

Fabian Tract No. 108.

**TWENTIETH CENTURY  
POLITICS :**

**A POLICY OF NATIONAL EFFICIENCY.**

By **SIDNEY WEBB, L.C.C.**

PUBLISHED AND SOLD BY

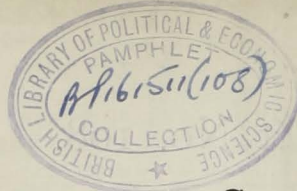
**THE FABIAN SOCIETY.**

**PRICE ONE PENNY**

LONDON :

**THE FABIAN SOCIETY, 3 CLEMENT'S INN, STRAND, W.C.**

NOVEMBER 1901.



## TWENTIETH CENTURY POLITICS.\*

It is not altogether an idle fancy that associates the change of century with a change of thought. The governing ideas to which we look forward, at the beginning of the twentieth century, will, we may be sure, not be those on which we looked back at the close of the nineteenth.

What is going to be the dominant note of Twentieth Century Politics? Certainly, I venture to assert, not the note of Nineteenth Century Liberalism or Conservatism.

What then is the matter with Liberalism? For fifty years, in the middle of the last century, we may recognize it as "a great instrument of progress," wrenching away the shackles—political, fiscal, legal, theological and social—that hindered individual advancement. The shackles are by no means wholly got rid of, but the political force of this old Liberalism is spent. During the last twenty years its aspirations and its watchwords, its ideas of daily life and its conceptions of the universe, have become increasingly distasteful to the ordinary citizen as he renews his youth from generation to generation. Its worship of individual liberty evokes no enthusiasm. Its reliance on "freedom of contract" and "supply and demand," with its corresponding "voluntaryism" in religion and philanthropy, now seems to work out disastrously for the masses, who are too poor to have what the economists call an "effective demand" for even the minimum conditions of physical and mental health necessary to national well-being. Of all this the rising generations of voters are deadly tired, and Liberalism has collapsed in consequence.

### The Decline of Liberalism.

I am aware that it is an amiable delusion of many good Liberals that the collapse of their party is due merely to recent, temporary causes—to the South African war, to personal quarrels among the leaders or to the Home Rule Bill. But the smashing defeat of 1895 was only the culmination of a steady alienation from Liberalism of the great centres of population, which began to be visible even in 1874. London and Lancashire have ever since persisted in this adverse verdict. The most startling feature of the election of 1885—still prior to the Home Rule Bill—was the extent to which Liberalism was rejected by the boroughs. All that has happened since that date has but confirmed the great centres of population in their positive aversion to Gladstonianism. This, and not the ephemeral dispute about the war, is the bottom fact of the political situation. Thirty years ago the great boroughs were enthusiastic for Liberalism. By an uninterrupted process of conversion they have now become

\* A lecture to the Fabian Society, November 8th, 1901. Much of this lecture appeared, under another title, in the *Nineteenth Century*, September, 1901, and is here reproduced by permission of the Editor.

flatly opposed to it. The fact that to-day the Conservative Party finds its chief strongholds, not in the lethargic and stationary rural counties, drained of their young men, but in the intellectually active and rapidly growing life of the towns (containing two-thirds of the nation), proves that the Liberalism of Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley does not express the Progressive instinct of the twentieth century. It held that position for so large a part of the last century that it came to believe that it held it by natural right. How is it that it has now lost it?

### A New England.

The answer is that, during the last twenty or thirty years, we have become a new people. "Early Victorian" England now lies, in effect, centuries behind us. Such things do happen. The processes which make one generation differ from another operate sometimes slowly and imperceptibly, sometimes quickly and even suddenly. At one period centuries may pass without any discoverable difference in the mind or character of a nation. At another new ideas are precipitated and new parties crystallized almost before the old parliamentary hands have time to prove their visionariness. Such an epoch of transformation we now recognize, to cite only one instance, in the reign of Elizabeth. We note, within a single generation, a distinct change in the content of men's minds. Their standpoints are shifted. Their horizons are suddenly enlarged. Their whole way of considering things is altered, and lo! a new England. In the same sense, the historian of the future will recognize, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the birth of another new England. Elizabethan England changed because Englishmen became aware of new relationships. They saw themselves linked on, almost suddenly, with the past in classic antiquity, and with the future in America. The England of this generation is changing because Englishmen have had revealed to them another new world of relationships, of which they were before unconscious. This time it is not a new continent that the ordinary man has discovered, but a new category. We have become aware, almost in a flash, that we are not merely individuals, but members of a community, nay, citizens of the world. This new self-consciousness is no mere intellectual fancy, but a hard fact that comes home to us in our daily life. The laborer in the slum-tenement, competing for employment at the factory gate, has become conscious that his comfort and progress depend, not wholly or mainly on himself, or on any other individual, but upon the proper organization of his Trade Union and the activity of the factory inspector. The shopkeeper or the manufacturer sees his prosperity wax or wane, his own industry and sagacity remaining the same, according to the good government of his city, the efficiency with which his nation is organized, and the influence which his Empire is able to exercise in the councils, and consequently in the commerce, of the world.

### "Thinking in Communities."

Hence the ordinary elector, be he workman or manufacturer, shopkeeper or merchant, has lost his interest in individual "rights," or abstract "equality," political or religious. The freedom that he now

wants is not individual but corporate freedom—freedom for his Trade Union to bargain collectively, freedom for his co-operative society to buy and sell and manufacture, freedom for his municipality to supply all the common needs of the town, freedom, above all, from the narrow insularity which keeps his nation backing, “on principle,” out of its proper place in the comity of the world. In short, the opening of the twentieth century finds us all, to the dismay of the old-fashioned Individualist, “thinking in communities.”

Now the trouble with what I venture to call nineteenth century Liberalism is that, by instinct, by tradition, and by the positive precepts of its past exponents, it “thinks in individuals.” It visualizes the world as a world of independent Roundheads, with separate ends, and abstract rights to pursue those ends. We see old-fashioned Liberals, for instance, still hankering after the disestablishment and disendowment of all State Churches, on the plea of religious equality; meaning that it is unfair to give any public money or public advantage to any denomination from which any individual taxpayer dissents. But if it be so, all corporate action is unfair. We are all dissenters from some part or another of the action of the communities of which we are members. How far the maintenance of a State church really makes for national well-being—how otherwise than by national establishment and public endowment we can secure, in every parish, whether it cares and can afford to pay for it or not, the presence of a teacher of morality and an exponent of higher intellectual and social life—is a matter for careful investigation. But the notion that there is anything inherently wrong in compelling all citizens to help to maintain religious observances or religious instruction of which some of them individually disapprove, is part of the characteristically Whig conception of the citizen's contribution to the expenses of the social organization, as a bill paid by a private man for certain specific commodities which he has ordered and purchased for his own use. On this conception the Quaker is robbed when his taxes are spent on the Army and Navy; the Protestant is outraged by seeing his contributions help to support a Roman Catholic school or university; the teetotaler is wronged at having to provide the naval ration of rum. Nineteenth century Liberalism was, in fact, axiomatically hostile to the State. It is not “little Englandism” that is the matter with those who still cling to such views; it is, as Huxley and Matthew Arnold correctly diagnosed, administrative Nihilism. So far as political action is concerned they tend to be inveterately negative, instinctively iconoclastic. They have hung up temperance reform and educational reform for a quarter of a century, because, instead of seeking to enable the citizen to refresh himself without being poisoned or inebriated,\* and to get the children thoroughly taught, they have wanted primarily to revenge their outraged temperance principles on the publican and their outraged Nonconformist principles on the Church. Of such Liberals it may be said that the destructive revolutionary tradition is in their bones; they will reform nothing unless it can be done at the expense of their enemies. Moral superiority, virtuous indignation, are necessities of

\* See Fabian Tracts, No. 85, “Liquor Licensing at Home and Abroad,” by E. R. Pease, and No. 86, “Municipal Drink Traffic.”

political life to them; a Liberal reform is never simply a social means to a social end, but a campaign of Good against Evil. Their conception of freedom means only breaking somebody's bonds asunder. When the "higher freedom" of corporate life is in question, they become angrily reactionary, and denounce and obstruct the most obvious developments of common action as "infringements of individual liberty," "municipal trading," or—dreaded of all words—"bureaucracy." They feel no desire to promote the greatest possible development of municipal activity, the most comprehensive extension of the Factory Acts, or the fullest utilization of the Government departments in the service of the public. They quite honestly consider such aims to be mischievous. They are aiming at something else, namely, at the abstract right of the individual to lead exactly the kind of life that he likes (and can pay for), unpenalized by any taxation for purposes of which he individually disapproves. They are, in fact, still "thinking in individuals."

#### Liberalism and the Empire.

This same atomic conception of society, transferred from the State at home to the British Empire as a whole, lay at the root of much of the feeling of nineteenth century Liberalism with regard to foreign and colonial policy, and may even be detected coloring the fervid propaganda of Irish "Home Rule." Twentieth Century Politics will be based, it appears to me, not on abstract rights of "nationalities," but on the concrete administrative necessities of definitely organized commonwealths; not on racial autonomy whatever the geography—an obsolete tribal notion which would give us an empire of the Jews—but on territorial democracy, whatever the mixture of race. Exactly what geographical areas will best serve as administrative units, and exactly what degree of local self-government each grade in the hierarchy of units will enjoy, is a difficult problem in political science, towards the solution of which the nineteenth century has contributed little. Meanwhile, Twentieth Century Politics for this country will certainly assume the maintenance, as against all external aggression, of that great commonwealth of peoples styled the British Empire\*, including within itself members of all races, of all human colors, and nearly all languages and religions. We, at any rate, are precluded from assuming or admitting that any distinct "nationality," just because it imagines itself to have ends which differ from, and, perhaps, conflict with, the common interests of the Empire as a whole, has, therefore, an abstract right to organize an independent government and pursue those ends at whatever cost to its colleagues or neighbors. The abstract right to unfettered freedom in self-government, which we all see that we must deny to the individual†, cannot be accorded to the family, the tribe, the race, the parish, the city, the county, the province, or the state. Our obvious duty with the British Empire is, not to "run" it for our own profit, or with any idea of imposing Anglo-Saxondom on a reluctant world, but to put our best brains

\* See *Fabianism and the Empire* (Grant Richards, London, 1900, 1s.).

† See Fabian Tract No. 45, "The Impossibilities of Anarchism," by Bernard Shaw.

into the task of so organizing it as (consistently with the paramount aim of its maintenance as a whole) to promote the maximum individual development of each geographical unit within its bounds. And as with the factory or the slum at home, it is clear that this maximum of individual development will not be secured by allowing each unit to pursue its own ends without reference to the welfare of the whole. The central idea of the old Liberalism, hostile as it was to the development of the State within these isles, was therefore naturally unsympathetic to the deliberate organization of the Empire over sea.

### Conservatives as Caretakers.

Has then the nation become Conservative? Not in the least. The pleasantly portly young gentlemen of no occupation, the portly manufacturers and the estimable country squires who sit on the Conservative benches, as every one who knows them personally will admit, no more share the feelings of the new England of the town electorate than does Sir William Harcourt. Far from having learnt to "think in communities," there is no satisfactory evidence of their having, in politics, learnt to think at all. Their very triumph is not their own. They are elected, not in order to put Conservatism into power, but in order to keep Gladstonianism out. Two advantages, indeed, they have, which make their election possible. The modern Conservative candidate is politically a man without prejudices. No abstract principle forbids him to listen sympathetically to any proposal for reform. Hence he seems on the platform less belated than the nineteenth century Liberal, with his stock of shop-soiled principles at full price. And, most useful of all at the present juncture, the modern Conservative, unlike the Gladstonian Liberal, is quite happy and ungrudging in paying out the Imperialist commonplaces which convey to a constituency a stimulatingly blustering impression that he is conscious of the British Empire as a whole. Into this blustering impression the enthusiastic voter is allowed to read as much consciousness as he himself has attained to of Imperial rights, duties and interests in the sphere of world politics. This, however, is mere hustings manner. Conservative cabinets at work, like Conservative members in the House of Commons, show themselves no more in accord with the new England of the twentieth century than do the Liberals. When the question is one of making any more effective use of the State departments, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach is as old-fashioned as Sir William Harcourt. As to our Presidents of the Local Government Board, they are about as much at home in twentieth-century municipal affairs as King James the First would be in a modern trade arbitration. Whether they are called Fowler, Chaplin, or Long, makes no difference that is discoverable by the provincial town clerks or the chairmen of the committees of the London County Council; all alike are impenitent decriers of the magnificent social structure that is rising all over the country, ignorant of their duties, missing their great opportunities, and naturally hostile to any extension of the local government activity which has already far outgrown their knowledge and capacity. In the efficiency of the War Office and Admiralty, the

elector has, to put it as moderately as possible, no more confidence to-day than he had in the nineteenth century. It may be an injustice to meritorious ministers in humbler station, but there is every reason to believe that the British public takes Lord Salisbury as the type of his own Government. Now Lord Salisbury simply does not believe in the possibility of improvement in human affairs—a view which is rather the philosophy of an independent income and a peerage than of the mass of electors existing in obviously improvable circumstances.

### The Party of National Efficiency.

It appears, then, that without some new grouping of the electorate, without the inspiration of some new thought, no virile and fecund Opposition, let alone an alternative Government, is conceivable. No front Opposition Bench can be really effective—still less can it cross the floor of the House of Commons—unless it expresses, not alone the views of its own political partisans, but also the inarticulate criticism of the mass of the community. Outside the narrow ranks of the “political workers” of either party, the millions of citizens are quietly pursuing their ordinary business—weavers at the loom, mechanics at the lathe, teachers in the schools, ministers of religion toiling in the slums of our cities, doctors going their rounds, manufacturers at their mills, merchants and bankers journeying daily to their offices, patient investigators working out scientific problems, public-spirited men and women struggling “*gegen die Dummheit*” on Town Councils and School Boards. It is these men’s judgments on public affairs, these men’s impressions and aspirations, which, in the England of to-day, give force and backing to the words of statesmen. And if now we inquire what it is that comes into these men’s minds when they read their newspapers, when they, in their particular callings, impinge on some corner of public administration, or when, in their own lives, some public disaster comes home to them, there is but one answer. They are not thinking of Liberalism or Conservatism or Socialism. What is in their minds is a burning feeling of shame at the “failure” of England—shame for the lack of capacity of its governors, shame for the inability of Parliament to get through even its routine business, shame for the absence of grip and resourcefulness of our statesmen, shame for the pompous inefficiency of every branch of our public administration, shame for the slackness of our merchants and traders that transfers our commercial supremacy to the United States, shame for the supineness which looks on unmoved at the continued degradation of our race by drunkenness and gambling, slum life, and all the horrors of the sweated trades, as rampant to-day in all our great centres of population as they were when officially revealed fifteen years ago. This sense of shame has yet to be transmuted into political action. The country is ripe for a domestic programme, which shall breathe new life into the administrative dry bones of our public offices. The party and the statesmen whom these men will support, the leaders for whom they are hungering, are those who shall convince them that above all other considerations they stand for a policy of National Efficiency.

### The Abolition of Sweating.

For such a policy of National Efficiency, there can be no other starting-point than the condition of the people. To-day, in the United Kingdom, there are, Sir Robert Giffen tells us, not fewer than eight millions of persons, one-fifth of the whole population, existing under conditions represented by a family income of less than a pound a week, and constituting not merely a disgrace, but a positive danger to our civilization. These are the victims of "sweating" in one or other of its forms, condemned, as the House of Lords' Committee emphatically declared, to "earnings barely sufficient to sustain existence; hours of labor such as to make the lives of the workers periods of almost ceaseless toil; sanitary conditions injurious to the health of the persons employed and dangerous to the public."

The first and most indispensable step towards National Efficiency is the healing of the open sore by which this industrial parasitism is draining away the vitality of the race. There is no doubt about the remedy, no uncertainty among those who have really worked at the problem. We have passed through the experimental stage of factory legislation, and we now know that it is no mere coincidence that these eight millions of persons correspond almost precisely with the sections from whom we have hitherto withheld the effective protection of the Factory Acts. The statesman who is really inspired by the idea of National Efficiency will stump the country in favor of a "National Minimum" standard of life, below which no employer in any trade in any part of the kingdom shall be allowed to descend.

### The National Minimum.

He will elaborate this minimum of humane order—already admitted in principle in a hundred Acts of Parliament—with all the force that eloquence can give to economic science, into a new industrial charter, imperatively required, not merely or even mainly for the comfort of the workers, but absolutely for the success of our industry in competition with the world. With the widespread support which this policy would secure—not only from the whole Trade Union world and the two millions of organized co-operators, but also from ministers of religion of all denominations, doctors and nurses, sanitary officers and teachers, Poor Law administrators and modern economists, and even the enlightened employers themselves—he would be able to expand our uneven and incomplete Factory Acts into a systematic and all-embracing code, prescribing for every manual worker employed a minimum of education, sanitation, leisure and wages, as the inviolable starting-point of industrial competition\*.

### Housing the People.

But factory legislation alone, however effective and complete, can secure a "moral and material minimum" only so far as the

\* For a complete exposition of this policy, in which are discussed all difficulties, see *Industrial Democracy*, by S. and B. Webb (Longmans, London, 1898); or, more briefly, *The Case for the Factory Acts*, with preface by Mrs. Humphry Ward (Grant Richards, London, 1901, 2s. 6d.). See also Fabian Tracts No. 50, "Sweating: its Cause and Remedy"; No. 67, "Women and the Factory Acts"; and No. 83, "State Arbitration and the Living Wage."



conditions of employment are concerned. Even more than in the factory, the Empire is rooted in the home. How can we build up an effective commonwealth—how, even, can we get an efficient army—out of the stunted, anæmic, demoralized denizens of the slum tenements of our great cities? Can we, even as a mere matter of business, any longer afford to allow the eight millions of whom I have already spoken—the “submerged fifth” of our nation—to be housed, washed, watered worse than our horses? Is it not clear that one of the first and most indispensable steps towards National Efficiency is to make really effective that “National Minimum” of sanitation which is already nominally compulsory by law? This means a great extension of municipal activity in town and country. It means a new point of view for the Local Government Board, which must cease to do evil and learn to do well, by dropping its lazy routine of obstruction and discouragement, and rousing itself to be prompt with its stimulus, eagerly oncoming with its help, and, when necessary, swift and ruthless with its compulsion. For the Local Government Board has, though no President seems to be aware of it, an even higher duty in sanitation than stimulus and help. It is the guardian of the National Minimum. To it is committed the great trust of seeing that no single family in the land is denied the indispensable conditions of healthy life. So far as house accommodation, ventilation, good drainage and pure water are concerned, Parliament has long ago embodied this National Minimum of sanitation in universally applicable Public Health Acts, which it is the duty of the Local Government Board to enforce upon local authorities just as drastically as these ought to do upon individuals. Can anything be more preposterous in a business nation than to allow (as a succession of Presidents of the Local Government Board have long allowed) one locality after another, merely out of stupidity, or incapacity, or parsimony, demonstrably to foster malignant disease and bring up its quota of citizens in a condition of impaired vitality? Why does not the Local Government Board undertake a systematic harrying up of the backward districts, regularly insisting, for instance, that all those having death-rates above the average of the kingdom shall put themselves in order, improve their drainage, lay on new water supply, and insure, by one means or another, a supply of healthy houses sufficient to enable every family to comply with the formula of “three rooms and a scullery” as the minimum necessary for breeding an even moderately Imperial race? Every medical officer knows that it is quite possible, within a generation after the adoption of such a genuine enforcement of the National Minimum of sanitation, to bring down the average death-rate by at least 5 per 1,000, and the sickness experience by at least a third. The equivalent money gain to the community would be many millions sterling. A single friendly society, the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, would, it has been calculated, save a quarter of million annually in benefits alone. I measure my words when I say that the neglect of the Local Government Board to enforce even the existing legal National Minimum of sanitation causes, each year, more deaths than the most calamitous of our wars.

### Raising the Standard of Life.

A Ministry really inspired with a passion for National Efficiency would, however, know how to use other instruments besides compulsion. The Government must set itself to raise the standard of life. This is specially the sphere of local initiative and corporate enterprise, of beneficent competition rigorously stopped by law from the downward way, but freed, stimulated and encouraged in every experiment on the upward way. We have seen how the Local Government Board has necessarily to be always coercing its local authorities to secure the National Minimum ; for anything beyond that minimum the wise Minister would mingle premiums with his pressure. He would, by his public speeches, by personal interviews with mayors and town clerks, and by the departmental publications, set on foot the utmost possible emulation among the various local governing bodies, as to which could make the greatest strides in municipal activity. We already have the different towns compared, quarter by quarter, in respect of their death-rates, but at present only crudely, unscientifically and perfunctorily. Why should not the Local Government Board avowedly put all the local governing bodies of each class into honorary competition with one another by an annual investigation of municipal efficiency, working out their statistical marks for excellence in drainage, water supply, paving, cleansing, watching and lighting, housing, hospital accommodation, medical service, sickness experience and mortality, and publicly classifying them all according to the result of the examination? Nay, a Ministry keenly inspired with the passion for National Efficiency would call into play every possible incentive to local improvement. The King might give a "Shield of Honor" to the local authority which had made the greatest progress in the year, together with a knighthood to the mayor, and a Companionship of the Bath to the clerk, the engineer and the medical officer of health. On the other hand, the six or eight districts which stood at the bottom of the list would be held up to public opprobrium, whilst the official report on their shortcomings might be sent by post to every local elector, in the hope that public discussion would induce the inhabitants to choose more competent administrators.

### Grants in Aid.

If honor and shame fail to appeal to the ratepayers of our most backward communities, there remains the potent lever of pecuniary self-interest. For England has, almost without being aware of it, invented exactly that relationship between central and local government which enables the greatest possible progress to be made. To let each locality really manage its own affairs in its own way—the anarchic freedom of American local administration—is not only to place an intolerable burden upon the poorer districts, but also to give up the all-important principle of the enforcement of a National Minimum. On the other hand, to subject the local authorities to the orders of a central government—the autocratic Minister of the Interior of continental systems—would be to barter away our birth-right of local self-government for the pottage of bureaucratic administration. The middle way has, for half a century, been found

through that most advantageous of expedients, the grant in aid. We see this in its best form in the police grant. When each locality did its own "watching" in its own way, thieves and highwaymen enjoyed as much liberty as the local governing bodies themselves. When this state of things became unendurable, eager reformers urged a national police force. But England had an anti-Napoleonic horror of a centralized gendarmerie, acting under orders from London. The solution was found in an empirical compromise. Parliament has, since 1856, required by statute that every county and every borough in Great Britain shall maintain an efficient police force.

#### A Compulsory Minimum.

This is the policy of the National Minimum. But as the local authorities very much disliked providing anything like enough police, and as the enormous growth of an uneducated and almost desperate "proletariat" which was produced by the industrial revolution forced successive Governments to be very much in earnest about police efficiency, they applied a potent stimulus to it. A grant in aid of the cost of the local police force was offered to the justices and town councillors—at first one quarter, and now one half, of their actual expenditure on this service, however large this may be. As the grant is conditional on the force being maintained in efficiency, the Home Office is able, without impairing the independence, or offending the dignity of the local authorities, to inspect all the provincial police forces. The Home Secretary has no power to order any improvement. But his annual inspection enables him to call pointed attention to any shortcomings, and to observe with circumlocutory official politeness, that if the defect should not have got itself remedied, somehow or another, before the next inspection, he might find himself under the regrettable necessity of withholding the certificate without which the grant cannot be paid. The result of this constant expert criticism and central pressure, coupled with the unlimited grant in aid, is that the strength and efficiency of the provincial police forces has increased during the past generation by leaps and bounds, without any loss of local autonomy, and without the creation of any centralized bureaucracy. We need not consider whether this very great development of the county and borough police was or was not required for national efficiency. The point is that, as successive Ministers really wanted it, they were able, by their fortunate discovery of the instrument of the grant in aid, *varying automatically with the growth of the service, and conditional on its efficiency*, to bring about the improvement they desired. The story of the establishment and progressive efficiency of the English provincial police force is destined to become a classic example of the perfect relationship between central and local self-government.

Unfortunately, ministers have had so little desire for efficiency in any other branch of local government, and have made so little study of the subject, that grants in aid have been, in other directions, perverted into mere doles in relief of the rates. Nineteenth century Liberalism—really unsympathetic to efficient government administration—simply hated them all, even the police grant, with an indiscriminating hatred. But the grants in aid are there, to the

extent, all told, of some fifteen millions sterling annually; and no ministry dependent on the ratepayers' vote will ever dream, by withdrawing this subsidy, of suddenly raising rates by two shillings in the pound. What we have to do is to give up all pretence of abolishing grants in aid, or even of objecting to their inevitable increase, in order to enlist their aid in the promotion of National Efficiency. A mere rearrangement of the existing infertile subventions would enable a separate grant to be made, on conditions similar to those of the present police grant, in aid of each branch of local administration which it is considered desirable to promote, not only for police and schools, but for such humdrum but fundamentally important services as roads and bridges, paving and lighting, water-supply and housing, baths and wash-houses, parks and libraries.

### Regeneration of Poor Relief.

Passing from the municipal services of daily life to the collective provisions for those sections of the community who are awedly unable to provide for themselves, what a vista of urgently needed reform is opened up by the Poor Law! Three-quarters of a century ago the nation was saved from hideous disaster by the little knot of social investigators who, by inventing the workhouse test, found the means of stopping the pauperism of the able-bodied. The central department charged with Poor Law administration adopted this invention, and has lived on it ever since. Liberal and Conservative Ministers alike have done their best, even at the cost of some public uneasiness, to maintain the "principles of 1834." But a government department cannot, any more than a business undertaking, go on living for ever on a single invention. The semi-penal workhouse was excellent for its purpose of a test of able-bodied destitution. We now know that it is the worst possible place for the children, the sick and the aged, who comprise the vast majority of present-day "paupers." But the Local Government Board has never incorporated this new truth. Twentieth Century Politics, applied to the relief of the poor, will replace the present critical and repressive attitude of the Local Government Board by a positive programme of Poor Law reform. What an energetic President would take in hand would be, not only the vigorous discouragement of outdoor relief *to the able-bodied* (women no less than men), but an equally vigorous insistence on the humane treatment of the aged, the most scientific provision for the sick, and, above all, the best possible rearing of the "children of the State." In no branch of the work of the Local Government Board is there more opening for improvement than in the case of the children. Here and there, indeed, enlightened Boards of Guardians have, after many difficulties, extracted the approval of the central department for carefully considered plans of "scattered homes" and "cottage homes," "boarding-out" and emigration. But in scores of unions up and down the country the Local Government Board tolerates, year after year, a treatment of pauper children quite "Early Victorian" in its parsimonious thriftlessness. There are still thousands of children in actual workhouses, still tens of thousands in ophthalmic barrack schools; the level of their education is still such that, to give only

one example, not a single pauper child in all London has ever won one of the London County Council's junior scholarships. In spite of the decay of apprenticeship, practically nothing has yet been done to give them any genuine technical instruction; and hundreds of them are still annually bundled off the hands of the Guardians into such occupations as hair-cutting and shaving, from which they are destined, in too many cases, to recruit the ranks of unskilled labor. Or take again the treatment of the sick poor. When a man is ill, the only profitable thing for the community is to cure him as thoroughly as possible with the least possible delay. Yet it cost years of patient struggle before Mr. William Rathbone and other far-sighted philanthropists could force the Local Government Board to require trained nurses or even to allow Boards of Guardians to train nurses for the sick poor. Even to this day, whilst some workhouse infirmaries are nearly as well equipped as a good hospital, they are all seriously understaffed. What is far graver, the Local Government Board allows dozens of unions to go on year after year with workhouse infirmaries so foul, so badly equipped, and so destitute of adequate medical and nursing staff—in short, so far behind the standard of an up-to-date general hospital—as plainly to delay recovery. Year after year its own officials report the same shortcomings—in one case going so far as to declare that the Guardians ought to be indicted for manslaughter. Yet no President has grit enough to put his foot down, and enforce, upon these backward unions, even the standard of the rest.\*

#### The National Minimum of Education.

So far I have been dealing with the prevention of disease and premature death, and the building up of the nervous and muscular vitality of the race. This, it is clear, Twentieth Century Politics will regard as the primary duty of Government. But it is not enough that we rear a physically healthy race. The policy of National Efficiency involves a great development of public education. Here again the law is in advance of the administration. So far as the schooling of children is concerned, Parliament has long since endorsed the policy of a National Minimum, to be compulsorily enforced on every locality and every individual. The guardian and interpreter of this National Minimum is the Board of Education. No Education Minister has ever found the House of Commons cut down his estimates, or express anything but satisfaction at the growth of the education vote. The Board of Education, moreover, has full powers to fine, dissolve, and even to supersede any local authority that fails in its duty. So far as instruction up to fourteen is concerned, it is clearly not the fault of Parliament if any child, in any part of the kingdom, is denied the most efficient education that pedagogic science can devise.

Unfortunately we have never yet had a Prime Minister or a Chancellor of the Exchequer who had any conception of the duty of the Government to insist on National Efficiency in education, or, with the one exception of Mr. Arthur Acland, an Education Minister who had any power of standing up either against his own permanent

\* See Fabian Tract No. 54, "The Humanizing of the Poor Law."

staff, or against the unwarranted but frequent interferences of the Treasury with educational policy. Unfortunately, too, both Conservatives and Liberals have, in dealing with primary education, been hampered by the particularism in schools which stands in the way of any national policy of education. One party has backed denominational schools, and has only grudgingly admitted the need for School Boards. The other party, with at least equal intolerance, has backed Board Schools, and only grudgingly allowed denominational schools to exist. The result of this sectarian and unsectarian narrowness, and of the incapacity of the Education Department itself, is that, after a whole generation of nominal compulsion, we are still only at the beginning of the task. Over at least a third of England, the schools, the training of the teachers, the scope and content of the curriculum, and even the attendance of the children, are so inferior as to amount to a national scandal, whilst only in the picked samples of a few towns do we rise to the common level of Switzerland. It is in the class-rooms of these schools that the future battles of the Empire for commercial prosperity are being already lost. What the country now needs, and what it will presently clamor for—perhaps too late—is a national policy in education. It is tired of the old particularism in schools. So long as freedom of conscience is maintained, and reasonable public control secured, the younger generation cares not a jot what particular modicum of religious instruction is combined with the secular education. It has not the slightest wish to starve out the Church or the Roman Catholic schools, and really prefers them to go on supplying a useful alternative to municipal administration. And seeing that we cannot possibly shut up the voluntary schools, which educate half the children in the land, the ordinary non-political citizen cannot see why the old feud should any longer be allowed to paralyze national education; why both sets of schools cannot once for all be frankly accepted as equally parts of the national system; why the Board of Education cannot do its statutory duty and firmly bring up all schools, whatever their management, to the same high (and annually rising) national standard of secular efficiency; and why the whole necessary cost of these improvements should not be freely granted, under reasonable conditions of audit and control, from national funds. And the tantalizing thing is that all this needs no further legislation. The Duke of Devonshire could decree it all to-morrow, after one Cabinet Council, by a stroke of the pen. All that stands between us and a really effective National Minimum of education is a strong Education Minister who really knows his business, who is backed by his Cabinet against the natural resistance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the necessary increase of the grant, and who will stand no insubordination from either his own or the Treasury clerks.\*

But all this concerns only primary education, which the nation thought that it had settled as long ago as 1870. It is now quite prepared to see the building up of an equally national system of secondary education, and even of university education of a certain sort. In nothing, indeed, has the present Government incurred more discredit than its failure to carry through its secondary education

\* See Fabian Tract No. 106, "The Education Muddle and the Way Out."

proposals, except, perhaps, in the timidity of the proposals themselves. The man in the street cannot be interested by carefully minimized reforms, effecting nothing but such half-hearted changes as only experts can understand. His imagination and patriotism must be roused by a large-hearted plan for bringing the whole of our educational machinery up to the level of that of any other country. Assure him politely that energetic local authorities here and there will presently provide technical schools and a scholarship ladder, and he will not even pretend to understand what it means; but he will wake up if he is told that the whole system is to be so reorganized that every clever child in every part of the country shall get the best possible training that can be devised. To get this done he quite realizes that there must be a substantial grant in aid of secondary education.

### Twentieth Century Universities.

Moreover, the man in the street, though he knows nothing accurately, has got into his mind the uncomfortable conviction that Germany and the United States are outstripping us, not merely in general education and commercial "cuteness," but also in chemistry and electricity, engineering and business organization in the largest sense. Nothing would be more widely popular at the present time, certainly nothing is more calculated to promote National Efficiency, than a large policy of Government aid to the highest technical colleges and the universities. The statesman who first summons up courage enough to cut himself loose from official pedantries on this point, and demand a grant of half a million a year with which to establish in the United Kingdom a dozen perfectly equipped faculties of science, engineering, economics, and modern languages would score a permanent success.

I can indulge in no further detail. The policy of National Efficiency here sketched out for the Home Office, the Local Government Board, and the Board of Education, needs, of course, to be worked out in equal detail for the other departments. The re-organization of the War Office and the substitution of a system of scientific fighting for our present romantic and incapable "soldiering"; the energetic rehandling of the Budget (which now yields no more per head than it did a hundred years ago), so as to assert the claims of the State as the sleeping partner in the unearned increment both of urban land values and the huge gains of monopolized industry; the reform of local taxation on the lines of an assessment according to site-value instead of the present penalizing of the building and improving of houses; the rescue of our present "tied" refreshment houses from the tyranny of the brewer, and the adjustment of their number and hours of business to the actual needs of each locality; the reform of the House of Commons by confining all ordinary speeches to a quarter of an hour, and the increased devolution of business to committees—all these are but points in the same policy of National Efficiency by which every part of the central and local machinery of the State—not to say also the wider commonwealth of the Empire—needs to be knit together into an organically working whole.

**FABIAN SOCIETY.**—The Fabian Society consists of Socialists. A statement of its Rules and the following publications can be obtained from the Secretary, at the Fabian Office, 3 Clement's Inn, London, W.C.

**FABIANISM AND THE EMPIRE: A Manifesto.**

Edited by BERNARD SHAW. 1s. post free.

**FABIAN ESSAYS IN SOCIALISM.** (35th Thousand.)

Paper cover, 1/-; plain cloth, 2/-, post free from the Secretary.

**FABIAN TRACTS and LEAFLETS.**

Tracts, each 16 to 52 pp., price 1d., or 9d. per doz., unless otherwise stated.

Leaflets, 4 pp. each, price 1d. for six copies, 1s. per 100, or 8/6 per 1000.

The Set of 85, 3s.; post free 3/5. Bound in Buckram, 4/6; post free for 5s.

Boxes for set, 1s., post free 1s. 3d.

**I.—On General Socialism in its various aspects.**

TRACTS.—107. Socialism for Millionaires. By BERNARD SHAW. 79. A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich. By JOHN WOOLMAN. 78. Socialism and the Teaching of Christ. By Dr. JOHN CLIFFORD. 87. The same in Welsh. 42. Christian Socialism. By Rev. S. D. HEADLAM. 75. Labor in the Longest Reign. By SIDNEY WEBB. 72. The Moral Aspects of Socialism. By SIDNEY BALL. 69. Difficulties of Individualism. By SIDNEY WEBB. 51. Socialism: True and False. By S. WEBB. 45. The Impossibilities of Anarchism. By BERNARD SHAW (price 2d.). 15. English Progress towards Social Democracy. By S. WEBB. 7. Capital and Land. 5. Facts for Socialists (8th edn. revised 1899.) LEAFLETS.—13. What Socialism Is. 1. Why are the Many Poor? 38. The same in Welsh.

**II.—On Application of Socialism to Particular Problems.**

TRACTS.—106. The Education Muddle and the Way Out. 98. State Railways for Ireland. 88. The Growth of Monopoly in English Industry. By H. W. MACROSTY. 86. Municipal Drink Traffic. 85. Liquor Licensing at Home and Abroad. By E. R. PEASE. 84. Economics of Direct Employment. 83. State Arbitration and the Living Wage. 80. Shop-life and its Reform. 74. The State and its Functions in New Zealand. 73. Case for State Pensions in Old Age. By G. TURNER. 67. Women and the Factory Acts. By Mrs. WEBB. 50. Sweating: its Cause and Remedy. 48. Eight Hours by Law. 23. Case for an Eight Hours Bill. 47. The Unemployed. By J. BURNS, M.P. LEAFLETS.—89. Old Age Pensions at Work. 19. What the Farm Laborer Wants. 104. How Trade Unions benefit Workmen.

**III.—On Local Government Powers: How to use them.**

TRACTS.—105. Five Years' Fruits of the Parish Councils Act. 103. Overcrowding in London and its Remedy. By W. C. STEADMAN, L.C.C. 101. The House Famine and How to Relieve it. 52 pp. 76. Houses for the People. 100. Metropolitan Borough Councils: their powers and duties. 99. Local Government in Ireland. 82. Workmen's Compensation Act: what it means and how to make use of it. 77. Municipalization of Tramways. 62. Parish and District Councils. 61. The London County Council. 55. The Workers' School Board Program. 54. The Humanizing of the Poor Law. By J. F. OAKESHOTT. LEAFLETS.—81. Municipal Water. 68. The Tenant's Sanitary Catechism. 71. Same for London. 63. Parish Council Cottages and how to get them. 58. Allotments and how to get them. FABIAN MUNICIPAL PROGRAM, FIRST SERIES. London's Heritage in the City Guilds. Municipalization of the Gas Supply. Municipal Tramways. London's Water Tribute. The Scandal of London's Markets. A Labor Policy for Public Authorities. SECOND SERIES (Nos. 90 to 97). Municipalization of the Milk Supply. Municipal Pawnshops. Municipal Slaughterhouses. Women as Councillors. Municipal Bakeries. Municipal Hospitals. Municipal Fire Insurance. Municipal Steamboats. Each Series in a red cover for 1d. (9d. per doz.); separate leaflets, 1/- per 100.

**IV.—On Books.**

29. What to Read on social and economic subjects. 4th edition, enlarged and re-arranged. 6d. net.

**V.—On Fabian Policy.**

108. Twentieth Century Politics. By SIDNEY WEBB. 70. Report on Fabian Policy. 41. The Fabian Society: its Early History. By BERNARD SHAW.

**VI.—Question Leaflets, containing Questions for Candidates for the**

following bodies:—20, Poor Law Guardians. 24, Parliament. 25, School Boards. 26, London County Council. 27, Town Councils. 28, County Councils, Rural. 56, Parish Councils. 57, Rural District Councils. 59, Urban District Councils. 102, Metropolitan Borough Councils.

**BOOK BOXES** lent to Societies, Clubs, Trade Unions, for 6s. a year, or 2/6 a quarter