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# DEMOCRACY

and a changing civilisation

by Rare section

J. A. HOBSON

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## PREFACE

UNTIL the post-War era, democracy, in the sense of popular self-government, was making such advances in most countries of the world as to be considered the natural goal of political evolution. Even those who distrusted it believed it to be inevitable. Now democracy is in several countries displaced by dictatorship, and everywhere it is discredited. Is this a merely temporary set-back, due to emergencies carried from war into an unsettled peace, and calling for unusual exercise of arbitrary power by rulers, to be laid down when normal conditions are resumed?

The analysis presented here shows a political democracy which even before the War found itself confronted with grave new tasks of an economic kind for which it was ill-equipped. A state created for political tasks dealing with the maintenance of law, order and defence, found itself rapidly immersed in the performance of important social-economic services, the control of public undertakings of a business nature, the regulation of conditions of employment in every economic field, involving a growth of public expenditure that demanded new large measures of taxation. Even before the War the forcing of these grave economic

## PREFACE

issues into politics was visibly straining the capacity of parliamentary government in Great Britain and other countries.

The exhibition of a world-wide depression at a time when the productive powers of human and natural resources can produce abundance of wealth has everywhere roused a conscious demand that the State, as the accepted organ of society, shall plan and organise the economic system, or that, in default of the State, the system shall organise itself. Dictatorship, in its several names and forms, is an effort, either on the part of capitalists defending private profitable enterprise, or of the self-assertive leaders of the proletariat, to use the power and prestige of Government to force a planned economic system on the people, in the name of a Corporate State.

If democracy is to recover, so as to take the planning of the economic system into its own hands, it must reform its spirit and its methods. A discussion of the main lines of such reform occupies a chief place in this book. Finally, consideration is given to the international aspect of democracy, the policy of federal government in a society of nations. Though limitations of space make impossible an adequate discussion of these important issues, it is hoped that these chapters may furnish a serviceable introduction to such discussion.

J. A. HOBSON.

*Hampstead,*  
*March 1934*



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