

M . A. POLITICAL SCIENCE

SEMESTER : FOUR

UNIT : FOUR

SPENCER : EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

- Spencer was known as the ' Father of Biological Approach to Politics '
- From his early environment he derived his love of liberty and later in life acquired passion for evolution. These two became the leading ideas in his thought.
- Under the influence of the views of his father and uncle his twelve articles in 'Nonconformist ' laid stress on the separation of Church from State.
- Like many of the nineteenth century scientists he discarded the belief in God and advocated the idea of a life force which was dynamic , not static.

DARWIN'S INFLUENCE

- Spencer accepted Darwin 's principle of 'survival of the fittest'.
- In 'Principles of Ethics' he wrote that:

".....among adults the individuals best adapted to the conditions of their existence shall prosper the most and the individuals least adapted to the conditions of their existence shall prosper the least."

- Though he accepted the principle of natural selection he did not agree that selection takes place through accidental variation.
- He also refused to accept the dictum of Weissman as to the non -inheritability of acquired characteristics.
- Thus Spencer believed that the qualities acquired through natural selection would produce a better society than the transmission of those resulting from artification..

UTILITARIAN VIEW

- Accepting the utilitarian view he held that happiness was the end of life and could be attained by constantly adjusting oneself to the surroundings.
- This process of adjustment was continuous and required a certain freedom in man which he termed free energy and faculty.
- Applied to human society, it meant a perfect society in which there would be complete harmony between man and man, with no interference from the government.
- Gradually the area of state activity should be reduced and the field for the exercise of man's natural rights should be enlarged.
- In the perfect/ideal society there would be no need of government but until it is reached "an instrumentality must be employed, firstly to bind man into social state and secondly to check all conduct endangering the existence of that state. "Such an instrumentality we have in government. "(Spencer)
- The State shall not go beyond the two functions. State activities are limited so that they do not interfere with society's natural evolution and do not prevent the proper differentiation of

social structures which are required for progress .

- Unlike science ,he believed that evolution would not be ad infinitum and would end when harmony was achieved.
- This theory leads to an anarchic society ultimately ,where a progressively evolved industrial society would be reached.
- The transition would take place from the compulsory cooperation of militancy to the voluntary cooperation of industrialism.
- In the midst of heterogeneity of ends morality will integrate the individuals and in this industrial society all will be happy.
- Spencer does not attribute a life and personality to the state like the Idealists had done.

HOSTILITY TOWARDS STATE

- The state was created only to check wickedness of individuals while the process of adjustment was going on.
- In the industrial stage it should be only negatively regulating. It should only redress evils and not prevent them.
- The state can't create the character required for harmony. It can only check social disharmony .
- State is not to protect or promote men for it would only increase number of incompetents.
- In 'The Man Versus the State' Spencer advocates ending officialdom.
- The State should not mitigate the suffering of the poor .
- There should be no provision for sympathy, love ,charity or benevolence in the State. These positive values have a place only in the private life and family.
- He was against state -managed post offices and ,monetary system ,factory legislation ,state issued currency or prevention of practice by unlicensed physicians etc.
- The State should not legislate for the regulation of commerce and trade, sanitary matters,poor relief and opening of schools and colleges.
- The State should not interfere with natural rights and freedom of contract in order to prevent them from happening.
- The State should not bother about building roads other than those required for the defense of the county .
- Barker thus believes that Spencer "s account of the functions of the State is mainly an account of what State ought not to do.
- Thus, his evolutionary theory lead him towards hostility towards the State and trust in the individual.

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