

Social Science Text-Books

EDITED BY RICHARD T. ELY

COMPARATIVE FREE GOVERNMENT

SOCIAL SCIENCE TEXT-BOOKS

OUTLINES OF ECONOMICS

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COMPARATIVE FREE GOVERNMENT

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PREFACE

WITH the advent of a world movement toward democracy has come a comparative study of government. Already a large body of literature, based on such study, has appeared. The fact is gaining recognition that to understand clearly the problems of democracy, and to solve them adequately, world experience with free institutions must be drawn upon. Democracy is not the exclusive possession of any people; nor is it dependent upon any particular form or method. Every nation, whether it is far advanced on the path of freedom or is only beginning the slow journey toward liberty, has its lesson for the whole world. It is of high value to have the important contributions of the various states analyzed and compared for the purpose of throwing light upon the problems and processes of free government. No nation is so far advanced that it cannot learn from the experience of others.

The comparative study of government is particularly valuable for the student just beginning his work in Political Science. It not only brings knowledge of fundamental principles, but gives breadth of view and develops sympathetic appreciation of what peoples of other races and nationalities are doing to meet the demands of modern society. It is the most effective safeguard against the narrow, intolerant provincialism and the cheap chauvinism which characterize the attitude of so many persons and which are so great an obstacle in the path of genuine political progress. The authors of this book are firm in the belief that the basic course in Political Science should be comparative in nature. It is a profound pity that so many men and women enter upon the duties of citizenship in complete ignorance of what the nations of the world are doing to achieve self-government.

A word concerning the plan and purpose of the chapters that follow should be given. The purpose is not primarily a comparative study of existing governments, but a study of the various processes and institutions by which free government is being attained. In this is found one of the book's distinctive features. The aim is not to give a mass of detail concerning each of the

governments considered, but to treat of the rise and present status of democracy by means of the most important contributing types, emphasizing those aspects which throw light on the main theme. In this way the student is made acquainted with the essential features of the world's free governments as they are now constituted.

Since all governments are manifestly affected by the struggle for freedom, none can be omitted from the final comparison. Yet as an introduction to the study some governments are clearly more important than others and may be used to illustrate the political organizations of the less conspicuous members of their own class. In this respect the United States holds first place because it was the first great state distinctly founded upon the theory of popular control, and because of its influence, both direct and indirect, upon all other states. It forms, especially for the American student, a natural basis for a comparative study of government throughout the world. The institutions of the United States are therefore described with considerable detail, fully half of the book being devoted to their consideration. This part is not primarily comparative, but descriptive.

A knowledge of free government in America involves an understanding of the rise of democracy in England; and therefore England, for distinctively comparative study, holds the next place. The United States is itself a product of England. Together the two great Anglo-Saxon states furnish the two leading types of free government, — the Presidential and the Cabinet. The one has been copied with many variations by the Republics of the New World and the other by the states in which free governments have developed out of monarchies. The treatment of the English government is not intended to be exhaustive, but is sufficiently full to show England's great contributions to democracy and to make clear the important contrasts between English practices and those of other states.

With equal definiteness the third place is assigned to France, whose relation to Anglo-Saxon history has been intimate and significant. France, unlike England and the United States, is developing a democracy under the normal condition of close proximity to rival states. Moreover, the French democracy is conspicuous because of the high centralization that prevails. It involves a governmental organization that differs fundamentally

from those of England and America. Furthermore, it is through France that modern free governments are most notably linked to the ancient Roman Republic through the system of Roman law. French experience, therefore, is of peculiar interest and value in the comparative study of political institutions.

Germany and Switzerland are selected for study because the one government exhibits the early stages of transition from autocracy to democracy and the other an advanced stage of assured democracy. Switzerland is also of especial interest because it furnishes a type of free government which is neither Cabinet nor Presidential, yet is completely democratic. The comparison is still further extended by chapters on the small states of Europe and the leading states of South America, and a final chapter on the relation of federation to democracy.

In the treatment of the various governments special attention is given to the federal system as an agency of free government; to the development and position of the executive authority; to political parties as a universal phenomenon in the transition from despotism to democracy; and to the judiciary because of its close relation to partisan politics in America and to the conflict between autocracy and democracy in all the great states. The judiciary is of peculiar interest, also, because of the two competing systems of English and Roman law, involving distinctly different governmental organizations and different means of access to the people as the source of authority.

In the preparation of the book the authors have incurred many obligations. They are especially indebted to Professor Ely, Editor of the Series, who read the entire manuscript and made many helpful suggestions. They are also under obligation to Professors F. A. Ogg, of the University of Wisconsin, and P. F. Peck and C. E. Payne, of Grinnell College, who read parts of the manuscript and gave valuable assistance through both suggestions and corrections. A part of the manuscript on England was read by Sir Frederick Pollock. Numerous friends in the various states described have been most helpful in supplying material for the book. Of these special mention should be made of Professeur C. Cestre, of the University of Bordeaux, and Professeur Emile Saignes, of the University of Toulouse.

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