

PREFACE

THESE pages embody the attempt of a plain man to thread a way through the social confusion of our time. The book sets out with a profound faith in the validity of the democratic principle ; and its object is to trace the path along which the logic of this principle appears to lead. No claim is made to expert knowledge of economics or political science ; but the writer has endeavoured to acquaint himself with the recent literature of the subject and to understand the main currents of prevailing opinion and feeling.

Events are moving so rapidly at the present time that certain passages became impertinent before the book was finished. It is probable that before it finally leaves the writer's hands, other passages may suffer in the same way. But the main drift of the argument remains unaffected.

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No attempt has been made in the body of the book to discuss the methods by which the social and economic changes which are impending should be carried through. It has been assumed that in the English-speaking world, the traditional respect for constitutional processes would avail to prevent resort to what has come to be known as "direct action." It is now clear that this assumption was ill-founded and that there is a considerable