

leaving the lot of the children unimproved. There is no justification whatever for such a pessimistic outlook. Abuses might be expected in a few cases which will have to be dealt with individually; in fact many of them may be known already to social agencies. But it is surely safe to assume that the great mass of people of the Maritime Provinces, or for that matter Canadians generally, want to better their own lot and that of their children if given the opportunity to do so.

Family Allowances mean one important new step forward in Canada. Its success will depend almost entirely on the

administration of the Act, a subject beyond the scope of this article. The administrative implications are not as simple as they may appear or as they have been presented to be. The Canadian pattern for the administration of our social services is now being unfolded. If the Federal Government is not discerning enough to work out a coordinated plan with the Provinces and the Municipalities in dealing with the social service aspects of Family Allowances, we will have lost one of our best opportunities for promoting social progress.

## Public Opinion and Social Progress

By MARY AGNES HAMILTON

OUT of the vast welter of evil produced by war, democrats on both sides of the Atlantic are deeply concerned to garner any seeds of good they can find. There are such; among them, undoubtedly, is our new and serious thinking about democracy itself. This, if we are honest and intelligent enough in the business of interrogating our faith and assessing our experience, may well prove richly fruitful: a veritable "soul of goodness in things evil" which we may, "observingly distil out."

Thus, observation of tyranny in action has revived and fortified our recognition of consent as an essential element in a free system. It has also compelled us to face the fact that mere consent is, of itself, not enough to satisfy the democratic canon. Passive acceptance of authority, warmed by the expectation of favors to come, is not good enough. Until we have made certain that consent is active and not passive we have not fulfilled the possibilities which justified Henry Maine in calling democracy a kind and not a form of government, be-

cause it alone can enable citizens to grow to know and to do, to the highest limit of their capacities. The crux is the degree of citizen participation.

From this point of view, aspects of British experience and practice are worth consideration. We move slowly. We are apt to be empiricists. It is not our way to talk much in terms of general propositions, or to work out patterns of action in advance, far less to proclaim ideological goals at which we aim. Yet, in retrospect over the steady social advance of a century, it is possible to discern something that can justly be called a democratic technique for securing a kind of citizen consent that is active, not passive a method that depends on, and in fact secures, their co-operation in each stage of the forward movement. The instrument through whose use we have in the past got things done, and now do so get them done, is public opinion: a public opinion that has been laboriously educated to a more or less conscious responsibility.

### A Democratic Process

Two points are determinant. First, when any reform or change is in question, the opinion demanding action must be of

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sufficient generality to mean that action, when taken, will be accepted by the public as a whole. In such case, legislation is enforceable, without friction. Second, the demand must be directed to some practicable and defined proposition—some specific grievance requiring redress. British governments normally move only when these two points are fulfilled; when there is, that is to say, a sufficient concentration of opinion on a specific demand. Then, however, they do move. Then, change can be put into effect with a maximum of public understanding and good will. The limited advance thus secured forms solid ground from which to move on to the next stage.

The process starts, as a rule, with a voice crying in the wilderness; an individual, stirred beyond endurance by some injustice, or illumined by some vivid vision of achievable improvement, He—or, very often, she—sees a thing instantly to be done. It is, or so he feels, quite easy to do—if only his fellows would open their eyes and see. At the moment, they can't or won't. He sets about making them do so. He writes; he makes speeches; he communicates his enthusiasm, or his anger, or both, to others. He and his lieutenants go out with the fiery cross. The single voice grows to be a chorus. A committee is set up, or an association formed, with branches up and down the country, run by eager spirits who have seen the light. Sooner or later, eminent persons lend their names, and sometimes help with money.

It is an affair of communication and conversion. If conversion spreads far and fast enough, some form of public inquiry may be set up, officially, to examine the case put by the enthusiasts. This inquiry may take the solemn form of a Royal Commission, set up by the government of the day. While it sits, taking evidence for and against, hearing witnesses, conducting its deliberations, the process of opinion-forming goes on. There is likely correspondence in the press; meetings; discussion. If a by-election happens to take place, the reformers will seek to make their cause an issue.

In any case, the Report of a Commission brings the matter inquired into before Parliament. If the Government is, by then, convinced that it has a sizeable body of opinion to deal with, a Bill in due course will be produced. Rarely, however, does this Bill go as far as eager enthusiasm had hoped. Yet, something is achieved; action has started. Stimulated by initial success, the reformers work towards the next stage. Very often, the Bill makes provision for inspection and review: on this they seize; this they use as a lever to the creation of a public demand for more. When, once again, the minority has become a majority, further progress can be accomplished.

### A Flexible Spiral

For this whole process, continually going on, in an atmosphere of argument and discussion, a useful name was coined the other day by G. M. Young, an experienced administrator, who has himself been an active propellant and participant in many social improvements. He described it as "A flexible spiral, always allowing for new conditions, but always rising towards better things".

This is, of course, a virtuous spiral. It is the very opposite of that vicious spiral we try so hard to prevent in connection with the interlocked movement of wages and prices. It is an ascending spiral. Public opinion produces action: this action again sets opinion in motion. Opinion and action act and re-act on one another. In general, the British tend to look with initial suspicion on anything new. There is always a minority, small or large, which eagerly acclaims it, because it is new.

The mass of citizens, however, have got to be familiarized with any new idea. This takes time and patience; it may take many years. Whether the effort of the few to convert the many succeeds or not depends on whether the proposed does in the long run commend itself to the common-sense as well as to the latent idealism of the community. It must do both; only then will it strike firm root

and create the kind of responsible opinion that enforces action. For instance, our present Factory Code is the result of more than a century of continuous effort; and the effort further to improve it still goes on. In the same way, our great Social Security coverage has been built up gradually, bit by bit. So has our educational system. So has our prison code.

This particularist, pragmatic approach does entail a slow, and very often, a piecemeal handling of questions. But, at the same time, it means that each limited stage, once achieved, can and does serve as a springboard for further advance. The whole thing is a flexible chain. There is nothing formal about it. No formula can compress it. That is where the word spiral fits. Its operation can be illustrated from almost any department of our social legislation. A case which shows gradualism at its best—and worst—is the long and slow process by which a Factory Code has been built up which to-day is not surpassed by any in the world, and at any stage has been strictly and generally enforced.

The canons of measurement and publicity apply, again, to the clearest contemporary case of working of the spiral—that of Children's Allowances. Twenty years ago a book appeared entitled *The Disinherited Family*. It was the work of Eleanor Rathbone, prominent in social work in Liverpool where she was a magistrate and member of the city Council. She had also been a leader in the long fight which won women the vote in 1918. This book, acclaimed by a leading weekly as "one of the most important contributions to social economics which has appeared for many years", had a definite and limited thesis. So long as the community makes no specific provision for children, both the children and the community suffer. Those parents whose offspring would be socially most desirable refuse to have more than the one or two whom, on a normal wage or salary, they can afford to bring up healthy and educate adequately; the thoughtless, meantime, breed children who suffer in health from the poverty caused by their number.

The book produced a stir. It was not long before groups began to form to discuss its proposal; soon, a Family Endowment Association was in existence, with an imposing array of distinguished names. In 1929, Miss Rathbone was elected to Parliament; there, she lost no chance of putting her idea forward. A series of Social Surveys, undertaken in the next ten years in the Merseyside, Southampton, Sheffield, Manchester and Bristol areas, armed her with impressive figures, proving that children are the primary cause of poverty.

When Mr. Seebohm Rowntree produced the revised edition of his famous survey of poverty in the city of York—*Poverty and Progress*—he made the same point with telling force. His first inquiry had been made in 1901; in 1941, he found that the general standard of living had improved by thirty per cent. Nevertheless, the incidence of poverty remained heavy on the children; in fact over 50 per cent of the children under one year and nearly 50 per cent of children under 5 were living in "primary poverty." The existence of children brought poverty into the home.

Eleanor Rathbone, re-stating her case in 1940 in a sixpenny pamphlet, which secured an immense circulation, declared "whether this reform will come to pass will depend not only on Government but on public opinion." By then, the early opposition of organized Labor was overcome, and evidence given by associations of many kinds to various public inquiries proved that there was in existence the public opinion to which she referred. Had not the principle been accepted both in relation to payments to parents under Unemployment Insurance and Workmen's Compensation, as well as in relation to Soldiers' Allowances? Why should children fare better when their father was unemployed or injured, than when he was working? An imposing array of M. P.'s organized a deputation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to put the case for national children's allowances, paid from State funds. Then, the Beveridge Committee, set up in 1941 to co-ordinate Social Services, made

the grant of Children's Allowances a pillar in the report. That Report was, in its broad outline, accepted by the Government in 1943, and the principle of Children's Allowances formally endorsed.

### Social Progress

This method of advance, conditioned by and dependent on public opinion, requires both patience and perseverance from the active-minded minority which is advocating a change. It is hard for this minority to see why a measure whose justice and urgency is crystal clear to them must wait until the slow-witted, unimaginative, and protected have, at last, been roused to see its inevitability. Yet they have their reward. Reforms do take place. The social and industrial history of a century is a history of uninterrupted steady progress, in which the aspirations of one decade become the accepted commonplaces of the next.

In 1885, a woman as intelligent as Harriet Martineau opposed the proposal for the fencing of dangerous machinery as "meddling legislation." In the 70's, education for women was resisted by Charlotte M. Yonge as on the ground that "superior women will teach themselves, and inferior women will never learn more than enough for home life." Trade Unions, as late as the 90's, were still regarded as "subversive" organizations, while Trade Union leaders were "dangerous agitators." In each case, by the time the legislature moved, it had behind it such a body of convinced opinion that the legislature finally passed was generally accepted, and therefore could be, and was, smoothly operated.

This has been the case with our Social services. In 1897, Workmen's Compensation legislation was enacted; in 1908, Old Age Pensions followed; Insurance against sickness and unemployment in 1910 and 1911 led on to a complicated series of provisions for the care of childhood, maternity and every aspect of public health. Finally, on the basis of the Beveridge Committee Report, the Government now has in hand a single comprehensive scheme, covering

the entire population from cradle to grave—literally, since children's allowances at one end are linked to funeral benefit at the other.

In the process of opinion-forming which precludes official action, recognition of what has, in fact, been achieved naturally finds small place. The reformer continually complains about what still needs doing and takes little interest in what has been done. What has been done is taken for granted. It is, in fact, only done when people in general do take it for granted. Reformers plead passionately with governments to "lead the way." Steadfastly; governments refuse to do anything of the kind. The reason, in the given case, may be bad. In general, however, the attitude is democratically sound. It is also honest. No good is secured by pious resolution or nominal enactment.

Indeed to put on the statute book a measure which in fact cannot be and is not enforced creates contempt for law. It has been the writer's experience to hear at Geneva, a British government denounced for not endorsing general promises which it could not implement, and this by representatives of states whose codes are loaded with Bills neither enforced nor enforceable. In Britain, laws are enforced, because, by the time they are passed, public opinion has been educated to approval of and is ready for their operation.

There is a close connection between law observance and self-sustaining public order, on the one hand, and public consent, slowly and patiently achieved. The orderly queue of persons waiting to pay their Income Tax, to get on a bus, or draw their wartime rations is one outward sign, among many, of the successful operation of a public relations technique that draws its strength from a genuine and pervasive respect for public opinion.

Another sign of the same thing is daily afforded by the unarmed policeman. The British policeman is the guardian and instrument of laws with public consent behind them. His power de-

pendes wholly on the fact that he has the public on his side. So does that of the inspector. The combination of order and progress depends on the slow process

of co-operation by citizens at all stages, on this our legislation rests. The spiral is continuous. Its vital and sustaining spring is public consent.

## More Education in Nutrition

By ELIZABETH MACMILLAN

THE establishment of a new and better social and economic order is a main peace aim of the United Nations. The first requisite of such a democratic social order is the provision of environmental conditions under which every citizen will be able to develop his or her full inherited capacity for physical and mental well-being.

Freedom develops feebly among ill-fed people. Nutrition has a profound effect on both physical and mental health. An adequate dietary is necessary for physical fitness, and the security which comes from physical health is fundamental for mental health. We cannot hope to attain the desired freedoms without a social order which provides the basic necessities for such health.

Nutrition is only one factor in health, but it is an important factor. Nutrition cannot perform miracles but adequate food does make a difference in health. We now know that some additional foods during pregnancy have a decisive influence on the health of the mother and the child. We know that food plays a part in building up resistance to disease and the prevention of tuberculosis. We know that proper foods make a difference in mental alertness and in the ability to learn. Adequate diets are necessary for proper bone and tooth development, for healthy skin, eyes and nerves and for optimal physical growth and length of life. Enough of the right kinds of food make a difference between positive health and merely passable health.

If our present knowledge of foods and nutrition was generally applied in Canada, it would have far-reaching implications for national health. Evidence that nutrition knowledge is not fully applied in this country, reckoned to have a high standard of living, is shown by the high incidence of rejections of men and women in the prime of life for service in the Armed Forces. True not all the incidents of these rejections can be laid at the door of malnutrition, but many undoubtedly belong there. Tuberculosis, weak hearts, poor nerves, poor vision, faulty skeletal development and much else are known to flourish in an environment of undernourishment.

Canada's shockingly high infant and maternal mortality rate bears further evidence of malnutrition.

Four Canadian Dietary Surveys conducted in 1939-40 with families in Halifax, Quebec, Toronto and Edmonton give us information, although somewhat limited, which bears evidence of faulty nutritional practices in Canada. Dr. L. B. Pett, Director of Nutrition Services, of the Department of Pensions and National Health, has made the following statement in summary of the findings of these surveys, "To sum up these findings is difficult, but the statement has been made that, roughly speaking, only forty per cent of the people studied were adequately fed, forty per cent were in a border-line state, and twenty per cent were seriously undernourished." "One conclusion is clearly evident from these surveys; many families in Canada were not securing supplies of food adequate for health, for the proper growth of children, and for working efficiency."