

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLICATIONS

I. BOOK REVIEWS

THE PROBLEM OF ADMINISTRATIVE AREAS. By Harold J. Laski. *Smith College Studies in History*, Vol. IV. No. 1, 1918. Pp. 64.

In the space of sixty-four pages Mr. Laski examines the prevailing system of administrative centralization and finds it wanting. The centralized democratic state has not fulfilled the expectations of nineteenth century liberals. The English parliamentary system as conceived by Bentham has broken down. It is not adapted to the sort of economic society which we have evolved. Because the sole basis of representation has been territory, the mechanisms of government have not been related to the occupation of the average man. Local government is slovenly; inertia has seized the civil service because political over-centralization has extinguished creative effort. The solution is to adapt the political organization to the present federalism of the economic system. The Whitely report recognized the federal nature of modern industry and distributes power in accordance with it. The political federalism to conform to the economic order will, therefore, be one of function as well as neighborhood. The individual will is too complex; the voter has too many group interests determining his vote, to enable a single centralized administrative structure to represent him adequately. The state must recognize these complex interests and organize itself accordingly. This will mean a different sort of a state, but it will be one which will relate itself truly to the life of the people. It will therefore be a vastly more vital thing than the present state. It will release creative effort rather than stifle it.

The above has become rather familiar doctrine. It is vague and unsatisfying at many points, but it is none the less significant and thought provoking. Its strength lies in the rejection of the "thus sayeth the law" attitude of mind and its realization that the governmental structure must adapt itself to the job in hand. The state has no divine authority. Its authority is wholly derived from the success with which it does what it sets out to do. Mr. Laski demonstrates that the "cure" in politics involves more than a budget system or a non-partisan ballot. It is a new kind of home rule. H. W. D.

FINANCIAL SYSTEM OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA. By F. F. Blachly. *University of Oklahoma*, 1921. Pp. 66.

This pamphlet has just been issued by the Bureau of Municipal Research of the University of Oklahoma as Number 3 in its *Studies in Government and Administration*. This study cannot be better characterized, perhaps, than by quoting from the preface:

It has been the writer's object to present a picture of the state's finances, complete enough to be of service to public officials, yet simple enough to be understood by the average reader.

It is now generally realized that government is largely a business enterprise, and that modern and efficient business methods are essential to its proper functioning. The growing interest in state budgets is an important and significant indication of this point of view. Since the people of Oklahoma have already adopted the budget system, it is evident that they appreciate the need of putting the state's activities upon a business basis. This study has been prepared because of the conviction that a clear understanding of the state's taxation and revenue system, its funds, assets and liabilities, its budget system and its accounting and reporting system are absolutely essential to this end.

The subject matter has been treated under the following heads: (1) State, Wealth and Expenditure; (2) Taxation and the Revenue System; (3) The Funded Debt; (4) The Appropriation and Budget System; (5) State Funds; (6) The Accounting and Reporting System.

The legislators and citizens of Oklahoma especially are indebted to Dr. Blachly for a presentation of their financial system which is understandable and still not so detailed as to be burdensome. The rest of us are indebted, also, both for the information about Oklahoma and also for an example of what can be done to enlighten legislators and the citizens of other states.

ROY G. BLAKEY.



HOUSING AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH. By John Robertson. New York, Funk and Wagnalls Company. [1920.] Pp. 159, with 12 diagrams.

This volume in the English Public Health Series, written for English readers, well deserves an American edition, because of its simple and convincing style and broad outlook on the prob-

lem. The author does not hesitate to assert that his experience as medical officer of health for Birmingham proves that "no single condition in the lives of the masses has such a damaging effect on health, or does harm in so many other ways, as bad housing," and also that "these people (except perhaps a negligible minority) will respond to improved conditions." He lays especial emphasis on a reasonably good environment as an essential to good housing. It is not enough to have a sanitary house; the general sanitation, convenience, and amenity of the neighborhood are equally important. "Women and children, at any rate, should be able to escape at frequent intervals from the awful monotony of soot-begrimed bricks and mortar, and it should be possible for them, therefore, to get without difficulty into playing spaces or parks which are green and pretty. Much of the stunted and degenerate mental outlook of the slum-dweller is due to the absence of pleasant surroundings to his dwelling."

Dr. Robertson does not consider that the tenement house meets the requirements for satisfactory family life. His book is based on what he himself calls a rather high minimum standard of cottage housing, but this is scarcely as high as our federal government standards evolved during the war. He welcomes compulsory planning provisions for all housing schemes on undeveloped land, and sees in the 1919 housing and town planning act (at the time of his writing still a bill before parliament) the way to a general plane of excellence in housing never before reached in England. A power under the 1909 act, which he thoroughly commends, is that which we call *zoning* in America; and he points out that there is no similar power to limit the uses of land in built-up districts of towns, where the gradual exclusion of industries from residential areas would be conducive to far better conditions of amenity and sanitation.

A point which Dr. Robertson makes is particularly *à propos* of various discussions current in our periodical press at the present time;—like Mrs. Barnett, he advocates "mixing the classes," and urges that in any housing scheme areas of houses for the lower rentals should be adjacent to groups of houses for those who are better off.

The book contains examples and statistics to prove the health-value of housing, and the experience of the war is adduced to reinforce municipal

figures. American readers can equally take to heart the lessons which Dr. Robertson draws from such facts.

THEODORA KIMBALL.



CONTEMPORARY FRENCH POLITICS. By Raymond Leslie Buell. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1920. Pp. 524.

Mr. Buell, the author of this book, went to France as a member of the American Expeditionary Force. At the close of the war he made a careful study of contemporary French politics. He succeeded in gathering a wealth of material on French parties, their programs, and their methods of action, which have always been baffling to the American student.

Three main subjects are treated: political parties, recent movements for political reform, and the French attitude toward the peace treaty and the League of Nations.

Probably the most valuable part of the book is that which deals with the French party system. The first chapter sets forth the principles for which the parties stand; the second shows how the multiple party system causes ministerial instability and the dominance of parliament; the third traces the history of party groupings before the war and the sacred union formed in the fall of 1914; and the fourth explains the realignment of parties that followed the signing of the armistice, the outstanding feature of which was the formation of the National Republican bloc, an alliance of "bourgeois" parties, for the purpose of defeating the Socialists now under the control of extremists favoring a revolution of the Russian type.

It is interesting to know that there are groups in France that strongly advocate the introduction of the American system of the separation of powers, an independent and powerful president and a supreme court with power to declare laws unconstitutional. There is an interesting chapter on the movement for professional representation or government by interests, and another on what is termed regionalism. The highly centralized government of France administered by a large body of state officials has, in the author's opinion, not only proved intolerably inefficient, but has also deprived French citizens of the training in civic responsibilities which local self-government affords.

ELMER D. GRAPER.

Columbia University.