

**POLITICAL PROBLEMS
OF AMERICAN
DEVELOPMENT**

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Political problems of American development by Albert Shaw

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ALBERT SHAW

**POLITICAL PROBLEMS
OF AMERICAN
DEVELOPMENT**

Columbia University Lectures

POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN
DEVELOPMENT

GEORGE BLOMENTHAL FOUNDATION

1907

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LECTURES

POLITICAL PROBLEMS
OF
AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

BY
ALBERT SHAW, LL.D.



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PREFACE

THE present volume is made up of a series of lectures delivered as the opening course upon the new Blumenthal Foundation in Columbia University. The lectures are printed as they were delivered, with no material changes. It would seem desirable to say in this prefatory note that, quite regardless of the titles assigned to the separate lectures (which here appear as chapters), the work is to be taken as a single essay or dissertation. We are only at the beginning of the history of a great blended family of white men of European stock who have made their homes in what was so recently the wilderness of North America, and who are working out for themselves a life of varied human relationships in their effort toward the realization of certain ideals and standards.

Thus far the history that they have made has been that of an initial period of development, and of adaptation to the conditions presented by a new country. This volume deals with the political phases of that initial period of development. It attempts to give some analysis of the nature of politics in American life, and of the problems of a larger sort which have presented themselves for solution through political means. The theme of the book is the struggle of the American people to realize national unity upon the basis of a homogeneous and well-conditioned democracy.

Although the several chapters discuss different phases or problems of American political life, the attempt has

been not to present particular problems in a technical or unrelated fashion, but rather to refer the problem in every case to its origin in the struggle for the achievement of a great nationality, and to show how the problem relates itself to the continuous evolution of our free, democratic society. It is in this spirit that the reader will find some discussion of the passing problems of sectionalism and unity; of immigration, race, and citizenship; of domain and the public guardianship of natural resources; of parties and participation in the business of government; of economic policies such as those relating to railroads, money, and the tariff; and, finally, the questions that have arisen in the nation's dealing with other governments and peoples.

Some readers may find in the book a measure of hopeful confidence in the character and the future of American democracy that current facts might seem to them not to warrant. It remains, therefore, only to be said that the views expressed are mature and deliberate, whether dealing with race problems, with economic conditions, or with the principles and methods of our practical democratic life.

ALBERT SHAW.

NEW YORK, 1907.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGES
+ I. NATURE AND MEANING OF OUR POLITICAL LIFE. The nature and meaning of politics in American life; national unity as the transcendent problem . . .	1-29
+ II. PROBLEMS OF POPULATION AND CITIZENSHIP. Constructive problems of population and citizenship, with questions of race, language, and status . . .	30-61
III. IMMIGRATION AND RACE QUESTIONS. Further remarks upon immigration and race questions, with particular reference to the Southern problem	62-86
+ IV. SETTLEMENT AND USE OF THE NATIONAL DOMAIN. Problems relating to the settlement and use of the national domain	87-115
+ V. THE CITIZEN AND HIS PART IN POLITICS. Problems of the franchise, practical participation in politics, and the working of parties	116-144
VI. PARTY MACHINERY AND DEMOCRATIC EXPRESSION. Further problems relating to party machinery and the freedom of democratic expression	145-165
VII. CONTROL OF RAILWAYS AND TRUSTS. Problems of economic regulation, especially those re- lating to railways and to industrial monopolies	166-193
VIII. PROBLEMS OF TARIFF AND OF MONEY. The tariff, questions of taxation, and problems of money and currency in our politics	194-223
IX. PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN POLICY AND EXPANSION. Problems of foreign policy, international relationship, and extension of sovereignty	224-251
INDEX	253

POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

I

THE NATURE AND MEANING OF POLITICS IN AMERICAN LIFE;
— NATIONAL UNITY AS THE TRANSCENDENT PROBLEM

It is obvious that there are two standpoints from which to make a survey of the political life and problems of a nation. The first is that afforded by the formal structure and organization of government. It brings into focus the official methods through which the political interests of the people find expression. This mode of approach may be said in a general way to seek answers to the question, How we are governed; or, more precisely, the question, How we order those phases of our associated life which in the broad sense of the word we term political.

The other standpoint is a very different one, although it affords an examination of many of the same facts and conditions. This second attitude is that of practical politics in its scope, its motives, its more definite objects, and its relationships to various social and economic groups, and to human activities in general. If the one method deals primarily with the legal and constitutional aspects of governmental or political life, the other method deals by

2 POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT

preference with the functions of government, with the content of the political life, with the interests and activities which constitute our political society.

Doubtless it is in keeping with the more usual order of presentation to begin with the legal structure and mechanism of government, and to proceed afterward to a discussion of the functions and business, the work and conditions, of the political life. But I am to deal with the concrete problems that confront us in our associated life as members of the body politic, rather than with government in the forms through which it exercises its power.

Some of these questions lie at the root of the differences that give a certain permanence to the dividing lines between great parties. There are other questions, belonging just as truly and importantly to the political life, that do not of necessity present themselves in such a way as to coincide with the lines of party cleavage. I shall, indeed, bring forward a number of topics and questions of current politics. But it will be in accordance with my purpose to treat of them as illustrating the character and course of our political life and progress in general, rather than to present them as detached questions for detailed and unrelated treatment. Thus if I speak in subsequent pages of the tariff or the currency, the race problem or the public control of railroads, I shall deal with those matters in their broader phases as relating to the political development of the people of the United States.

So vast, indeed, are the considerations which react upon the political life in our times, that unless one chooses for his theme some specialized topic, he might almost feel himself launched upon a shoreless sea of more or less controverted ideas, without chart or compass. Let me say then