The author who created a minor sensation with 'Parkinson's Laws' by which bureaucracy grows regardless of workload, challenges more conventions in this useful volume addressed to students and general readers. Because India is one of the few open forums remaining in Asia for debating political thought, 'general readers' - administrators, economists, sociologists, and political and social workers - should give Parkinson a hearing; he gives fresh perspective to current discussions about democracy and local self-government.

His treatment displays two principal virtues. First, he does not limit himself, perhaps because he studies and teaches history, to restating the notions of the standard-textbook array of political theorists in the Western tradition; he avoids theory for the sake of theory, and discusses only those thinkers who are clearly useful in explaining political realities. And, perhaps because he teaches in Asia, at the University of Malaya, he examines not just Western experience but also that of India, China, and Latin America.

Second, abandoning the textbook framework of chronology, he analyzes four types of political organization - monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, and dictatorship - arguing that they evolve one from another, in that order. Each has strengths and weaknesses; each - its form varying in response to circumstances of the society in which it appears, arises to solve certain problems each collapses when the problems change.

So, for example, Republican Rome's democratic institutions disintegrated when shouldered with problems of the sprawling Empire. In 19th-century Latin America, the liberators who ousted the Spanish modelled their new governments after the American constitution; but, since the necessary social conditions for democracy were lacking, dictatorships soon emerged. Although horrified, Simon Bolivar himself recognised that democratic forms could not handle Columbia's problems and thus allowed himself to be enthroned as king.

Studying evolution of forms rather than chronology of history, Parkinson skips nimbly across centuries, continents, and civilizations, for his evidence. Buddhist monasteries are excellent incubators of the procedures and attitudes needed in the councils of parliamentary democracy. Communism stands not with Nazism as a form of dictatorship, but alongside Calvin's theocratic institutions of 15th-century Geneva as a form of oligarchy. With Locke and Jefferson, Gandhi receives full treatment as an original thinker - the only one in our century on democracy.

In the light of the recent outbreak of coups d'etat in Asia and Africa, and of the debates about the development of political institutions in the new India, Parkinson's insights are provocative. His analysis of the weaknesses of the welfare-state form of democracy is devastating. He finds no one type notably superior to the others; in any event, contrary to the sense of the word 'form', no form is static. A form may be long- or short-lived, but, since it is a living organism, change is certain.

By implication then, monarchy must evolve into oligarchy, oligarchy into democracy, democracy into dictatorship, and dictatorship again into monarchy; not an encouraging message. But, Parkinson doesn't abandon the reader here. In his Epilogue, he exchanges the role of coolly-disinterested historian for that of a citizen and commentator. He argues no dogma; we need not resign ourselves to running on the evolutionary treadmill without hope; the circle can be broken.

The subtle Chinese mind, he feels, will probably not long submit to the straightjacket of Communist dogmatism. On the other hand, no bold new thinking has come from the Western world during this century. For the next major step in the evolution of political thought he looks to India.

Despite his high opinion of Gandhi, he sees little possibility of turning the clock of industrial development back by returning to village republics. But, although closing this rear exit, he does not slam the front door leading to some development of India's recent experience - which must draw upon the Gandhian concern with villages as well as from Western experience with urban industrialization.

Probably to the disappointment of some readers, Parkinson does not propose his own solution a complete system, a glittering theory about which study circles could discuss, dissect, and dispute for weeks. In an era of isms, he avoids such temptations. Instead, he suggests how social scientists must evolve solutions in each society. As a true democrat, he concentrates upon means rather than ends, upon methodology rather than Utopian results. For he finds that studies in political science are generally more political than scientific.

The first step is simple in theory but challenging in practice: to gather the facts. We are largely ignorant about most forms of political organization, past and present. We hark back so often to Greece and Rome because Greek writers left some records of their experience; not so elsewhere.

One source of facts - generally of dubious value are political theorists, sociologists, ethnologists, psychologists, philologists, historians, geographers, and economists; for political organizations serve whole societies, and no one discipline can describe societies as a whole.

Having collected all facts possible, scientific political thinkers must verify them, compose a picture of the system being studied, and then analyze whether it succeeded or failed in solving the problems of its society. Thus armed with experience, we can better examine the problems we face and, using the scientific method, seek to create solutions without erring in the footsteps of our forefathers.

Parkinson leaves us with this combination of analysis and suggestion, HOW to apply it in India?
Experienced rural development workers readily admit that they do not know enough about the people they serve; some realize, too, their ignorance of field research techniques of the social sciences. Most hold high an ideal of local democracy, but few are confident about how it can be established.

Along with devolution of power, 'people's programme', and 'planning from below', we hear daily of the glorious panchayat democracy of ancient times. We are assured that it existed, but we hear little about how it worked. The history of attempts during the past ninety years to establish local self-government is dismal. Scholars would do great service by digging up the details about these ancient panchayats. If reliable documentation does not exist as is probable, they can turn for clues to the traditional receptacles of history- folk legends and epic poems. Even clues are desperately needed.

Hank weeds of dictatorship are strangling loosely-rooted democracies around us. Will we see the same drama here? Parkinson tells the hows and whys from history, and shows how to challenge the saying that history repeats itself.

Atic’s New Dyes Plant

THE extension to the Atic Industries Private Ltd dyestuffs plant at Bulsar, Bombay, which was formally opened on the 9th by Shri Manubhai Shah, Minister of Industry, will manufacture a wide range of vat dyes. The dyes include vat purple, blues, blacks, browns, olive, yellow, orange and some solubilised vats. The monthly installed capacity is approximately 3,15,000 lbs and the project has cost Rs 1.3 crores.

The new plant, which has taken two years to complete, will strengthen the country’s dyestuffs industry and save a substantial amount of foreign exchange previously spent on importing these dyes. The extension has been built alongside the original Atic plant, opened in 1956, to make Atic Jade Green dyestuffs.

The new plant is housed in a three-storied manufacturing building with a floor area of 47,000 square feet. Ancillary buildings include an electricity supply sub-station, a chitted water plant, compressor house and a cooling water recovery plant. New storage facilities have been provided for raw materials and engineering stores.

A well-equipped laboratory for the testing of raw materials and finished products, with facilities for dye testing and dye application, forms a part of the project.

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