideal state, are to meet the material needs of society. Such is Plato's society!

On analysis, it is apparent even to the least observant among us that men are not alike in many fundamental characteristics. It is a far cry from that observation, however, to presume a condition of natural inequality. The digits 0,1,2,3 and 4 are not alike. Yet different combinations of those digits, such as 0#4, 2#2, 3#1 are all equal.

Plato's first assumption of inequality, therefore, is

not proven to the satisfaction of the writer of this paper. It is understandable that since he is in love with reason and his preferences are shared by the men he most respects, that he should assume that his own estimate of human ability is the true test of superiority. The value, however, remains no more than a personal judgment or preference; one to be weighed by us in the light of human experience and practicality.

Are we to judge the man of intellect superior to the man of brawn. The men of intellect, most of whom read Plato and regard themselves as philosophers worthy of being kings, may think so, but will the men of brawn? Actually, the contributions of both are necessary to the harmonious functioning of society. Both may be said to be equal in their indispensability.

Plato cannot, therefore, prove that a social order of workers, fighters and thinkers are in a natural order of superiority. Certainly he cannot prove to the multitude that skill in reasoning, which they may not have, is more valuable than their own skills in determining the all important question of man's relation to man. What are the precise intellectual and moral standards which distinguish the best philosopher from "inferior" human beings? Men tend to doubt the measurements which are used to assign privilege to others and privation to themselves. The contempt which many a laboring man and business man can muster and express in the pronunciation of the word "professor" is a monument to Plato's naivete.

We are thus brought to the position of declaring that if, as we assume, it is desirable to have the wisest in the community govern, then their position of leadership must be based solely on their capabilities by training to handle a job for the community which demands specialization just as the job of the engineer, and sales clerk require training and specialization. No claims of status or superiority should accompany that division of responsibility. It is further necessary for the harmony of the group that the division be mutually arrived at. Under such an arrangement, the position of the wise man who governs is that of leader in the responsible sense of the term and not that of a ruler in the authoritarian sense of the term. Since his position of leadership is contingent upon the continued assent of the community and it is the community which is most directly concerned with the effect of decisions made, the relationship can be no other.

Such a position is called for, because associated with our criticism above is concern with the effect of Plato's plan on the unity which is required of any society claiming stability. A struggle for existence often requires a faith and Plato supplied Greece, which was struggling to prove its superiority to the will of the inferior northern barbarians and the lower appetites of the Phoenician traders, with such a faith. Yet Plato's doctrine of superiority, like any other, even in its noblest form, is a means of dividing men, setting classes and peoples against one another. A society divided against itself will fall.

It is now possible for us to state our conclusion another way and come thereby face to face with our first question.

Since the leadership of the wise in the community must depend on the consent of those with other qualities if it is to be stable and lasting, we can state that if the wise ought to rule, as Plato suggests, then we had better reject Plato's ideal state of inequality and look for another type of organization as one most likely to bring forth and maintain a following for such leadership.

Our conclusions so far point to democracy as that type of organization. Here we can even introduce a plank in Plato's program which comes to our support. No man, he argues, can attain position in his society by birth, wealth, or marriage and no man can force his way to the top by brute strength.

However undemocratic and authoritarian his doctrine may be in other respects this proposal of Plato's stands as a rebuke to most of the orders of privilege that have disfigured history. Membership in his classes is not fixed. On the contrary, the social order is to be established through an elaborate system of education in which each is given opportunity to show his aptitude for rising from level to level.

This raises two problems. Firstly, if it is essential, as seen, in Plato's scheme to guarantee opportunity for all and thus apparently provide for rotating rulers when those in power outgrow their usefulness, then it is necessary to insure procedure whereby those in power cannot perpetuate themselves in power. The problem is particularly vital in the light of Lord Acton's postulate that power is corrupting, since our rulers, philosophers or no, are but mortals and subject to human corruptibility. Rather than provide for such insurance, Plato's willingness to trust his philosophers with complete power invites violation of the guarantees he considers essential.

Secondly, if education is capable of raising the level of citizens so that they can become wise philosophers and rulers, then isn't that an argument for that type of government which, by training, an outstanding form of education, will develop qualities of leadership, let alone of citizenship and responsibility, among those of the multitude whose potentialities have been untapped? Fitness is developed by actual practice and it is by the exercise of government that the capacity for judgment grows.

The virtues of democracy, therefore, become apparent as the best type of organization to achieve rule by the wisest. Furthermore, since only under democratic government can there be a just correlation between policy, consequences and responsibility with its attendant development of political maturity and wisdom on the part of those who participate in the process, the general level of intelligence is raised and the more likelihood there is that the wise will rule.



In conclusion, it is well to note the ethical implications involved in our discussion of societal organization. Plato's appeal is to the beauty of order, but underneath that order there is a brutality. This same beauty, based on order, often delights us in romantic accounts of the Old South, or in stories of the ancienne noblesse, or in novels based on medieval and feudal pomp and circumstance. As we drift in fancy from plantation to manor house, through castle halls and stately ceremonies, or feast with philosophers and artists, it is convenient for us not to be concerned with the cost of that apparent beauty to men long dead. We choose our own place at the top in the pleasant company of knights, kings and gentlemen. The lowly whom we do meet in our fancy are quaint and humorous, loyal and devoted. They know their place and don't challenge the standards which determine it.

But the fancy is far from reality. Inequality is inequality whether it is garnished with talk of beauty and order, presented in the crude form of feudal society, or embellished with the phraseology of modern totalitarians who consider all men to be equal only some men more equal than others (Orwell).

A society based on inequality is not beautiful.

LINCOLN STEPPENS - AN OPINION

by  
Max M. Kampelman

University of Minnesota  
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT  
SPRING, 1948.



### LINCOLN STEFFENS - AN OPINION

There is much that is vain in Lincoln Steffens. There is much that is keenly analytical. There is much that is exaggerated oversimplification.

Lincoln Steffens was not a profound thinker. It would appear that he read little of the great works. He wrote with authority on political problems of his day and expertly expressed opinions on matters of economics, though he had not adequately disciplined or exposed his mind to the economic and political critiques of the great thinkers who had preceded him.

But he was an important man. His works reached millions. His pioneering influenced opinions. He was a product of his day and though we may be critical of that product, our criticism must be mellowed by our admitted inability to project ourselves into the environment that was his.

It is, therefore, of interest, for an evaluation of the day, to find out what Lincoln Steffens learned from his experiences. His muckraking had failed to change the world, but had succeeded in changing his views of society. Thus he did not live in vain. It was no longer the underworld, bad politicians; it was his fault and my fault, "our thinking about it". Herbert Hoover's election was "a triumph of corruption", but there was no use railing at the big business interests behind it. The president was not corrupt; you, I were. Corruption was no more an isolated disease in need of a cure; it was now a sore, evidence of a root virus and a natural phenomenon in its setting. (p.862)

Strange for Steffens to have come to this view? No. He was a reformer who had come to see the shortcomings of his efforts and the need for basic changes in the structure of society. The environment was at the root of evil; the economic drives that led men to act as they did. Man was selfish; too much interested in privilege for himself. The petty privileges preferred by each of us were symptomatic of and indeed strengthened the larger pattern which enslaved us to bad government and a sick society. The economic system

induced that behavior. Those who accepted the system must accept the attendant evils. Those who would deal with the evils must deal with the system.

And just as he had earlier embraced the reform movement as the beneficiary of his energies, so now did he as completely reject reform and accept reconstruction as the "cure-all". In fact, so wholeheartedly did he possess the view that he lost all sense of discrimination. His extremism put him in the unenviable position of looking at Mussolini and ignoring the ruthlessness of his ways as he saw a man of action with "the will and the way to do something" (p.819) Hence his praise of the Soviet Union, not for being right but for being ready. (p.762)

We can well ask where are Steffens' values? He spent many months and much money searching the universities of Europe "for a science of behavior" and yet he found no ethic. All he asked was whether it worked.

Perhaps that should be excused. Steffens became an economic determinist. He now knew the answer and it was new; certainly it was alien to his surroundings. But aside from the fact that he always seemed to know "the" answer, did he deserve credit for his discovery? Beard's lectures and writings had pointed the way in the early part of the century and Marxists had begun their active agitation in this country at the end of the last century.

Where was Steffens? All that can be said is that he heard but did not understand. When it finally did come to impress itself upon his being, he was incapable of relating his past and the values of his day to new facts.

His position, therefore, was not a clear one - not well considered. Granting, as we should, the premises that the root virus must be dealt with, we search in vain for an adequate coping with the vital and collateral question: "What road to reconstruction?".



It is not clear, first of all, what we reconstruct toward. The value seems to be lacking. Rather there seems to be a faith that reconstruction is desirable for its own sake. But the experience of the past decade permits the modern reader to recall that reconstruction can lead to deterioration. We can thus be critical of his praise of Italy and his acceptance of the belief that business control of government would bring us to the same desired ends sought by the Soviet regime. (p.872)

Neither did the problem of means and ends trouble him, and again we benefit from the experience of the past decade. He skeptically asks: "is democracy the way to democracy?" (p.818) and his comments on the Russian revolution reveal his doubts. Bela Kun's experience in Hungary proves to him the worth of "red terror" in revolution. (p.805)

But there is no indication that such terror is needed to reconstruct the American society. Nor can we be certain that it is not. He comes to see "that it was useless - it was almost wrong - to fight for the right under our system" (p.802). The system must be changed. But how?

Is it to be by revolution? Apparently not, for that requires illiteracy and unorganized labor (p.743). Is it to be gradual? If so, Steffens hinders the desired reconstruction when he says it is almost wrong to fight for right and when he scoffs at all efforts at reform. Or does he believe that it will come through trust mergers, bribery and corruption?(p.829)

If so, then Steffens indeed, like Burke, is crying "Deus vult" and we have a clue to his philosophy. There is no clear statement of that extreme, however, and we are left to wonder whether his determinism brought him so far along that he rejects the element of human choice as a determinant factor and is satisfied that there is nothing wrong with the world but our thinking about it.

At only one other point does he seem to suggest another escape from his dilemma. At the Darrow trial, he says: "I believe that nothing but love will do the job. That's Christianity. That's the teaching that we must love our neighbors" and he finds that his attempt at applied ethics works (p.700).

The apparent confusion would not be so evident were Steffens merely a reporter of events. He assumes the onus of being more, however. He comments and advocates. His statement that "...heaven and hell are one place, and we all go there. To those who are prepared, it is heaven; to those who are not fit and ready, it is hell" (p.799) could well be understood as the cynical analysis of a reporter examining the wave of the future in terms of the Soviet Revolution, Italian Fascism and the growth of industrial might in the U.S. But Steffens becomes a champion of that heaven and thus becomes vulnerable to the criticism that follows, and to that which preceded.

With this hasty analysis, let us turn next to a very brief tracing of the factors that led Steffens to the conclusions expressed in his autobiography.

Steffens held himself in high regard. It is that which makes an objective examination of his views so difficult. Is his role exaggerated? Doesn't he seem to judge events by the part he played in them? If so, how valid are his observations.

Witness his reported conversations with Gene Debs on the Russian Revolution; his relations with Filene, Roosevelt, the Mexican revolutionists.

The lesson on civil liberties taught to Colonel Woods and the New York police give the impression that he, "Lincoln Steffens, discovered the rationale of civil liberties. Perhaps it was a discovery to him. But Milton's 17th century Areopagitica and John Stuart Mill's Essay on Liberty deserve some credit.

This egocentricity was evident in the selfishness of Steffens' early life. It was also evident in the dime novel dramatization of early incidents - his experience of prayer at Mrs. Neely's illness with its anti-climax; the



colt, sold and later seen driving a wagon; the repentance of Duke the cowboy; the suicide of the American gambler in Germany. And the egocentricity continued,

In his early life too there is the admiration for the men of action rather than intellect. He believed the word "not of all men, but of 'bad' politicians like Charlie Procter" (p.15). The others promised him gifts and then failed to produce, just as later reformers failed to live up to their promises and men like Byrnes, James Dill and Richard Croker proved themselves to be likeable.

There was furthermore a disillusionment in those days produced by his disappointment in people, his horse racing experience and his days at the legislature. "Nothing was what it was supposed to be". (p.47)

He, therefore, early sought "to adjust the difference between what was and what seemed to be. There was something wrong somewhere, and I could not get it right". The rest of his life, there is implied, was spent in that quest and it took him through his first muckraking experience in military school, his observation that war was stupid, his personal transition in San Francisco from play acting to concern with an outside world, his dilettantish college excursions and his search for the cause and cure of city corruption.

This period is significant too because of two significant ideas that possessed him. They are particularly significant, because, written as they were during his later life, though attributed to his youth, they may very well express his final views.

First, is the conclusion he reaches "tentative but emancipating, that men ... were and always had been mostly ignorant fools whom a boy, even a little fool like me, need not look up to" (p.108). Is that a clue to his skeptical attitude toward democracy, his admiration for elitists?

Second, is his continued reference to the fact that the scholars and intellectuals, with all their knowledge, "knew no essential truth". He tried to find out, but none of his professors could agree on knowledge or on good



and evil.

Is that an apology for the missing ethic and set of values, for his not preoccupying himself with the problem? He could not find an answer - and by God, neither could anybody else - professor, socialist, anarchist, reformer. Action was the substitute for ethic.

At another point, he says: "Ethics are professional; they differ in different occupations; and an ethical practitioner, formed and fitted in one profession, trade, or business, is apt to be disqualified thereby for another occupation morally as well as technically" (p.328). This is based on an idea he develops that "morals are matters of trade and profession and form the ethics they are supposed to be formed by" (p.180).

True? Perhaps. But only as a half-truth and not a satisfactory explanation of his predicament. Can we be certain that he even thought about the problem once he lost himself in the excitement and fame of newspaper work. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that he could but note ideas and pass on. "There was no time to think. Newsmongering calls for action, not reflection" (p.328).

Steffens' admiration for men of action, therefore, rather than for those concerned with ethics and principle in behaviorism strike one as perhaps being another manifestation of his egocentricity. He had been a man of action too so it must be that men of action will provide the solution to the ills of society.

He would die believing that his life had been worth living.

Much of this analysis has been critical, hypercritical. Just as Mr. Steffens discovered the importance of environment, however, so must it be understood that the critic is the product of an environment too as is his criticism. We have alluded already to the advantages in a perspective of a decade and to the almost impossible job of objective projection into the past.

Lincoln Steffens was on a level with his time, with his contemporaries. Much of what he said then we now accept for granted. Our vantage point, therefore, leads us to a perspective which tends to point up the glaring inconsistencies and confusions of his thinking and of the era that produced him. We have the advantage too of knowing about some of his contemporaries who were far ahead of their day in their thinking and philosophy and he does not come off best in the comparison.

Steffens caught a glimpse of truth. "reform is not enough. Reconstruction is basic. Economics and privilege are at the bottom of much that is wrong. Man and society are products of an environment and one does not have free choice. But, unlike men like Beard, he rushed where wise men hesitate. Without adequate contemplation or study, he embraced the partial truth as a whole truth and leaves us unimpressed.

In only one strain of his experience does Steffens provide us today with a profound challenge. We have referred to his applied religion during the McNamara and Darrow trials. On one other occasion is he visibly shaken - his experience with the Milwaukee Socialists.

They had, he said, a religious faith, a vision of a better world which made them unpurchaseable. "Christianity, unpreached and untaught and unlearned among the righteous, works wonders still among the sinners" (p.526).

It is unfortunate that Steffens was too busy to pursue, understand and apply the basis of that ethic to the problems of his day. He might have made a new discovery - an ethic which has not failed, but rather one which has not been tried at all. We might then today be grateful rather than critical.

Max M. Kampelman



The Act of Surrender has spelled the end of militarism in Japanese history. An epoch is at an end. Japan's bid for mastery of the Far East has been broken and she has been forced to accept the complete capitulation of her armies and to withdraw into her four over-populated islands. The world can now breathe easier.

But is our problem in Asia at an end? Is there any guarantee that Japanese militarism will not again rise? What government are the United Nations now planning for Asia? In brief, are there elements in Japan, sufficiently devoted to democratic ideals, whom we can trust to restore Japan to the ranks of sanity?

Since it is clear that the occupation forces will have to rely on the use of Japanese officials and institutions, it is interesting to note that emerging into the limelight from twenty years of persecution to become one of the key figures in the beaten empire's struggle toward democracy and a place in the world's family of nations is the frail, short, bespectacled Toyohiko Kagawa, internationally known pacifist in a land of militarists, devout Christian in a land of Emperor-worship.



In a pointed letter to the Associated Press obviously designed to convince America of his cooperative intentions, Premier Prince Naruhiko Higashi-Kuni revealed that he had asked the noted Japanese Christian leader for help "to raise moral standards, do away with the hatreds and establish friendly relations with the United States and other countries". As part of that program, Mr. Kagawa was requested to launch a series of radio broadcasts to preach "moral regeneration" to Japan's millions.

Commenting on that letter, a Tokyo dispatch to The New York Times, stating that he "already is an important and influential man", further observed: "It is understood that General Douglas MacArthur's foremost advisers also are counting heavily on Mr. Kagawa as one of a number of prominent 'patriotic liberals', through whom the occupation army hopes to obtain the impetus for building a democratic Japan".

All this would seem to indicate, therefore, that there are elements in Japan whom we can trust. Further, the choice of a Christian lends credence to the fact that belief in the divinity of the Emperor and in the doctrine of State Shinto is by no means universal in Japan.

Reports from our representatives in Japan state that apart from the big industrialists and the high Army leaders, who regard the myth as a convenient propaganda line, most of those educated at Japanese universities in the period of relative freedom up until the Army took over in 1931 developed Liberal or Communist tendencies and were agnostic about the Emperor. In addition, industrialism, which had experienced rapid growth, had the effect of undermining the divinity myth among the workers; and the peasant alone, laden with poverty and making up the

mass of the population, kept his strong faith in the Emperor's sacred character.

Obviously, however, democratic government will not be easy to foster in Japan. In spite of the heroic pre-war efforts made by Mr. Kagawa and a small handful of other democratic devotees who braved intimidations and persecutions to build cooperatives and trade unions in the 1920's and 1930's, there is no political tradition of democracy and there are not many voluntary associations in which Japanese citizens had the opportunity to learn even the rudiments of self-government and democratic procedures.

Nevertheless, these democratic devotees will be able to rely on the tradition that for 1350 years Japan waged no foreign war. From A.D. 250-1850, Japan fought only one foreign war, that with Korea at the end of the 16th century.

And it was not without a virtual revolution that the Army was able in 1931 to gain control of the government and begin the invasion of Manchuria. In 1931, they killed the Prime Minister, Hamaguchi, because he signed the London Naval Treaty. In 1932, they murdered Prime Minister Inukai, thus putting an end to party government. In 1936, their biggest coup, three members of the Imperial Household Ministry, potential rivals, were killed or wounded. It was also the Army which made Tojo, up until then a relatively obscure figure, Prime Minister in November 1941.

Does any of the anti-militarist spirit remain in Japan? Has the military succeeded in the past ten years to destroy all signs of opposition? These questions are difficult to answer. Rigid censorship and

ruthless totalitarian controls have prevented us from obtaining access to what actually has been taking place within Japan.

What we have been able to learn, however, through bits of news items which have seeped through and from reports which are now being unearthed, is not only very interesting, but indicates that there may be more of a democratic peace-loving potential in Japan than many of us thought possible.

From British observers returning from the Far East, for example, we have learned, according to Worldover Press, that the number of Japanese subjects confined in concentration camps inside Japan for offenses against the war or the regime exceeded 20,000.

U.S. troops who occupied the Aleutianx island of Kiska, according to the United Press, found a Japanese pamphlet which indicated the existence of an underground movement in Japan desirous of peace. The pamphlet charged Japanese militarists with treason and "blindness" and quoted poetry purportedly written by Emperor Hirohito in favor of world peace.

In May of this year too, the London Daily Express reported that Prince Yauhito Chichibu, "pacifist brother" of the Japanese Emperor was released after two years "honorable preventative detention".

Of particular significance, however, is material released by Allied Labor News on the basis of prisoner of war studies made by the Japanese Anti-War League in China, a group about which little is known but which was reportedly formed and led by Japanese political and



labor exiles in China and operates with the support of the Communists and approval of the Kuomintang.

Their picture is one of intolerable working conditions, labor conscription and soaring cost of living leading to the pauperizing of already impoverished workers, strikes, mass arrests and a growing anti-war feeling.

The strikes reached their climax when it became apparent that the "Chinese incident" would not be settled in short order and that Japan was facing a long war.

Little has been learned hitherto about the strikes of 1941, the report continues, because of the censorship, but they began with economic demands and quickly acquired a political anti-war character. The first strike was at Kobe in April 1941 and embraced more than 100,000 workers, a large part of the factory force in the city. It included all the men of the large Kawasaki shipyard at the Kobe factories of the Mitsubishi trust.

The direct cause was dissatisfaction with the food rations. Under the new system brought into force that year, each worker was entitled to 2.7 "go" of rice (a "go" is .16 of a dry quart), but because of the shortage, they got 15% less. At the same time, the work day was increased from 12 to 16 hours.

The workers organized a sit down strike, shouted anti-war slogans and began systematic sabotage of machinery at the dockyards. Fearing the spread of the strike, the government ordered troops into Kobe and smashed the strike arresting 20,000 workers for questioning

and exiling and shooting many of the ringleaders.

A few months later, in August, another large scale strike broke out at Nagoya, involving, among other factories, the Mikubishi aircraft plant producing the famous zero plane. The strike involved more than 20,000 workers and sabotage was also one of its main characteristics. It was settled by partial concessions to the workers, but after they came back to their benches, many arrests took place.

In September of the same year, the workers of the War Ministry Ordnance plant at Kokura also went out on strike. This involved only 3,000 of the 60,000 in the plant, however, and the War Ministry, the report continues, realizing its speedup policies were hindering rather than helping production, settled the grievances and there were no reprisals.

The last big strike before Pearl Harbor took place in October at Tsurumi, a town between Tokyo and Yokohama, in which most of the heavy industry of the Tokyo district is centered. More than 20,000 workers took part, but again the strike was broken and reprisals followed.

Finally, evidence that Pearl Harbor did not completely stop dissatisfaction may be gathered from the fact that even local officials of Japan's fascist party, the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, at the national convention of the organization in the Spring of 1943 declared:

"The feelings of the Japanese people toward cooperation in winning the war is weakening. Is not the working class the only group that makes sacrifices, while the people on top do nothing and make money?"

What of the future?

The military party has now lost face and is associated in Japanese minds with the disgrace and dishonor which has befallen their country.

Force, however, must be replaced by "education" if peace in the Far East is to be long-lived. One of the first steps, therefore, is for us to make genuine efforts to alleviate Japan's legitimate grievances.

The Atlantic Charter must be applied to the Pacific. Racial prejudice on our part must be eliminated. On the outcome of this clash of ideals depends the ultimate peace of the Far East.

If Japan can be shown not merely negatively that a solution sought by military might does not pay, but that positively there is a way out along pacific lines in cooperation with a West which admits the reality of her problems and shows a sympathetic determination to help solve them, then there is no reason why the democratic devotees in Japan cannot lead their country into the family of nations and become a factor for peace in the Far East.

As far back as June 1935, Kanju Kato, then chairman of the General Council of Trade Unions of Japan, came to this country and warned us of the coming danger of war.



Although the Japanese labor movement, he said, was a peace movement, workers were being sucked into the military drive of the "ruling capitalist class" under the guise of patriotism. "They are pushing war preparation in spite of all we can do", he continued. "The war spirit has been inspired by imperialists and is being carefully nourished by them. Unless checked, it will lead to war and both your country and mine will be drawn into it".

He pleaded for cooperation and understanding between the labor, cooperative and other democratic elements in Japan and the liberal democratic movements in America as the only way to avert war.

Now, ten years later, there is still time for us to heed Mr. Kato's plea and save our children and his from future slaughters.