Book Review. Government and Business by Earl Willis Crecraft

Frank Horack Jr.
Indiana University School of Law

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RECENT BOOKS REVIEWED


The publisher's announcement of this book contains the following statement by Dr. Charles A. Beard:

This book is a path-breaking work—the first attempt, as far as I know, to link up political science and business, to show how business affects government, to outline the business functions of government, and to indicate the points of political control over economic operations—all within the compass of a single volume. It will stir up discussion and make students of political science take a broader view of their field.

Dr. Beard is altogether too modest; for those who are familiar with his writings will recall that he has been a trail-maker himself in emphasizing the economic aspects of government, and no doubt the author found some of his inspiration in the writings of Dr. Beard.

Dr. Creecraft has, however, shown with remarkable clearness, and in a very comprehensive way, the numerous contacts and relationships of government and business.

The book consists of thirty-six chapters, an excellent bibliography and an index.

The author holds that it is entirely normal for business to engage in political activity; and for government to be responsive to the influences brought to bear on it by business forces.

In all of the departments of government, great industries are likely to be active. They keep in close touch with lawmaking, whether it be in congress, the state legislature or the city council; they establish contacts with executive and administrative departments in local, state and national governments; they take part openly or sub rosa in election campaigns to promote their interests. As a matter of fact, business pays a large part of the campaign expenses of political parties, and political history gives ample evidence that some of the contributions do not represent the individual's patriotic interest in his party.

The author shows the many ways in which government promotes the production, distribution and exchange of goods, and how it protects consumers as well.

The advocates of the doctrine of laissez faire, if there really are any, will probably be surprised at the array of facts which the author has marshalled to show that after all one of the chief objects or purposes of government has been the promotion of the economic (business) welfare of the citizens of the state, both at home and abroad.

The publishers recommend the book as a textbook, but for what courses is not stated. To the reviewer it does not appear to be suited for a textbook, but it should be stimulating to those who have covered the fields of economics and political science.

FRANK E. HORACE.
State University of Iowa.


"The Income and Standard of Living of Unskilled Laborers in Chicago" is number eight of a series of social science studies directed by the local community research committee of the University of Chicago, and is aimed at the question of whether the Chicago Standard Budget used by certain relief agencies sets too high a standard for dependent families supported by such agencies. In pursuit of this objective the income and expenditures of 437 families are recorded and analyzed. The result is a faithful, detailed piece of research in which the methods employed are explained in detail and from which much can be gleaned regarding methodology.

The difficulties with a study of this kind, however, are many. First, any statement of what constitutes a minimum standard, whether it be the Chicago standard budget or any other, is subject to the limitations implied in its assumptions relative to the amounts of food and clothing materials, and the minimums in housing such as space, windows, running water, lights, bathrooms, and fixtures. And a statistical study, in the nature of things, cannot verify the standard set. Therefore, the study does not answer the problem it proposes as to whether or not "the Chicago Standard Budget sets too high a standard for
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dependent families who are being supported by relief agencies." Furthermore, it is but a commonplace to affirm that one cannot lay down a commodity standard and then pretend that a single translation in money terms is good either for a period of time or at the same time in different places.

If the purpose of the study were to find out whether or not the standard set translated into money terms could be met by unskilled workers in Chicago, the survey affords only a partial answer, the chief limitations being (1) the survey includes but 487 cases of workers employed steadily for a year and, therefore, is not representative of the unskilled in Chicago; and (2) it was found impossible to secure a clear understanding of what constituted the difference between a skilled and an unskilled worker. In light of these facts, one is forced to conclude that what we have is a picture of these 487 workers. Further generalization is not justified.

At times it is a question whether or not social workers in setting standards and in testing their shortcomings do not forget the very thing that they so often charge other people with forgetting, namely: the worker is a human being.

The reviewer believes that the process of checking and rechecking formulated standards is worth while for, in the long run, general concepts may be evolved upon which more common agreement can be secured. But for the present any budget standard should be used only for the most general sort of guidance. The income of the particular family and the direction of expenditure should be treated as a case.

WILLARD E. ATKINS.

New York University.


This is a "Report on a Survey Made to the Governor and His Committee on Consolidation and Simplification." It is a paper-covered pamphlet of one hundred closely printed pages.

There are one hundred counties in Virginia, and the investigators selected twelve of them for purposes of intensive study, intending to select twelve that would be representative of the varying conditions to be found in the state. However, they have not presented a study of each of the twelve counties separately, but have divided their report into thirteen chapters, each dealing with a particular problem of county government, i.e., The Fee System, County Indebtedness, Public Welfare, County Highway Administration, etc.

The work apparently has been very well done. The investigators went to the bottom of their problems and have dealt with them most thoroughly. The treatment is clear and concise. If one masters the contents of this pamphlet, he might feel that he had a pretty complete knowledge of county government in Virginia. The investigators were not content merely to describe local government, but sought to discover by means of intimate contact just how the various functions are actually administered in practice. The report is based on a very intelligent first-hand study, and is most illuminating.

It is obvious, however, that the investigators went forth in the spirit of the crusaders. There is no doubt that they were convinced before they ever started that county government in Virginia was exceedingly bad, and was much in need of radical reform. Every page of the report breathes dismay at the alleged shocking conditions. There is no denying that undesirable conditions are convincingly disclosed. But it is rare that careful students exhibit such unbounded confidence in their own criticisms and their own recommendations concerning reform. This report fairly bristles with unqualified assertions that this or that ought to be done, and that certain reforms will bring immediate relief. Indeed the report turns out to be a vigorous plea for the abolition of existing forms of county government in Virginia and the establishment of the county manager scheme. Supervisors, sheriff and prosecutor, to say nothing of others, are brusquely swept into the discard as elective officers, and the new and virtually untried county manager is boldly set up to drag the Virginia counties out of a morass of bad government. Elaborate charts are utilized to show conditions "before, and after."

The county is treated throughout as an area of state administration, rather than as an area for local self-government. No doubt this treatment is in keeping with the tendency of the times. Institutions of local self-government have been decaying rapidly in the past few decades.

On the whole the report is a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the actual workings of county government. One does not need to