

As to the first point, three main solutions are offered, control by state government departments, control by independent commissions, and control by trade unions. The choice of system would in great measure depend on the method in which the socialist commonwealth came into being. Coming as a result of the gradual extension of state and municipal ownership to one industry after another, the first alternative would be the most probable solution. The prospect is one which should warm the cockles of a Tammany grafter's heart. Here would be a prize worth the striving for, the control not of a narrow section of men's activities but of the whole wide field. Incalculable interests would be at stake. And we are asked to believe that in the strife there would be no factional struggle, no wire-pulling, no dickering, no ward heeler, no slates, that in this ideal state only the fittest will be chosen to office, and that there will be no machine. In such a state civil service reform would have no meaning. To prohibit civil servants from political activity when everybody is a civil servant, is to disfranchise the nation. The struggle between different groups and occupations to secure control of the government would be intense. Competition driven out of the economic door would fly in at the political window. Quite aside from this evil of still more intense political strife, there would be the consideration that the unwieldy centralization involved would be fatal to progress and efficiency. Bureaucratic routine would paralyze initiative. The red flag would be shredded into red tape.

Recognizing this danger, other socialists suggest government by commission. Government by state-appointed commissions has to its credit some notable achievements. There is, however, need here for discrimination. For its success three conditions appear to be indispensable. The number of commissions should not be so great as to make impossible that constant publicity which to-day tempers authority and remedies the evils of inertia and routine and cliquism which sooner or later beset such bodies. The commission succeeds best when its function is gathering and dispensing information or regulating private industry; it succeeds least when it endeavors itself to carry on complex administrative duties. Finally, commissions can be independent of party pressure only so long as their appointment is not the main function of the government and therefore not the main issue on which elections turn. Set up commissions in every sphere of activity, impose upon them the burdens of administration as well as of publicity or regulation, make them so important a factor in government that their choice will be the chief object of party rivalry, and if we escape from Prussianizing our free democracies it will only be by relapsing into the régime of faction and pull for which the commission is suggested as a remedy.