

The mixed mesophytic forests occupy a relatively small area and are regarded as the lineal descendants of the Tertiary forests surviving in areas that have escaped glaciation, especially in the southern portion of the Appalachian plateau. The oak-hickory and oak-chestnut communities are held to represent local segregates from the mixed mesophytic type associated with more arid conditions. The communities occupying the largest areas are the hemlock-white pine northern hardwoods, covering a vast extent in the Great Lakes region, and the evergreen forests of the south-east, which are here included in the deciduous forest formation because their affinities are held to be closest with the other forest types dealt with.

For all the communities the author furnishes data from a number of sample areas respecting the woody constituents, and though reference is made from time to time to the herbaceous vegetation this is incidental rather than a feature of the main theme. The whole work is well illustrated by some eighty half-tone reproductions and nine maps, one of which is on a large scale, showing the limits of the forest regions as here defined.

The approach is essentially floristic rather than ecological, and habitat conditions are only briefly and generally treated; but within these limitations the work constitutes a valuable addition to the literature dealing with the arboreal vegetation of this area.

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## CIVIL ADMINISTRATION IN GREAT BRITAIN

### The Civil Service Today

By T. A. Critchley. With an Introduction by the Rt. Hon. Lord Beveridge. Pp. 150. (London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1951.) 12s. 6d. net.

MR. T. A. CRITCHLEY in this book has set out to give a factual and objective account of the Civil Service in Great Britain and the way it works, as well as to indicate in what respects it differs from the pre-war Service. This was done for the administrative class ten years ago by H. E. Dale; but Mr. Critchley covers a wider field and, it must be admitted, his book is by no means easy reading. He succeeds in conveying a clear picture of the way in which the Civil Service has grown with the increasing demands on government for positive rather than negative functions, and of the way in which certain of its inherent weaknesses are linked to such measures for obtaining public control and ministerial responsibility as the parliamentary question. But something much more vivid than the few flashes he gives of four or five Civil servants at their daily work will be required to hold the interest of the many whom he is trying to convince as to the necessity for a Civil Service and the way its size is determined by the public demand for services; and to any thoughtful reader the picture he presents of the complexities of administration is as frightening as that which he gives of the extent to which the Civil Service now touches, and sometimes paralyses, the whole of civil life.

This is not nearly as profound a book as either Mr. H. E. Dale's or the more recent studies of Dr. E. N. Gledden or Mr. H. R. G. Greaves, though it could easily have had a wider appeal. On the whole, Mr. Critchley is too much on the defensive, and what he

does not say is sometimes more significant than what he actually writes. A working Civil servant could after all have scarcely been expected to write the obvious rider as to the effect on the Civil Service, not to mention on Parliament and ministers, of overloading Parliamentary sessions with legislation, however admirable individual measures may be and no matter how much public support they receive. Disregard of administrative limitations may be as disastrous as disregard of known chemical or physical properties in technical development.

Even where Mr. Critchley might be expected to be less inhibited he is too reserved. More should have been said of the Whitley Council system in the Civil Service, on the real weakness of which he merely touches. Further, though he admits that Civil servants are not infallible, he is inclined to lay the blame for defects entirely outside the Service. Of local government he says little and that little is disparaging, betraying no hint that in the revivification of local government might be found the way to a solution of the problem of complexity at the centre. He questions, in fact, the value of devolution, and when he writes of the necessity for a real spirit of public service he is plausible rather than persuasive in arguing that by this means deficiencies in organization would be corrected.

Unquestionably more mutual understanding between the Civil servant and the public is required—and, also it might be added, a clearer appreciation of the limitations of the Civil Service on the part of Parliament and Cabinet. Mr. Critchley's book may do something to further that understanding, but the dominant impression it leaves on the mind of the reader is the necessity for some very clear thinking about not so much the organization and functions of the Civil Service but rather the whole structure and organization of government, and the imperative necessity for grappling with that problem of local government reform which all political parties seem determined to ignore or avoid.

There are three other points that will strike the man of science who reads this book. Mr. Critchley clearly believes that there is room for the wider diffusion of scientific methods throughout the Service and that such a step would have a tonic effect. Nevertheless, he is sceptical as to the effect on a democratic system if the man of science once comes to dominate, and he becomes confused when he refers to the man of science or other expert as an administrator. Much more dangerous to democratic institutes, however, is the tendency for parliamentary democracy under the conditions depicted by Mr. Critchley to pass into tyranny of the executive. It is clear from this book, that that danger is yet to be removed.

The third point that emerges from the figures given by Mr. Critchley and the general picture he draws is of the extent of the demand which present conditions make upon Great Britain for trained man-power. Can the nation afford to devote to non-productive tasks its highly trained men and women in the numbers required to execute the tasks now placed upon the Civil Service? Can the educational system of Great Britain supply the necessary administrative talent, even if we draw freely on all possible reserves of it from science and technology? These are but a few of the questions raised by a book that, purporting to be descriptive, is highly suggestive to any thoughtful reader and, for all its limitations, covers the ground at least as well as any other. R. BRIGHTMAN