

BOOKS

The Revolutionary Theme in Contemporary America (edited by Thomas R. Ford). Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1965. Pp. x, 99. \$3.50.

These four essays were papers presented at a conference on "Main Currents in American Life" sponsored by the University of Kentucky to mark its Centennial in 1965. The essays focus on revolutionary change in American society, a comparison of Canadian and American societies, the impact of a "goal-oriented" activist U.S. Supreme Court, and the connection between organization and education.

In the open essay, Max Lerner sees America as having been revolutionary in two ways: historically in a transfer of power, i.e., American Revolution, and presently in a "drastic, highly accelerated pace of change." While the events of the post-war years have eroded the image of America as a revolutionary power in the first sense, the United States continues to be an authentic revolutionary civilization in terms of social change. Lerner identifies six major processes operating in American life: the revolution of weapons technology, the revolution of access, the uprooting revolution, the cultural and intellectual explosions, the time revolution, and the revolution of values. He does not see man totally at the mercy of these revolutions; it is possible "to locate these revolutionary changes . . . [and] to channel them . . . to the uses of radical humanism."

C. Herman Pritchett traces the recent role of the U.S. Supreme Court in protecting civil rights. Much of the resistance to the Court's decisions draw from two sources. First, while there have been activist courts in the past, they have generally supported conservative aims and have, as a result, received strong approval from the "establishment." The recent decisions have been in support of liberal goals and have not received the approval of much of the news media and the bar association. Secondly, where the Court has traditionally served as a brake on state action, the recent Court has operated as an instrument for social change. Pritchett argued that a strong Supreme Court is not only not a danger to democratic change but an added assurance that representative institutions will be responsive to democratic purposes.

Peter F. Drucker examines the relationship between the rise of modern organization and the educational revolution. The growth of vast organizations has meant virtually unlimited opportunities for the highly edu-

cated in the developed countries. Not only is education the "central economic resources and the key investment," but the university, the agency for producing the Educated Society, must become the creative centre of society.

Perhaps the most interesting paper is Seymour Martin Lipset's comparative examination of Canadian and American societies. Using the four distinctions of achievement-ascription, universalism-particularism, self-orientation-collectivity orientation, and equillitarianism-elitism, Lipset sees the United States as "more achievement-oriented, universalistic, equalitarian, and self-oriented than Canada." The major factors causing these differences are identified by Lipset as the Canadian counter-revolutionary past, its need to distinguish itself from the U.S., the Anglican religious tradition, and the difference in frontier expansion. Lipset cites the impact of the Loyalist settlers (it would appear that the United Empire Loyalists have great explanatory power in Canadian historiography) on the development of anti-American sentiment. His easy distinction between the Canadian "mosaic" and the American "melting-pot" approaches to immigration is entirely too simple. Neither does he show why the Methodists and Baptists, who strongly opposed a religious establishment in the United States, exercised limited influence in Canada and why the Methodists were willing to become a part of the "establishment." Although Canadian Society may be as Lipset describes, the reasons for it would appear to be more subtle and complex than he allows.

R. L. Schnell

The University of Calgary

Paul Diesing. *Reason in Society: Five Types of Decisions and Their Social Conditions*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962. Pp. 262. \$5.75.

This is a very useful book both for the decision maker in an ongoing enterprise and for the detached students of *wissensoziologie*. Professor Diesing states his purpose early and with clarity in the following terms:

The basic purpose of this book is to explore three other kinds of rationality which are basically analogous to technical and economic rationality without being reducible to them. . . . I shall consider in addition to technical and economic rationality, the kinds of rationality appropriate in interpersonal relations, in law, and in governmental or control systems. (p. 2)

Diesing points out initially a tendency to equate rationality with technical or economic rationality. He invokes von Mises: "all rational action is therefore an act of economizing." Current organizational theory tends to define organizational rationalization in terms of increments in productive efficiency. Raymond Callahan in his work, *Education and the Cult*

of *Efficiency*, details the unpleasant consequences of the application of economic and technical rationality to educational policy decisions. One of the major emphases made in Diesing's work is the conflict of different forms of rationality in differing institutional contexts. He states quite candidly, "I wish to change existing conceptions of rationality." (p. 5)

The author emphasizes that he will utilize S. C. Peppers' conception of *natural selective systems*—a form of Darwinian survival related to culture traits or techniques which tend to be reinforced by rewards or efficacy over time. It is also not unrelated to Comtean organicism or natural systems which evolve according to some inherent logic.

Selective systems, then, operate through the agency of individuals and on culture traits. They produce a gradual increase in number and quality of effective culture traits and a decrease of ineffective traits over a period of time. (p. 6)

The different forms of rationality are linked to what Diesing terms *trend developments*—in other words, each form of social rationality is linked to an institutional, organizational or functional context. Each of these contexts in turn exhibits a goal-dynamic such as economic progress, integration, stratification, or legalism.

The author uses a common format to analyze differing patterns of rationality. He first attempts to describe the historical trend of development and the type of organization it produces. Next he goes on to the pattern of decision making within the area, discussing the conditions under which this method is appropriate. Finally, he attempts to identify the kind of "good" produced by the rational action under discussion.

Taking only one of the five rational forms, technical rationality, the author points out that this form is undertaken for the sake of achieving a given end. It is associated with technological progress or with increasing the efficiency of productive techniques. A technically rational decision is one best suited to move a sequence of actions toward a given goal—it is in short a means to a predetermined end. It is the appropriate decision in a calculable context or the price system. The good achieved is some utility, satisfaction or goal attainment.

The other forms are similarly analyzed and contrasted. The legal order is directed toward a system of clear, consistent, detailed and technical rules; the social system toward integration; the economic system toward the production of utilities in a more general sense than limited technical utilities; and the political system in the production of freedom. Trend developments, appropriate contexts, and decisional patterns are discussed with discernment and erudition.

Diesing attempts in his final chapter to generalize about the concept of reason, citing attributes such as order, creativity, and calculation. "Every decision," he states, "is a creative act." (p. 240) He concludes

with a plea for greater emphasis on forms of rationality other than technical and economic:

Social and political rationality are the most neglected of the forms of rationality today and their study is the most important, both in theoretical terms and in relation to the principal world problems of today. (p. 247)

On the positive side, Diesing refines at a considerably more sophisticated level the concept of social rationality beyond the simplistic or monofactorial view of economics and technology. His interpretation is however not without bias. He is almost Hegelian when he states:

Existing societies are reasonable because they must be in order to survive. Reasonableness occurs because it is rewarded by continued existence, and beyond by increase of power, security, adaptability. (p. 240)

Despite some mention of creativity there is, in this work, a sociological tendency toward consensus, group maintenance and evolutionary change without sufficient recognition of the functions of conflict and existential deviancy by individuals. It tends to manifest a conservative-organicist bias common in the functionalist perspective in sociology.

This effort is, however, an extremely useful step in clarifying an important concept with sophistication and grace. Decision makers in education can gain a better understanding of functional areas beyond the normal economic and legalistic frames of reference to which they presently seem to be limited. The mistakes of Cubberly and Strayer need not be repeated. For the theoretician, the heuristic possibilities for research and analysis are considerably broadened. This is a valuable and insightful book, written with deceptive clarity and providing fare for both the discerning decision maker and the speculative investigator.

E. L. Koch

The University of Calgary

