

Government and Liberty.

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Authorities:

Essay — Mills.

Social Statics — Spencer.

The State — Wilson.

Political Science — Woolsey.

Contemporary Socialism — Rae.

Individualism a System of Government.

Two an-
tagonistic
schools of
political
thought —
their tech-
nical
natures.
The nineteenth century has been noted for two antagonistic tendencies; the one being toward greater freedom of individual action; the other toward vesting more power in government, consequently placing greater restrictions upon individual liberty. These opposing tendencies have been largely fostered by two schools of political thought equally extreme in their views. The Spencerian school holds that the State is a voluntary association of individuals for mutual protection, from which the individual may withdraw at pleasure; that government is a necessary evil; and it looks with extreme jealousy on every act of government that is not an act of police. The socialistic school on the other hand holds that the government should not protect society against crime, and foreign and domestic danger but also

also that it should oversee, control and even own the industries of the people regardless of individual rights.

The mid-
dle ground
the only
safe one.
Happily, these tendencies have been neutralized by the conservative wisdom of statesmen and by the good sense of the people themselves, thus forming a middle ground of political belief. In this Essay I will endeavor to keep within the borders of this middle ground, believing it to be the only one upon which Society can safely depend for highest development.

Government
the instru-
ment of
Society,
its need
and end.
If men were perfect; if they had complete control over their passions and appetites, there would be little need of government. But men are far from being perfect. From their very nature they are selfish and sordid, and being left free from control other than their own, the strong would prey upon the weak, and liberty to act would exist only for those who could do so by force. In order then to control the selfishness of men, to protect the weak against the strong, and to advance itself in civilization, Society has constituted Government as its instrument of execution by which only can it reach its highest development—the true Liberty of all. Government can have no other object than this, and its end is fully accomplished when it has secured to each individual the best means for greatest self-development. In order to secure these means and to perpetuate itself Government must often restrict the actions of men, even

to taking away their liberty, or, going still further, it may even take their lives in order to save the lives of others, or to protect itself in some great emergency. But presumption lies always with individual liberty and government cannot justly restrict or take it away without first determining if such restriction will result in the good of Society.

Private rights. But there are certain particular rights that concern the individual almost entirely, on whose protection by the government depends the peace and welfare of all. Of these the right of self-defense is of the greatest importance. It lies at the foundation of all other rights; for property ^{liberty and} life would be at the constant mercy of sharpers and robbers were men not permitted to act according to this "fundamental law of nature." The right of free speech, next to that of self-defense, is of great importance. Without it efficient communication would be well nigh impossible, and the range of human development would be much limited. Moreover the teaching of History is, that Free Speech is the corner stone of free government, and that those people who enjoy it in the greatest degree are the most prosperous and the happiest. Hence, government should not ^{hijack, or forbid} freedom of speech and public gatherings, unless there is much danger of riot.

Even then it is better simply to strengthen the police force than to interfere with so sacred a right. Inseparably associated with free speech is freedom of conscience, — liberty to worship what, when, and how, one pleases. The ^{only} ground upon which government can interfere is when the religious doctrines are immoral in their nature, or when their exercise conflicts with the peace and safety of individuals.

Duty of Government in regard to these rights. It is not only the duty, but also very much to the interest of government to protect men in the enjoyment of these rights; for a government that limits the free expression of thought; that cannot stand criticism; that interferes with religious matters; that is constantly meddling with private affairs, is either a very weak government or a very despotic one. It is no longer free.

Government may largely concern the individual. But all rights, no limit or matter how private, may be abused, and government, for its own protection and that of society, may abolish ^{limit or} their enjoyment. ^{Mr.} Mills in his "Essay on Liberty" denies this. ~~He~~ He says that the individual should have complete control over those affairs that concern himself alone; that his private habits, as drinking intoxicants and

indulging in other vices, should not be interfered with even if they result in great injury to him. But the individual is "born in Society" - Almost every act of his influences those around him for good or for evil. His indulgence in evil habits affects those around him Society in two ways: first, by setting a bad example, thus exerting an immoral influence whose power for evil can not be estimated; second, by injuring himself physically and mentally, for it is impossible for one to injure himself without causing loss and injury to society. Each man owes to Society a certain amount of labor. If by any habit or fault of his own he becomes unable to perform his part, Society must bear the burden for him. For this reason government has the right to interfere with the enjoyment of any private right whenever it believes that the exercise thereof is injurious to the welfare of society.

The right to ^{acquire and} hold property is justly considered to be a sacred one to the individual, and it has been shown that its protection by government is one of the mainstays of society. Hence the individual should have the greatest possible freedom to follow his own choice of

occupation and to manage the details of his business after his own manner. But if the business is such as to be injurious to the health, morals, or other interests of society, government may limit or even abolish the exercise of the right.

Right
association.
Dangers
from
corpora-
tions.

The right to hold property and to conduct enterprises has connected with it a very important corollary, — the right of association. There are many enterprises that require such large capitals or extend over so great a territory that individuals cannot undertake them separately. In order to accomplish such far reaching results, association is necessary. The Submarine cables and our vast railroad system, if left to individual or governmental enterprise would have waited long before reaching completion, and possibly would never have been carried out at all. But vast power is often placed in the hands of such combinations, and they are justly looked upon with dread lest they absorb individual action, oppress weaker competitors, or even exercise their powerful influence to the injury of government itself. Government, therefore, must have some control over their action by means of equitable laws of inspection and regulation.

One of the common expressions found in

"Free Labor,"—mean that competition should be absolutely free, in other words being only under ~~the~~ such restrictions as are placed upon it in the natural inter course of competition, that legislatures have no right whatever to impose upon it regulations of any kind, ^{either} for the good of the employees or for the of the employers. But History & teaches again and again that "labor" needs the oversight of law; that the natural restrictions upon labor, placed there by custom, prejudices, and selfish interests, must be removed by counter restrictions of government. The purpose for labor, "as they use the term is the acquisition of wealth. In the pursuit of that object, stimulated by the evergrowing demands and needs of society, everything else is disregarded. The employer and employee are alike bound down by natural iron laws over which they have no control. The one becomes insensible to the evils around him, hard hearted, and selfish, the discontented, ignorant and degraded. But the mental and moral freedom of labor is of more importance to the welfare of society than the mere acquisition of wealth. If ignorance, degradation, and physical degeneracy are dangerous to the social and political prosperity, then these cannot be left to the instincts of individuals. The State must

ever be ready to protect the true freedom of labor, by the strong arm of the law.

Conclusion.

Reciprocal rights and duties.

Mental and moral freedom of men the only true liberty.

From this brief discussion we perceive that individuals and government have reciprocal rights and duties. That individuals, in order to secure the peace and welfare of the community, must surrender a part of their liberty, that it is the duty of government to ^{protect} secure individuals in the enjoyment of their rights, so adjusting them as to prevent unnecessary conflict; and that it is the right of government to use all proper means to this end, insuring each full opportunity for highest self-development. But this self-development can be reached only through self-exertion. The individual, therefore, should be allowed the greatest possible freedom compatible with the public welfare. The government should have no end of its own, and should do nothing that would in any way hinder him in his endeavors to better himself; on the other hand it should do everything in its power to aid and stimulate him to greater exertion and self-dependence. Above all it should provide every means that will enable him to throw off the yoke of ignorance, prejudice, and superstition, means that

will strengthen him and in plans of ambition,
that will broaden him physically, mentally
and morally. Only when man is freed from
mental and moral bondage can ^{he} be said to have
reached the highest liberty, - the true individ-
uality

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