

PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION

BY

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PREFACE

A FULL-LENGTH portrait of the so structure of the one aspect cannot pretend to be an ady decided by the of the subject, since studies from other angles must be undertaken before even the appearance of life can be simulated, or anything like an approach to reality achieved. Obviously, the study of social administration is as wide as society itself, and as complex as the human personality. The purposes of the social services are determined for them by the political and moral conceptions underlying the structure of the modern state, and their methods are equally decided by the philosophy of the age in which we live; superficial examination of what is done and how it is done will lead no appreciable distance. The study must be linked with the most far-reaching examination of the problems of the modern world if it is to have more than a merely transient value.

For instance, the proper understanding of the problems relevant to social administration requires that they should be thoroughly examined in the light of the results obtained by economic analysis. There must be taken into consideration not only obvious economic phenomena, such as the economic effects of the taxation that is necessary to support the social services, but a number of rather more elusive problems also require consideration, from the influence of the payment of unemployment benefit on the labour market, and housing subsidies on the rate of wages, to more technical matters connected with the effects which the accumulation and investment of large capital funds by the insurance schemes has upon the rate of interest, and the like.

Again, it is possible to approach social administration from another angle, from which new truths may be disclosed which are in a sense even more fundamental to a study of this kind. The social services can be examined from the point of view of what might be termed general sociology, associated with which would be an investigation of the effects of their operation on social institutions such as the family. This would, no doubt, lead to the solution of many problems, as for instance the extent to which the transference of family

responsibilities to the State, particularly parental responsibilities, has had the effect of weakening family ties. The same kind of analysis can also be applied to the individual, to discover whether the fostering of individual abilities by the State-aided educational system, and the provision of such facilities as good housing, medical services, and a measure of protection against the menace of economic insecurity, has added to the development of that nebulous asset, 'personality', and the degree of self reliance existing in the world of to-day, or the reverse.

The study of the social services from the administrative or institutional point of view is therefore only part of a much larger study which has, for the most part, still to be undertaken. However, an examination of these services in, as it were, the three-dimensional manner would be an enormous task which would take years to complete, and which no single person is in all probability qualified to carry out. One of the essential features of the present book is its incompleteness, which can only be excused on the ground that the first attempts to deal with a subject of this magnitude must be partial. Its justification must rest on the importance of the conclusions that are arrived at in this way.

One point with regard to these conclusions requires emphasis. The fact that the argument underlying them has the general trend of a reasoned defence of the system of local government is due entirely to the operation of the compelling tendencies inherent in the subject-matter itself. The writing of the book was started with, if any bias at all, a bias in favour of the central administration of the social services. Special pleading in favour of this or that form of administration was, however, ignored, and the most serious endeavour was made to deduce administrative principles from one source only, the requirements of the services themselves.

It must also be made clear that this book does not pretend to contain an adequate description of the social services, or even of the administrative machinery connected with them. Its sole purpose is to discover, as far as possible, what principles apply to social administration in a democratic State. Description of social organization is therefore restricted to the bare minimum necessary to illustrate the argument.

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I

INTRODUCTION

WHAT are the social services? Why is their administration worth studying? Neither of these questions can be taken for granted; an answer must be found to both. For the consciousness that there are such things is only just awakening, and beginning to disturb the public mind with the prospect of indefinite expansion of the education, health, and other services, each more costly every year than a king's ransom. Uneasy doubts are being aroused as to their real value, and the benefits they bring with them, or even the positive harm they may do to the independence of the individual, a much-cherished object of devotion in this democratic State of ours. Speculation about the social services is in its infancy, though it is perhaps beginning to take on some of the vigour of immaturity.

The history of the last two or three centuries shows that it is the rate of expansion of the social services that is new, and not the services themselves. Something new has happened to the world, involving a fundamental change in the chemistry of social life, which, in turn, has resulted in the hypertrophy of certain of the bodily organs of society. Whether or not this is due to disease or to superabundant health is (for the moment at least) beside the point; the processes of their growth do undoubtedly provide an attractive subject of study.

At the present time much emphasis is placed on the need for controlling the economic life of the country, with the object of making the productive machine the servant, rather than the master, of those who tend it; or, in other words, to elevate the conditions of the 'economic man' from those of barbarism to civilization. This is a very recent change in the trend of governmental activity, for until only the other day, and certainly during the period from 1830 to 1914, the energies of the State were mainly directed towards improving the social, rather than the economic, condition of the people. Nearly all the early mechanism of public administration was

directed towards this end.¹ The gradual change from individualism to collectivism which can be traced in English domestic legislation during the past century, and to which these developments were due, brought with it many important administrative problems, some general to the whole field of public administration, others of peculiar importance to social administration, in which progress was most revolutionary and invention most successful.

In the early years of the nineteenth century the reaction against deep and somewhat cynical pessimism about the future of society resulted in a modification of the thorough-going individualism which underlay the political philosophy of the period. Control over the sanitary conditions of the towns, the maintenance of a satisfactory system of public education, and the like, could only be achieved through the medium of collective action sponsored by public or voluntary bodies, supplementing the strivings of individuals, and even acting as a better substitute in their place. Fortunately, the doctrinaire individualist never succeeded in capturing the imagination of the British people, for the Utilitarians came into the world much too late to stem the tide of advancing collectivism. Progress was made possible by the adoption of a theoretical distinction between the social and economic aspects of human relationships. The dividing line between them was as difficult to draw a hundred years ago as it is now, but nevertheless the assumption that it existed enabled the opponents of the collective control of economic enterprises, such as transport or water and gas supply, to support the establishment of public and voluntary bodies charged with 'social' functions, such as the education of the children of the poor or the proper nursing of the sick in workhouse infirmaries, without making them feel that they had involved themselves in a contradiction of fundamentals.

There was thus a large measure of agreement within the political parties as to the effective limits of governmental action. This, lasting for many years, provided a shield

¹ There are some important exceptions, among which are Foreign Relations, the Fighting Services, the Revenue Departments, the Post Office, and the early attempts to control capitalist industry, made through the Factory Acts. The first four services were all that were, in practice, performed by the central government in the eighteenth century. See Ramsay Muir, *How Britain is governed*, pp. 38-41.

beneath which the mechanism of social control could be constructed; the most determined opponents of collectivism, the Philosophical Radicals, gave not merely a grudging consent to proposals of this kind but even added to their force by demanding that a stop should be put to the clash of individual interests in a certain limited field. The disciples of Bentham were men of energy, worshipping Efficiency as ardently as any inhabitant of the United States of our own times, and they did not pause to consider whether the reforms for which they strove could be strictly reconciled with their principles; their pioneering work had the paradoxical result that the mechanism of State action came to be reconstructed and repaired, and so cleansed of its eighteenth-century grime and decay, that it presented a means ready to the controlling hand of any statesman who cared to use it to regulate the economic or social world about him. In the end, the uses to which this machine was put would have profoundly shocked the able mechanics who played so large a part in constructing it.

It is important to notice the close connexion between Benthamism and the origins of the new services.¹ The reform of the poor laws was carried out by Benthamites according to Bentham's ideals, which were translated into practice as far as the temper of the country would allow, and have coloured poor-law administration ever since. Public health developments were greatly influenced by Bentham's project for a Ministry of Health, which seems so startlingly modern to our eyes to-day. Again, emphasis on *enlightened* self-interest must lead to zealous advocacy of popular education,² and it is thus no coincidence that identified the Philosophical Radicals with the movement for its advancement. The executive abilities of many of the Philosophical Radicals left a very deep impression on the social services, being almost as important a factor as their theories. Such men as Edwin Chadwick, Southwood Smith, and James Kay-

¹ The *direct* influence of the Philosophical Radicals declined greatly after the enfranchisement of the middle classes by the Reform Act of 1832. See Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. iii, pp. 29 seqq. But their *indirect* influence, exercised over the legislator and administrator, continued to be a potent factor in English politics for many years.

² See C. R. Fay, *Life and Labour in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 44.

Shuttleworth directed the early growth of many of the new public bodies that came into existence during the 1830's and 1840's, founded with the object of alleviating in one way or another the miseries resulting from the massing of men in the new industrial towns. Their infinite faith, moreover, in the essential perfectibility and reasonableness of humanity, united with a capacity for clear and concise thinking, led to the result that their main achievements lay as much in the investigation of the causes of social unrest, and in suggesting remedies for the evils they laid bare, as in the practical reforms which they carried out.

Two types of State interference in the social life of the country gradually emerged as the result of the efforts of the early reformers. In the first place there were the services which have since been called 'environmental', such as street-cleansing, refuse-disposal, drainage, and water-supply. Services of this type seek to improve the sanitary (or, generally speaking, the physical) surroundings of the individual, and thus indirectly lead to better public health, or greater amenities of life. Another type of service, sometimes called the 'personal' service, has sought to provide the individual, *as an individual*, with the precise form of assistance he needs, which must therefore be adjusted to meet the circumstances of each 'case'.¹ It is with the latter that this study is primarily concerned.²

The objection will doubtless be raised that this is too narrow a definition of the public social services, and too limited an explanation of their origin. In particular, it may be argued that the whole of that nebulous service known as 'Public Health' is, by usage, a 'social service'. It may be admitted that the object of sewage disposal, the making of building by-laws, or town-planning, is the physical welfare of the community, and services of this kind are to that

¹ Lord Eustace Percy has drawn attention to the class of service which 'now overshadows all other municipal services: the services, such as education and public health, which are designed more directly to benefit the citizen as an individual. It is this . . . class which is generally thought of as the "social Services" *par excellence*' (*Government in Transition*, p. 126).

² It is unfortunate that there is no authoritative definition of a 'social service'. The absence of one was bewailed by the Committee on National Expenditure of 1931 (*Report*, p. 142).

extent 'social'. If, however, it is asserted that any service which exists for the benefit of society is a 'social service', the term becomes so wide that it loses nearly all its significance, for it would be possible to argue from these premisses that the supply of electric energy, the provision of museums and parks, and the repair of roads, are social services! The practice of the past twenty-five years has, on the contrary, gradually identified the 'social' with the 'personal' services. The 'Drage Return', for instance, issued every year since 1920, of the cost of certain public social services, is almost entirely concerned with services of this kind.¹ Incidentally, it shows their importance, for the cost of the limited number with which it dealt, in 1933-4, was over £480,000,000.

Borderline cases may, of course, be found, perhaps the most troublesome being housing, which has both an 'environmental' and a 'personal' aspect. But they can be separated. House property management is undoubtedly a social service, for this activity brings the authority responsible for it into contact with purely individual problems of the first magnitude, such as arise out of failure to pay rent or to keep houses clean. In both these events the authority must make a careful investigation of the facts before taking action; it cannot turn the tenant out into the street without more ado, as a private landlord might. On the other hand, so long as the local authority restricts itself to the mere *building* of houses, selling them when finished to their occupiers, or handing them over to another authority for management, the service performed is merely environmental, and not a social service within the restricted meaning of the term. The cost of providing houses should only be debited to the social services account when the money is used for the lowering of rents, to lessen the burden on families with low incomes, which is the object of the 'differential rent' schemes adopted in several towns. The line between public assistance and economic subsidy is a narrow one.

The social services are not to be identified with those for

¹ This Return includes the whole cost of housing, but omits many other services, such as Blind Welfare and prisons, which are 'personal' in the highest degree. Mr. W. Hardy Wickwar has dealt almost entirely with the 'personal' services in his book, *The Social Services*, published in 1936.

which payment is required from the recipient, such as the insurance services, secondary education, and hospital treatment, on the ground that they are rendered merely in the interests of the individual. This line of argument has not, in any case, a great deal to commend it, since it leads to the view that the venereal diseases and parts of the maternity and child-welfare services are primarily undertaken for the general well-being of the community, and that *therefore* no charge should be made in respect of them. Cancer may be said to be as dangerous to the community as syphilis: the only difference between them from the point of view of the State is that syphilis is known to be contagious, and carries with it a moral stigma which makes the sufferer reluctant to submit himself for treatment. Hence everything possible must be done to induce him to attend a clinic.¹ Whether or not the service is primarily one which concerns the State rather than the individual is beside the point. If the State were not an interested party, it would not provide it.

A list of the chief services, with the administration of which it is proposed to deal, illustrates their homogeneity:

'Personal' Health Services.

Public Assistance.

Education.

House Property Management.

Unemployment Relief, including the Employment Exchange Service, and Vocational Guidance.

National Health Insurance.

Pensions.

Lunacy and Mental Deficiency.

Home Office 'Reformative Services', including the Prisons and the Probation Service.

It must not be thought that the social services are of recent origin, and that problems connected with their administra-

¹ See the *Report of the Royal Commission on National Health Insurance*, 1928, p. 65. The *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Public Assistance Administration* contains a list (Appendix III) of the 'Public Assistance Services'. Unfortunately they are of a very miscellaneous character, and it is hard to see any similarity between them. Perhaps the nearest approach to a common factor is the granting of money or money's worth. The only forms of assistance connected with education that are included are the school meals and the school medical services.

tion have just come into being. Public assistance, the most typical of them all, has had an organized existence for more than four centuries; a tradition of local administration was established by it many generations ago, which moulded the form of the social services until the end of the nineteenth century. For many years, however, it remained unique. Voluntary (or semi-voluntary) services, such as hospitals and schools, existed side by side with it, but their unwillingness to accept State control on the one hand, and the reluctance of the State to give them financial support on the other, prevented them from becoming social services until these two obstacles could be overcome. They had a long and interesting history before they were (with certain important exceptions) engulfed in the tide of advancing collectivism. The voluntary origin of many of the social services has left a deep impression which is still plainly apparent to-day.¹

The three basic services out of which the social services of to-day have developed are the poor law, education, and public health; the origin of the last two can be traced back still farther to the first. The administration of the poor law by Benthamites showed two things: destitution, it was discovered, was not solely or even mainly due to the idleness of the pauper; much of it was caused by ill health, attributable to insanitary living conditions, over which the individual had no control. Another large section of poverty was created by the poor laws themselves, since the inmates of the workhouses, who were brought into them during infancy or at an early age, received no sort of education capable of fitting them to earn their livings outside. The 'principle of less eligibility', it was seen, required substantial modification. This line of reasoning underlay three epoch-making reports: Kay-Shuttleworth's report to the Poor Law Commissioners on the condition of the poor in Suffolk and Norfolk, published in 1836,² the report of Neill Arnott and Kay-Shuttleworth on the sanitation of London,³ and the report of

¹ It would be interesting to trace the connexion between the central government and the older universities, the grammar schools, and the voluntary hospitals, but this is too far from the scope of the present work.

² *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 1836, pp. 143-94.

³ 'On the Prevalence of Certain Physical Causes of Fever in the Metropolis, which

Southwood Smith on the causes of disease in Bethnal Green and Whitechapel,¹ to which the Poor Law Commissioners called the attention of the Government in 1838.²

The modern development of the social services begins in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is significant that the 'personal' health services, particularly hospital and other forms of medical treatment, were provided at first by the boards of guardians who controlled the earliest of the 'personal' services: the relief of destitution. Not until the passing of the Education Act, 1870, was a public social service created outside the scope of the poor law. From 1902 onwards the public health and education services were rapidly developed by the local authorities, for the passing of the Midwives' Act, 1902, marks the beginning of a new epoch. A halt was called to the expansion of the range of social services administered by the local authorities just at the time when the development of the 'personal' health services seemed to indicate further advances all along the line. The scientific treatment of the problems of poverty which began in the first decade of the twentieth century was entrusted almost entirely to newly formed departments of the central government. The first signs of the centralizing movement could be seen as early as 1877, when the prisons were transferred from local to central control, thus preventing the local authorities from sharing in the creation of a new social service by emphasizing the 'reformatory' instead of the 'deterrent' aspect of punishment, a transformation which has been partially brought about by the Prison Commissioners during the last thirty years or so. Another service, unemployment relief, is in process of transference at the present time.

The problems that are encountered in the administration might be removed by Proper Sanatory Measures.' *Fourth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 1838, *Appendix A*, pp. 67-83.

¹ 'On some of the Physical Causes of Sickness and Mortality, to which the Poor are particularly exposed, and which are Capable of Removal by Sanatory Regulations, exemplified in the Present Condition of Bethnal Green and Whitechapel, as ascertained on Personal Inspection.' *Ibid.*, pp. 83-94.

² See Sir John Simon, *English Sanitary Institutions*, 1st edition, pp. 180 seqq. Kay-Shuttleworth devoted his life to the cause of public education from 1838, when he was appointed Secretary of the new Education Committee of the Privy Council. Edwin Chadwick and Southwood Smith were leaders in the public health movement.

of the social services are of considerable complexity, for they spring from that most mysterious of all sources, the human personality, which provides each service with the crude material on which to work. Blank ignorance of the mechanism of cause and effect may well make the administrator hesitate in his course, induce him to suspend his judgement, and make him reluctant to disturb things as he finds them. He is dealing with human beings, and it is a bold man who professes confidence in his understanding of his fellow creatures.

'The unemployment insurance scheme', a civil servant has remarked, 'is properly to be regarded neither as an exercise in ingenuity for economists and lawyers, nor as the football of party politics. It is a factor of the first importance in the lives of a large number of men, women, and children; to play with it is to trifle with vivisection.'¹

The categories of the exact sciences can be relied on only to a very limited extent in fields of experience such as these. Uniformity of treatment may be called for in the interests of justice, but human personality must not be harmed by standardization, and even the idiosyncrasies of individuals must be respected.²

The object of the social services may be stated in these general terms: the improvement of the conditions of life of the individuals who compose society. In some cases the individual may be only too anxious to take advantage of the 'course of treatment' that is offered: when, for example, a man falls out of work through no fault of his own, he wants nothing more than a new job at his old trade, and enough money to keep his home together until he gets one; if a service gives 'something for nothing' his eagerness may be

¹ P. Y. Blundun, 'Administrative Aspects of Social Insurance', *Public Administration*, 1927, p. 359. 'In some services more markedly than in others [the spirit of blind justice] must be tempered by consideration of the variable and sensitive human element. This process must be especially prominent if not paramount in those social services of which National Health Insurance is an outstanding example; those services which affect the daily lives of the common citizen, and which are specially designed to ameliorate his lot in times of calamity, of sickness and distress. The wind of administration must in these services be tempered to the shorn lambs' (C. H. Garland, 'The Local Organization of Services administered by a Central Authority', *Public Administration*, 1925, p. 391).

² 'Public Administration', an address of the Rt. Hon. Stanley Baldwin, *Public Administration*, 1934, p. 13.

a source of embarrassment, as in the case of the poor law. But such people as the work-shy, the truant from school, and the person convicted of a crime, respond only with reluctance. In such cases the line of least resistance is to rely on powers of compelling the social misfit to 'toe the line' and behave like a good citizen. Enforced conformity to accepted standards of social conduct may, it is true, make obedience a habit, but the 'inner man' is unlikely to be affected by these methods, which usually end in complete failure, since co-operation, if it is to have any value at all, must be voluntary.¹ In the social services the basis of agreement is often hard to secure. The service is there, but the individual has not asked for it; often he does not want it. Yet he cannot ignore its presence, for in some cases he *must* contribute towards its cost, and in others he *must* accept it, not from conviction, but because he has no option in the matter.

The obstacle that must be overcome in the administration of the social services is therefore the reconciling of the minimum of compulsion, without which the service often cannot exist at all, or would be available to few owing to mounting expense, with the desirable maximum of goodwill on the part of the beneficiaries, which alone can make it valuable. Compulsion must be made compatible with consent; mass production with variety; uniformity with adaptability; and, above all, efficiency with human sympathy. Altogether, a formidable ideal for which to strive!

Analysis of this kind shows that certain definite characteristics must be present in the administrative system, if society is to be served effectively, and the full advantages are to be obtained from a social service by those for whose benefit it is created. The most important of them, which may be said to be essential rather than desirable, are as follows:

In the first place, the authority entrusted by Parliament with the administration of a service must be able to command the confidence both of its 'clients' and of the people at large (not forgetting the taxpayer). It must possess political stabi-

¹ 'Neither by pensions nor by police, by gifts, nor restraints, can the social well-being of a single individual be secured without his co-operation. . . . Compulsory powers are no key to the mass production of social virtue' (L. F. Ellis, 'The Respective Spheres of Public Authorities and Voluntary Organizations in the Administration of the Social Services', *Public Administration*, 1927, pp. 390, 393).

lity and strength, sufficient anyhow to acquire for itself the money and the legislation that are the prerequisites of competent administration, and to defend itself from any attacks which may be made against its actions or its policies in Parliament, by the Press, minorities, cranks, or vested interests, and to free it from the soul-destroying necessity to temporize, and to trim its sails to the wind of corrupt pressure. In order to possess this kind of strength, and to fit into the framework of democracy, the department must be founded on popular consent, signified by approval given by the electorate at the polls to those who control it.

The necessities of social administration require that it shall show the highest degree of flexibility in action, of adaptability to local circumstances, of sympathy with the needs and failings of individuals, and of responsiveness to public opinion. The ever-present danger must be guarded against that the responsible officials will become immersed in routine business, and lose sight of the general public interest, if their attention is concentrated on a relatively narrow range of subjects. It is a danger with the gravest possible consequences for the social services,¹ which must be so managed that they can be adjusted to suit the diverse characteristics of the provinces of England, with ways of living as far apart as those of the miner of Durham and the agricultural labourer of Somerset. Since their object is the improvement of the life of the individual, those responsible for their administration must strive to see themselves through the eyes of the 'clients' they serve, in order that they may know how exactly to go about their business.² The nature of the social services therefore requires that decentralization of authority shall proceed up to the last possible stage, and that the widest discretion shall be given to individual administrative officers.³

¹ C. H. Garland, 'The Local Organization of Services administered by a Central Authority', *Public Administration*, pp. 394-5.

² 'The one essential [of a penal system], far more important than considerations of machinery, or even of expert knowledge, lies in the human factor, in the possession by administrators and inspectors alike of that superlative virtue of *sympathetic imagination*, that faculty of believing in the treasure hidden in every criminal's heart and of looking at prison conditions through his eyes' (Stephen Hobhouse and A. Fenner Brockway, *English Prisons To-day*, p. 402).

³ 'At the heart of the [Borstal] system is the recognition of the individuality of each lad. They are not the raw recruits of a conscript army, to be arranged in rows

This leads us to another requirement: the services lose much, if not all, their effectiveness unless a high degree of coherence is maintained between them. This is not a mere matter of social justice, of giving the citizen in Northumberland the same rights as his fellow in Cornwall. It must be kept in mind that the only unifying factor in social administration is provided by the individual. This is the focal point of the social service. Administration must therefore be continuous; there must be no break within the services or between them. It is, for instance, an obvious absurdity that there should be no co-operation between the maternity and child-welfare service, the school medical service, and the National Health Insurance doctor. The accumulation of joint records relating to the medical history of the individual would have the immediate effect of laying bare the causes of ill health, and of imposing an outside check on the efficiency of many of the services. The truth is that the social services are inseparably intertwined. The probation officer must co-operate, not only with the police, but also with the education authority, the public assistance and health departments, and he must also seek the aid on occasion of the mental hospitals, the housing authority, and the employment exchanges.¹ The Unemployment Assistance Board must maintain a close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, the Public Assistance, Housing, Maternity and Child Welfare, and other public authorities, not to speak of the whole range of voluntary associations such as the Poor Man's Lawyer, and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

The separation of the social services that has resulted from their distribution between a number of independent or semi-independent bodies has had a very harmful effect on their work. When all is said and done in the way of creating

according to their physical stature, to be swung rhythmically in a mass across the parade ground to the beat of a drum. Each is a different and a difficult problem. It is because they are handled individually, with sympathy, firmness, and discernment, that those who handle them must be rare individuals. The strength or weakness of the Borstal system lies in the strength or weakness of the Borstal staff' (Alexander Paterson, in S. Barman, *The English Borstal System*, pp. 12-13).

¹ *Report of the Departmental Committee on the Social Services in Courts of Summary Jurisdiction*, 1936, p. 64.