Forward To Sam Blumenfeld. Congratulations! — Lew

THE SOCIAL CREDITER

FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALISM

Vol. 44. No. 9. SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 1965

Registered at the G.P.O., Sydney, for transmission by post as a periodical.

Lippmann

PORTRAIT OF THE PUNDIT AS A YOUNG MAN

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FROM *American Opinion*, MARCH, 1965, WE REPRINT THE FOLLOWING BIOGRAPHY.

THE AUTHOR IS THE HIGHLY LITERATE EDITOR OF *US-France Report*. HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE EDITORIAL STAFFS AT RINEHART & COMPANY, THE WORLD PUBLISHING COMPANY, THE VIKING PRESS, AND GROSSET & DUNLAP - WHERE HE WAS EDITOR OF THE UNIVERSAL LIBRARY SERIES FOR FIVE YEARS. MR. BLUMENFELD HAS RECENTLY FORMED HIS OWN PUBLISHING HOUSE: COLERIDGE PRESS, OF NEW YORK.

The "PRESTIGE" of Walter Lippmann is one of the unquestioned and unchanging phenomenon of our "Liberal" day. He is not only considered our number one journalistic pundit, despite his constant "errors of judgment," but he is also credited with being a sage of incalculable wisdom, a veritable national guru. Presidents consult him; Khrushchev granted him private interviews; and a major TV network devotes a precious hour each year to a privileged "visit" with Mr. Lippmann at his fireside. There seems to be no limit to his connections and influence. And yet, when you stop and think of it, all Mr. Lippmann is is a columnist. That is correct, is it not? Indeed, one has to go back to the very beginning of Mr. Lippmann's curious career to understand why he has the prestige, and influence in political affairs, which are his. Let us do that. Let us examine, let us closely examine, the portrait of the pundit as a young man.

Walter Lippmann was born, in New York in 1889, of wealthy parents of German-Jewish origin. He was educated at a private school for boys where he astounded his teachers with his brilliance and precocity. During his youth, Mr. Lippmann's family often went to Europe, permitting the budding intellectual to experience the luxury of foreign travel and to examine foreign cultures. In 1906, at the age of seventeen, he entered Harvard College. Those principally influencing the young Lippman at Harvard were the philosopher George Santayana, the psychologist William James, and the Fabian Socialist Graham Wallas. (Wallas, who was one of the original founders of the Fabian Society, had come to Harvard as a visiting professor during Lippmann's last year as an undergraduate. His influence on Lippmann was to be deep and enduring.) In a short time Walter Lippmann gained the reputation for being the most brilliant and articulate young Socialist intellectual on the Harvard campus.

Lippmann was so highly thought of that he didn't even have to leave academe to seek his destiny. It came looking for him in the guise of the American Fabian Socialist, Lincoln Steffens, who had been looking for an assistant. Steffens describes how he found Lippmann, in his famous *Autobiography*:

> *It was late summer when I went to Cambridge. The graduated class of Harvard was scattered. There were a few of them left around Boston, and some professors. I described the man I was after, not the job I had to offer. If you mention a job, people think of a "friend who needs a job." I asked for the ablest mind that could express itself in writing. Three names were offered, only three, and after a little conversation everybody agreed on one —Walter Lippman. I found Lippmann, saw right away what his classmates saw in him. He asked me intelligent, not practical, questions about my proposition and when they were answered, gave up the job he had and came home to New York to work with me on my Wall Street series of articles. It was reporting. I was writing in my house in Connecticut. He went to Wall Street for facts, which he reported to me. He "caught on" right away. Keen, quiet, industrious, he understood the meaning of all that he learned; and he asked the men he met far more than I asked him for. He searched them; I know it because he searched me, too, for my ideas and theories.*

From then on, Lippmann's success was secure. The summer assignment was followed by a year of postgraduate work, during which time the student savant, at the request of Steffens, organized the Harvard chapter of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, structured along Fabian lines, for the purpose of stimulating an interest in Socialism among college men. By the end of 1910, Lippmann had done such a fine job at Harvard that three hundred students successfully petitioned for the introduction of a course in Socialism into the official college curriculum.

From Harvard, young Lippmann went to work briefly for Steffens on the staff of *Everybody's Magazine*. Then, in 1912, he was appointed executive secretary to the Reverend George R. Lunn, newly elected Socialist mayor of Schenectady, New York. Lippmann found the job challenging, but in a short time realized that one Socialist victory in Schenectady was not going to revolutionize that city, let alone the nation. And so, on May 1, 1912, the fledgling guru resigned his position. Ernest Sutherland Bates, writing in the *Modern Monthly* of June, 1933, described what followed:

> *On June 1, 1912, there appeared in* The Call, *Socialist organ of New York, an article entitled "Schenectady the Unripe" in which the executive secretary [Lippmann] justified his resignation. He spoke with affection of the Socialist Party, begging that though its members might*

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consider him a fool they would at least call him "Comrade Fool," but he pointed out that, while Mayor Lunn was giving Schenectady a better government than it had had before, it was a strictly reformist government, characterized by "timidity of action, the lack of a bold plan, a kind of aimlessness behind the revolutionary speeches." "When the Socialists become reformers," he wrote trenchantly, "there ceases to be an organized party of genuine radicals to keep the reformers alive."

Bates commented further:

During the ensuing year, Comrade Lippmann was an active member of Branch 1, which was considered the most radical of the Socialist groups in New York City. When Charles Edward Russell was nominated for mayor by the Socialists in the spring of 1913 eleven members of Branch 1, including Lippmann, were dissatisfied with the party platform and submitted what was currently called a "revolutionary left-wing platform" of their own, presumably written by Lippmann as the literary genius of the group. It made a clear distinction between, on the one hand, "Non-Socialist Reforms Indorsed by Socialists," and on the other, "Distinctively Socialist Policies," and it contained a ringing declaration in favor of the latter: "We do not pretend to represent the economic interest of all. We hold that where irreconcilable conflicts of interest exist, it is either ignorance or hypocrisy to pretend to represent all of them. We therefore do not expect, or ask for, the votes of any but those genuinely interested in the abolition of the profit system."

The Socialist's mayoralty candidate was badly beaten, but the year was by no means wasted for Mr. Lippmann. During the previous months he had been developing his own arguments for Socialism in his first book, *A Preface to Politics*, which was published in 1913. This volume should perhaps be referred to as "A Preface to Walter Lippmann," for one must read it in order to fully understand how thoroughly committed Lippmann was to the Fabian proposition that the American Constitutional republic had to be destroyed. What did he hope to replace it with? A Socialist state—loosely called a "democracy"—which could be attained through the "creative statesmanship" of an Executive with a strong will to replace America. Did the end justify the means? Of course, said Mr. Lippmann, but not quite so crudely:

Instead of trying to crush badness we must turn the power behind it to good account. . . . Behind evil there is power, and it is folly,—wasting and disappointing folly, —to ignore this power because it has found an evil issue. All that is dynamic in human character is in these rooted lusts. [*p. 50*]

This view of the utility of evil was certainly in line with Fabian morality, which was but a modern adaptation of Machiavelli; it is fittingly symbolized in the Fabian coat-of-arms depicting a political wolf in sheep's clothing. Concerning the Machiavellian tactics of Fabian Socialism, Professor Philip M. Crane has written in *The Democrat's Dilemma:*

[*Sidney*] *Webb was fully prepared to employ any means —fair or foul—to achieve his end. As Anne Fremantle put it: "There was also in Sidney an almost terrifying disregard for the means to achieve the single goal he had set himself."*

In other words, the Fabians were practising Marxism-Leninism before Lenin had even emerged, and what Miss Fremantle had said of Sidney Webb could also be said for Walter Lippmann. In fact, his book was a primer for those who would willfully and deliberately transform the United States into a Socialist state. He provided the philosophical and practical guidelines for a vast plan of action. Lippmann wrote:

Nobody needs waste his time debating whether or not there are to be great changes. That is settled for us whether we like it or not. What is worth debating is the method by which change is to come about. [*p. 285*]

Naturally, such change could only take place after the masses had been sufficiently "educated":

The real preparation for a creative statesmanship lies deeper than parties and legislatures. It is the work of publicists and educators, scientists, preachers and artists. Through all the agents that make and popularize thought must come a bent of mind interested in invention and freed from the authority of ideas. [*p. 307*]

Lippmann's book made quite an impression among his fellow radicals; in fact it led him directly into an association with "Liberal" Herbert Croly in the founding of the *New Republic* magazine in 1914. The magazine, financed by Willard Straight of the J. P. Morgan company, was billed as a "Journal of Opinion which seeks to Meet the Challenge of a New Time." H. L. Mencken, not at all taken in by such high-sounding advertisement, referred to Lippmann and his colleagues as the "kept idealists" of the *New Republic*. Its first issue, published on November 7, 1914, characteristically featured an article entitled "The End of American Isolation," thus serving notice that the magazine would promote a new internationalist foreign policy for the United States. Although the magazine was promoted as "Liberal," it was clearly a mouthpiece for the Socialist ideas of world government. This was the time, incidentally, when the Fabian totalitarians began expropriating classical Liberal terminology as a cover for their own illiberalism.

During this same fateful year, Walter Lippmann's Fabian professor, Graham Wallas, published his important book entitled *The Great Society*. The Preface, written in the form of a dedicatory letter to his star pupil, read as follows:

Dear Walter Lippmann,

This book develops the material of that discussion-course ("Government 31") which you joined during my stay at Harvard in the spring of 1910.

Now that the book is finished, I can see, more clearly than I could while writing it, what it is about; and in particular what its relation is to my Human Nature in Politics *(1908). I may, therefore, say briefly that the earlier book was an analysis of representative government, which turned into an argument against nineteenth-century intellectualism; and that this book is an analysis of the general social organization of a large modern state, which has turned, at time, into an argument against certain forms of twentieth-century anti-intellectualism.*

I send it to you in the hope that it may be of some help when you write that sequel to your Preface to Politics *for which all your friends are looking.—*

Sincerely yours, *Graham Wallas*

Wallas's thesis was that our great industrial civilization was drifting, and that in order for it to be channeled in the

proper socialistic direction, it had to be controlled from top to bottom. Individual freedom had to be curtailed "democratically." On the subject of "democratic" thought control, he wrote:

If non-official Thought is to become effective it must also use the oral interchange of ideas. And since, in our urban communities, nothing can be done effectively which is not done deliberately, we must provide at least as carefully for the Organized Thought of the ordinary citizen as we are now beginning to provide for his Individual Thought. [*p. 283*]

Lippmann's second book, *Drift and Mastery,* which was published in late 1914, echoed his teacher's ideas. He too was concerned about how we could reach The Great Society. But, as author Lippmann discovered, it wasn't the plutocrats who were standing in the way of Socialist planning, but the people themselves. He writes:

. . . We have to face the fact in America that what thwarts the growth of our civilization is not the uncanny, malicious contrivance of the plutocracy, but the faltering method, the distracted soul, and the mushy vision of what we call grandiloquently the will of the people. [*p. xvi*]

For Lippmann it wasn't tyranny which blocked the way to Socialism, but freedom which had reached new heights as the old authorities crumbled under the advance of science. To Lippmann and Wallas, this freedom was really chaos. Lippmann explained:

The battle for us, in short, does not lie against crusted prejudice, but against the chaos of the new freedom. This chaos is our real problem. [*p. xvi*]

Lippmann's book called for a conscious plan to be imposed upon America by the radicals so that their great collectivist society could be attained. Naturally, he had to convince his fellow "Liberals" that the people with their mushy vision—for whom he had typical Fabian-intellectal contempt—would not really object to being controlled:

Men will do almost anything but govern themselves. They don't want the responsibility. In the main, they are looking for some benevolent guardian, be it a "good man in office" or a perfect constitution, or the evolution of nature. They want to be taken in charge. [*p. 189, emphasis ours*]

As for American traditions of freedom which look with disfavor upon those who would impose their plans over others, Lippmann argued:

There can be no real cohesion for America in following scrupulously the inherited ideals of our people. . . . The only possible cohesion now is a loyalty that looks forward. . . . To do this men have to substitute purpose for tradition. . . . We can no longer treat life as something that has trickled down to us. We have to deal with it deliberately, devise its social organization, alter its tools, formulate its methods, educate and control it. [*p. 266*]

Of course, any kind of master plan demands that those who carry it out work under a central discipline, giving up their individual independence. But Mr. Lippmann finds great compensations in accepting this discipline:

There is a terrible loneliness that comes to men when they realize their feebleness before a brutally uninterested universe. . . . He [man] seeks assurance in a communion with something outside himself, at the most perhaps, in a common purpose, at least, in a fellowship of effort. "This is the true joy in life," says Bernard Shaw, "the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one." [*p. 278*]

Shaw, of all the Fabians, gloated most over the use of Machiavellian methods. Lippmann further rationalized the need for collective discipline in several of the most interesting passages in his book:

What men need in their specialties in order to enable them to co-operate is not alone a binding passion, but a common discipline.

Science, I believe, implies such a discipline. . . . The scientific world is the best example we have today of how specialists can cooperate. . . . There are undoubtedly beginnings of such a common method in public affairs. . . . Instruments of a cooperative mind are being forged. . . .

This work has aroused in many men the old sense of cosmic wonder, and called forth devotion to impersonal ends. [*p. 281*]

His use of the phrase "cosmic wonder" suggests that Mr. Lippmann is cryptically referring to something much more concrete. In any case, we cannot help but suspect that when Lippmann wrote of the "instruments of a cooperative mind" which were in the process of being "forged," he was referring in a cryptic manner to the great political conspiracy which was then being organized around that master conspirator, Colonel Edward M. House. Colonel House, who was Wilson's advisor and alter ego, had already formulated his own suggestions for a Socialist dictatorship in America in a book, which he had published anonymously in 1912, entitled *Philip Dru: Administrator.* It is not only likely that Lippmann read *Philip Dru* and was thereby influenced by it, but it is also likely that Colonel House read *A Preface to Politics* and found in Lippmann a first-class recruit for his "cooperative mind," which was a fancy phrase for conspiracy. We do not know when Lippmann met House for the first time—perhaps as early as 1912, through the good offices of Lincoln Steffens—but we do know that by 1916, Lippmann, as an associate editor of the *New Republic,* was in constant touch with House. Discussing the *New Republic's* pro-Wilson bias, Lippmann wrote in the July 16, 1930 issue of the magazine:

Our relations with Wilson were never personal. I don't think Croly ever saw Wilson when he was President; in the winter of 1916 I had two or three interviews, such as any journalist has with the President. Croly and I did begin to see something of Colonel House. It was a curious relationship. Wilson was preparing to run for his second term; his main problem was the management of American neutrality. We discussed the problem perhaps once a fortnight with Colonel House. He never told us what the President was going to do. . . . Partly by coincidence, partly by a certain parallelism of reasoning, certainly by no direct inspiration either from the President or Colonel House, The New Republic *often advocated policies which Wilson pursued.*

(*To be concluded*)