1947

Book Review (reviewing Elton Mayo, The Political Problems of Industrial Civilization (1947))

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Recommended Citation


This slender pamphlet consists of two lectures given by Dr. Mayo at a conference on Human Relations and Administration at Harvard last May. In bidding farewell to his colleagues with whom he has carried on painstaking and distinguished researches over the past twenty-one years, Dr. Mayo makes only a tantalizing beginning at extending to the political sphere his analysis of the industrial scene summarized in his recent volume, The Social Problems of An Industrial Civilization.

For Dr. Mayo the principles of sound organization have always been those which tapped the wellsprings of human cooperation. He looks at Russia in the first lecture and soberly credits her great achievements in modernizing a primitive community in a quarter of a century and in securing cooperation from so vast and heterogeneous a population. But he warns that the “heroic” methods of administration which so far have been used must sooner or later raise a serious internal problem because they are incompatible with the spread of literacy and education which has perhaps been Russia’s most striking achievement. It is refreshing at the present moment to have the Russian problem discussed in terms other than those of American security. In the second lecture he points up the plight of the modern world deprived of the unifying vision Christianity once gave it which transformed it for a while from “another culture to a civilization.”

Few will gainsay Mayo’s insistence that the outstanding need of the world today is “for investigation and study of organization and the sound principles of intelligent administration.” As we congratulate a scholar on a lifetime of research well spent, we may hope that his retirement is only nominal and that we may look forward to having, in a more elaborate form, his mature judgment on contemporary political problems and in the role that law might play in “the development of the almost endless possibilities of human social capacity.”

HARRY KALVEN, JR.*


Designed primarily as a text for college courses in public utilities economics, this is actually a study of forty years of social control of a part of American industry. Local, state, and federal experiences with the regulation of privately owned water, gas, electric, telephone, and urban transportation systems are described and analyzed in terms of both economic and social consequences, but discussion of regulation of rail, motor, and air carriers is omitted, apparently in recognition of the special problems there presented.

Many accounting, financial, and corporate-integration regulation problems which public utilities commissions face are isolated and discussed. The consideration of earnings control covers not only the history of judicial and administrative fumbling with the concept of “fair return on fair value” and a description of the rate-fixing methods currently used by various commissions but also includes a discussion of “continuous,” “cyclical,” and “marginal-cost” methods. There is an explanation of differential pric-

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