RECENT BOOKS REVIEWED

POPULAR GOVERNMENT. By Arnold Bennet Hall, J.D. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921. 280 pp.

The thesis of this book is that the representative form of government and representative political institutions will produce more nearly popular government than will the operations of direct democracy. This thesis the author defends ably, and perhaps more effectively than did recently Alleyn Ireland in *Democracy and the Human Equation* or Harry F. Atwood in *Back to the Republic*.

Accepting with generous quotation and acknowledgment the definition, prerequisites, and limitations of public opinion as suggested by President A. Lawrence Lowell, Dr. Hall defines popular government as "that form of political organization in which public opinion has control." By coupling with this major premise the appropriate minor in each case,—that the conditions necessary to an adequate public opinion do not prevail in the particular political practice under examination,—he arrives, in Chapters IV to IX, at conclusions unfavorable to the employment of the direct primary, the presidential primary, the initiative and the referendum, legislative supremacy, the recall of judicial decisions, and the recall of public officers, as means of securing popular government. The last chapter strongly advocates the adoption of the short ballot principle.

Conceding that "control by public opinion does not guarantee either the justice or accuracy of the control," but rather assures elements of strength and stability and "a definite tendency to realize the aspirations and convictions of the people—an ample justification for a democracy in a country such as ours," the author presents the fundamental questions: "How may the accuracy and reliability of public opinion be improved?" and "How must public opinion rule in order to rule best?" In answering the first question, the methods of improving the press, party leadership, and the intellectual and philosophical equipment of the people, as the chief forces in creating public opinion, are discussed in Chapter II.

In the treatment of the direct primary, in-

cluding the presidential primary, so-called, the customary arguments are advanced, along with the main attack:—"such a thing as public opinion on the best candidate for most of the offices for whom [sic] candidates are nominated, is wholly and absolutely impossible." Consequently, the author favors the selection of candidates by conventions of legally chosen delegates. Probably no one would deny the superior ability of a convention to select good candidates, but many would doubt the existence of the convention's predominating interest in doing so. One must realize that the members of the ordinary political convention constitute a group of persons possessed of fairly distinct and conscious interests.

A strong case is made out for constitutional and judicial restraint of legislative power. The author tends, however, to talk the imaginative language of the jurists: "It follows, therefore, that a people that would govern themselves wisely should seek to limit their own power and place restraints upon their own action"—as if, in constitutional conventions, no breath of faction stirs, no deep economic and social group interests find expression. Of course, where usable methods of amendment are present, one cannot much more reasonably object to a judicial review of legislative action than to such a review of administrative action.

This book should be of chief value to those who believe that the cure for the ills of democracy is more democracy, and those, if there are any such, who think that "democracy" is a simple matter of letting the people vote on everything. It brings sharply to the reader's attention the seriousness of the problem of establishing the most efficient connection between an electorate and its government.

What students of political science especially need, however, is a sufficiently detailed investigation of the facts to establish the truth or falsity if possible, of contentions regarding the direct primary, the recall of public officers and so on, as well as a thorough study of the processes of public opinion, and the psychology of an official personnel. The book contains the result of no such original investigations.

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