Chapter II

Shaw's Attitude to Democracy

Shaw began his political education, as he himself says in the Preface to John Bull's Other Island," by reading Karl Marx.¹ This gave him a new vision and also an advantage over his comppeers in the political field, and it taught him to distinguish between sham Democracy and real Democracy easily. While others around him were glorifying the British brand of Democracy which, in their opinion, was becoming more and more democratic, first, by abolishing the property qualification for the House of Commons membership, then, by extending the franchise to women aged 30, and, finally, by granting the vote to every adult aged 21 in conformity with Equality, Shaw became more and more critical of it. From his long political experience of 26 years beginning with his joining the Fabian Society in 1884 and ending in his resignation from its Executive in 1911, Shaw knew that Capitalism and Democracy cannot go together in any real sense. In a society based on private property which he characterises as "the very worst of all the devil's inventions for the demoralization and damnation of mankind,"²

² Prefaces, p. 350.
there can be no true equality. Property is a negation of
democracy. "We know that private property distributes wealth,
work and leisure so unevenly that a wretchedly poor and mis-
erably overworked majority are forced to maintain a minority
inordinately rich and passionately convinced that labor is so
disgraceful to them that they dare not be seen carrying a
parcel down Bond Street. We know that the strains set up by
such a division of interests also destroy peace, justice,
religion, good breeding, honor, reasonable freedom, and every-
thing that government exists to secure, and that all this
iniquity arises automatically when we thoughtlessly allow a
person to own a thousand acres of land in the middle of London
much more completely than he owns the pair of boots in which
he walks over it; for he may not kick me out of my house into
the street with his boots; but he may do so with his writ of
ejectment." Incidentally private property and democracy have
been so organically related in the body politic of the West
that it is difficult to think of the one without the other.
In Shaw's Democracy there is no provision for private property;
it's abolition is the first condition for a civilized society.
"Civilized men and women", he argues, "must live by their
ordered and equal share in the work needed to support the
community, and must find their freedom in their ordered and
equal share of the leisure produced by scientific economy

3 Prefaces, p. 350.
in producing that support. It still takes some conviction to repudiate an institution so well spoken of as private property; but the facts must be faced: our clandestine methods of violating it by income tax and surtax which mean only 'what a thief stole steal thou from the thief' will no longer serve,..."\(^4\)

Politically, no doubt, everybody enjoys equality having the right to vote, on the assumption that the people have a similar political capacity. Shaw holds that the assumption is wrong, for political capacity, like musical or mathematical capacity, differs from individual to individual. Secondly, equality in the right to vote has little meaning without economic equality. It is money power that really rules the country; only in name is it the representatives of the people. Parliament is in the pockets of Plutocracy. In a capitalist society, says Shaw, education, religion, the Press and everything else are formulated and controlled in the interest of the rich and the people born into it are made to regard private property as a sacred institution, symbolic of individual skill and industry! In other words, common people are humbugged into protecting the very thing which, had they known its real character, they would have destroyed at the first available opportunity. This is what democracy in actual

\(^4\) Prefaces, p. 350.
practice has resulted in. The "idle rich", small in number, wallow in riches and luxury and waste; the poor masses scramble in poverty and disease and ignorance.

In 'The Revolutionist's Handbook' supplied as an appendix to Man and Superman he says, "Democracy substitutes election by the incompetent many for appointment by the corrupt few." One important implication of the observation is that a government formed through an "election by the incompetent many" cannot be an efficient government. The democratic government, as he saw it working in England for more than six decades, has left no doubt in his mind that it is neither a government of the best nor of the worst but just an "official government" that keeps going on as a matter of routine work without initiative or innovation or resolution. The persons at the helm of affairs have no cultural background for political education. They still grope their way in pre-Marxian, pre-Butlerian grooves as hopelessly as the blind man in a dark alley. "Votes for everybody (called for short, Democracy) ended in government neither of the best nor of the worst, but in an official government which could do nothing but talk, and an actual government of landlords, employees, and financiers at war with an opposition of trade unionists, strikers, pickets, and occasionally rioters." Here are the examples, in Shaw's own words,

5 Prefaces, p. 188.
6 Preface to Too True to be Good in Prefaces, p. 349.
of the inefficiency of the Democratic Government in England. "When the horrors of unregulated selfish private enterprise forced both Conservatives and Cobdenists to devise and pass the Factory Acts, it took the British Parliament a time lag of 50 years to make them effective. Home Rule for Ireland took thirty years to get through Parliament, and was decided after all by a sanguinary civil war."  

The only silver lining in British Parliamentary life is that in war times, or when there is a real threat to the life of its rulers, it can transact business in 30 minutes which otherwise would take 30 years. The second part in the observation follows inevitably from his conviction, which we have noted earlier, that real Democracy in the sense of a government by people is impossible under Capitalism.

Shaw's reaction to the traditional definition of Democracy as a government of the people for the people by the people is both interesting and instructive. He enlightens his readers on the subject by comparing Democracy "to a big balloon with gas or hot air and sent up so that you shall be kept looking up at the sky whilst other people are picking your pockets. When the balloon comes down to earth every five years or so you are invited to get into the basket if you can throw out one of the people who are sitting tightly in it; but as you can afford neither the time nor the money, and there

7 Preface to Farfetched Fables in Prefaces, p. 907.
are forty millions of you [writing in 1930] and hardly room for six hundred in the basket, the balloon goes up again with much the same lot in it and leaves you where you were before. I think you will admit that the balloon as an image of Democracy corresponds to the parliamentary facts. Now about the first part of the definition of Democracy, government of the people; he agrees that it is evidently necessary, for a human community can no more exist without a government than a human being can exist without a co-ordinated control of its breathing and blood circulation. The second part, government for the people — is, according to him, the most important and he shares the view of Dean Inge that Democracy means "a form of society which means equal consideration for all" and that it is a Christian principle. That is why he insists on "equality of income." But "equal consideration for a person with a hundred a year and one with a hundred thousand is impossible." Shaw does not accept the third part, government by the people — on the ground that the people cannot govern; it is a physical impossibility. "Every citizen," he says, "cannot be a ruler any more than every boy can be an engine driver or a pirate king." If we ask him "why should not the people make their own laws?", he would counter us with "why should not the people write their own plays?"
What, then, the phrase by the people means. According to Shaw, it means that the people are governed by their consent. But the difficulty is that people, in the existing framework of society, refuse to be governed. Their dread of the rates and taxes is a pointer. Even if they are willing to be ruled, who will rule them? Shaw does not believe that "Mr Anybody" elected by "Mr Everybody" can carry on government, which is really the most difficult job on earth and which presupposes a good deal of initiative, imagination, knowledge, character and skill on the part of the ruler. The task has become more difficult for a modern government, for it, unlike the government of the 19th century which concerned itself only with the maintenance of law and order in the country, has to deal in the problems of Socialism at the national level and those of co-operation, harmony and of peace at the international level. In a word, it is beyond the capacity of 98 percent of our existing rulers who cannot manage even "a baked potato shop" successfully. In the context of these facts and observations it will be easier to understand those plays of his which, directly or indirectly, speak of his idea about democracy.

Shaw's political career began in 1884 and his dramatic career in 1892, the year in which Widowers' Houses came out after seven years of hibernation. As has been noted earlier, he made use of his political idea; and convictions in his plays, sometimes satirising the existing institutions, sometimes propagating his own ideology, but amusing the audience all the while. He deliberately chose the art of the comedian like
Aristophanes and Moliere from a conviction that this alone would enable him to criticise, castigate and teach mankind without causing malice to any one; in a word, to realise his political and sociological objectives.

John Bull's Other Island, written in 1904 on the background of the Irish Movement for Home Rule, is the first of Shaw's plays in which he provides his audience with a sample of British Democracy in a style enlivened by wit and satire. The Democratic Government in England, by its own profession, stands for Equality, Liberty, Efficiency. What provokes Shaw into attacking the British Democracy is the lack of harmony between its profession and its practice. He argues that if it truly believes in Liberty, there is no point in denying Home Rule to the Irish. He does not accept the plea of inefficiency either, for the English themselves have been no less inefficient in the management of their own affairs. In the preface to John Bull's Other Island he asks his readers to go through Mr Charles Booth's account of London and Mr Rowntree's account of York to see if his contention is untrue. He also warns the English not to mistake the Irish Protestant selfishness for Irish loyalty. "In Ireland", he says, "it is not 'loyalty' to drink the English King's health and stand uncovered to the national anthem: it is simply exploitation of English rule in the interests of the property, power, and

12 Prefaces p. 457.
promotion of the Irish classes as against the Irish masses.\textsuperscript{13} True, the Home Rule aspect of the play lost most of its significance with the Irish Free State coming into existence in 1921, but in other respects such as hoodwinking the common people in electioneering by appealing to their sentiments and credulity by prospective members of British Parliament, inefficiency of the British Government in tackling its own problems at home, the play is as fresh as ever.

Broadbent is a Liberal in politics and a Protestant by religion. He is going to Ireland "to develop an estate there for the Land Development Syndicate", in which he is interested. He is "convinced that all it needs to make it pay is to handle it properly, as estates are handled in England"\textsuperscript{14} (Act I). Presently an opportunity presents itself to him for his election to the British Parliament from an Irish Constituency. He begins his campaign thus: "All I can say is that as an Englishman I blush for the Union. It is the blackest stain on our national history. I look forward to the time and it cannot be far distant, gentlemen, because Humanity is looking forward to it too, and insisting on it with no uncertain voice - I look forward to the time when an Irish legislature arise once more on the emerald pasture of college Green, and the Union Jack - that detestable symbol of a decadent

\textsuperscript{13} Prefaces, p. 450.

\textsuperscript{14} John Bull's Other Island in the Complete Bernard Shaw Plays, p. 407. Hereafter cited as \textit{Plays}. 
Imperialism - be replaced by a flag as green as the island over which it waves: a flag on which we shall ask for England only a modest quartering in memory of our great party and of the immortal name of our grand old leader^{15}(Act III). It is followed by his ludicrous drive with Haffigan's pig in his car, of which he himself says, "The pig's the thing: the pig will win over every Irish heart to me. We'll take the pig home to Haffigan's farm in the motor: it will have a tremendous effect."^{16} It has a tremendous effect, as the car with the pig in it meets with an accident, and Broadbent, who knows the mob psychology, uses his instruments, namely, his purse, his oratory. The English Liberal addresses his listeners on the subject thus: "Gentlemen, I hope the gravity of the peril through which we have all passed - for I know that the danger to the bystanders was as great as to the occupants of the car - will prove an earnest of closer and more serious relations between us in the future. We have had a somewhat agitating day; a valuable and innocent animal has lost its life: a public building has been wrecked: an aged and infirm lady has suffered an impact for which I feel personally responsible, though my old friend Mr Laurence Doyle unfortunately incurred the first effects of her very natural resentment. I greatly regret the damage to Mr Patrick Farrwell's fingers; 

^{15} Plays, p. 432.

^{16} Ibid., p. 436.
and 'I have of course taken care that he shall not suffer pecuniarily by his mishap' (Act IV). At this moment murmurs of admiration at his magnanimity are heard from his listeners. Now what remains for the future Member for Rosscullen to do is to supplant his friend Larry Doyle in the heart of Nora Reilly and to engage her as his canvasser in electioneering. "You'll be a great success as a canvasser, Nora: they call you the heiress; and they will be flattered [to] no end by your calling, especially as you've never cheapened yourself by speaking to them before..." As he finds her a bit hesitant, he continues - "Aha! Wait till you find out what an exciting game electioneering is: you'll be mad to get me in. Besides, you'd like people to say that Tom Broadbent's wife had been the making of him? That she got him into parliament? into the Cabinet, perhaps, eh?" (Act IV). Shaw has no faith in the efficiency of a Parliament to which members get themselves elected by such dubious means. It is no wonder if the government of such a country fails to solve its vital problem. Modern democracy means a party system of Government and Britain serves as a model of this brand of democracy. A government formed and run by Party System can hardly be efficient, for the members, whether of the Treasury Bench or of the Opposition, are more concerned with the party interest than with the problem itself. A bill is often judged not on

17 Plays p. 438.
18 Ibid., p. 446.
its merit but on whether it enables the ruling party to continue in power or it enables the opposition to topple the government. Speaking of the British Party System Shaw says: "Compare the sterility of Parliament in everything but post-prandial oratory with the extension of municipal socialism by the municipalities, where there are no cabinets, no royal selection, no general elections except at immovably fixed dates: in short, no possibility of the Party System."19

"This lands us in the unexpected conclusion that government by Parliaments modelled on the British Party System, far from being a guarantee of liberty and enlightened progress, must be ruthlessly discarded in the very fullest agreement with Oliver Cromwell, Charles Dickens, John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Adolf Hitler, Pilsudski, Benito Mussolini, Stalin and everyone else who has tried to govern efficiently and incorruptly by it, or who has studied its operation with a knowledge of its history and that of the Industrial Revolution. Contrast what it has done with what an efficient and entirely public spirited government might and should have done during the two centuries of its deplorable existence, or with what the Russian Soviet government has done in twenty years, and all our Whig Macauleyism drops dead before the facts."20

Coming back to the text, one important purpose of sending Hodson, the valet of Broadbent, to Ireland along with his

20 Ibid., p. 29.
master is to focus the miserable condition of the poor in England. As Hodson describes his plight to his Irish counterpart, Matthew Haffigan, the inefficiency and failure of the British Government both at home and abroad come to light. To quote Hodson in his dialect - "Oi once ran ap four weeks in Lezbeth w'en Oi was aht of a job in winter. They took the door off its inges and the winder aht of its seshes on me, an gev maw wawf onoomenia. Oi'm a widower nah. Gawd! when Oi think of the things we Englishmen as to pat ap with, and eah you Awrish ahlin abant your silly little grievances, and see the wy you mike it worse for haz by the rothen wiges youll cam over and take and the rothen plices youll sleep in, I just feel that I could take the aowl bloomin British awland and mike you a present of it, jast to let you fawnd aht wot reel awdship's lawk" (Act III). Things in the democratic world have not changed in any appreciable way even after eighty years since the writing of John Bull's Other Island.

Major Barbara written in 1905, records Shaw's attack, for the first time in dramatic form, on the Democratic Government in England. Andrew Undershaft, one of the joint proprietors of Woolwich Arsenal and a millionaire, meets his son Stephen who has been brought up like any other richmen's son, educated at Harrow and Cambridge, and who, consequently, has acquired the traditional English sentiments and habits. His mother, Lady Britomart, has already warned him that it is not easy to tackle his father. He must have his way no matter

21 Plays, p. 435.
what others or even the Government, say of him. "Those two men, Andrew Undershaft and Lazarus", says Lady Britomart, "positively have Europe under their thumbs. That is why your father is able to behave as he does. He is above the law. Do you think Bismarck or Gladstone or Disraeli could have openly defied every social and moral obligation all their lives as your father has? They simply wouldn't have dared. I asked Gladstone to take it up. I asked the Times to take it up. I asked the Lord Chamberlain to take it up. But it was just like asking them to declare war on the Sultan. They wouldn't. They said they couldn't touch him. I believe they were afraid" (Act I). Although Undershaft has altruistic aims and is anxious to raise the common people from their present humiliating condition of life, the Government do not bother about it. What worries them is his money, as they are simply afraid of his money power. Stephen is too young to understand this; besides he has no political education. Undershaft's free and frank opinion about his capability and his future affects him English sentiment, his sense of patriotism. "He knows nothing; and he thinks, "says Undershaft, "he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career. Get him a private secretaryship to someone who can get him an under Secretaryship and then leave him alone. He will find his natural and proper place in the end on the Treasury bench."

\[22\text{ Plays p. 462.}\]
Naturally comes the protest from Stephen: "I am sorry, sir, that you force me to forget the respect due to you as my father. I am an Englishman; and I will not hear the Government of my country insulted" (Act III). This is enough to send Undershaff into an outburst, marked by a satirical refrain, on the nature of administration in England: "The government of your country! I am the government of your country: I, and Lazarus. Do you suppose that you and half a dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaff and Lazarus? No, my friend; you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it does not. You will find out that trade requires certain measures when we have decided on those measures. When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need. When other people want something to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and military. And in return you shall have the support and applause of my newspapers, and the delight of imagining that you are a great statesman. Government of your country! Be off with you, my boy, and play with your causes and leading articles and historic parties and great leaders and burning questions and the rest of your toys. I am going back to my counting-house to pay the piper and call the tune." 

In this part of Major Barbara, if not elsewhere, Andrew

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23 Plays, p. 490.

24 Plays, pp 490-91.
Undershaft is the spokesman of Shaw, as Shaw has been the spokesman of the Fabians in practical politics. If "effectiveness of expression", as he himself said, "is the Alpha and Omega of style", here is his style at its best. How factual, how precise and yet how effective the expression is! Evidently, one of his objects in this play has been to dramatise what he preached from the platform, that democratic government is impossible under Capitalism. It is Plutocracy in practice but Democracy in name, that rules the country. The iconoclast in Shaw the dramatist has dealt his first blow to make his audience aware of real democracy.

Shaw could not be satisfied with the working of Democracy in England which is popularly known as the homeland of Democracy. Its deviation from its cherished principle of equality tormented him time and again. The incubus of Capitalism would not let Democracy work in the right way. The rise of the Commercial class, the capitalists in the Victorian Age posed a greater danger to Democracy than the landed gentry had done in the preceding age. The crusade which Shaw had started years ago against the evils of Capitalism and the drawbacks of Democracy he now reviewed with renewed vigour in his play Heartbreak House (1913-1919).

Heartbreak House is a landmark in the development of Shaw's didactic art, for it not only presents a dramatic picture of "cultured, leisured Europe before the war" but also diagnoses the maladies from which she is suffering and
suggests the remedy for them. In the eye of Shaw Europe has gone astray, forsaking natural ties of love and affection, embracing artificiality in life, sacrificing democracy to plutocracy and, above all, sinking in ignorance. Ellie's coming on invitation to Mrs Hushabye but finding none to receive her, Captain Shotover's inability to recognise his daughter Andy, his daughter Hesione's failure to recognise her sister, Lady Underwood's dyeing her hair, Randall's running after married women, Mazzini Dunn's attempt at business ending in his bankruptcy, Mangan's frenzied move to "strip stark naked"—all these are suggestive of the chaos on all sides in English (also European) national life.

On the political side the prospect is no less gloomy. Mangan in Heartbreak House represents the modern entrepreneur, worthy offspring of Capitalism. It is a very powerful class. It is money power that makes them veritable gods on earth. They live and grow under the democratic government but they flout it and its principles at will. Boss Mangan, a Napoleon of Industry, for example, has an income of "fifty thousand" a year. He is in politics as well, obviously by money power.

Heartbreak House symbolises England (also Europe, there being no essential difference). Literally it means Captain Shotover's house, which Ellie describes as "this silly house, this strangely happy house, this agonizing house, this house without foundations" (Act III). Captain Shotover himself

25 *Plays*, p. 799.
disowns it saying: "It is not my house; it is only my kennel." Bad becomes worse. Heetor despairingly asks Captain Shotover what will happen to his ship that we are all in? This soul's prison we call England? His reply is: "The captain is in his bunk, drinking bottled ditchwater; and the crew is gambling in the forecastle. She will strike and sink and split." The drunken skipper may turn to Providence, but it will not save him, for "one of the ways of Providence with drunken skippers is to run them on the rocks." Where does safety lie? Safety lies in navigation. "Learn your business as an Englishman," says Captain Shotover to Heetor. "Learn it and live; or leave it and be damned." The people of Heartbreak House, except the "two burglars", have survived the catastrophe and there lies the hope for them. But they have to turn their eyes from the balloon above to the earth below to have real democracy in life. In Shaw's earthly paradise there is no room for the burglars and idlers. Dramatically, the explosion from the sky killing Mangan and the burglar means that and nothing else.

The Apple Cart, written in 1929, is the first full fledged political play by Shaw. When it saw the light of the

26 Plays, p. 799.
27 Ibid., p. 801.
28 Ibid., p. 801.
29 Ibid., p. 800.
30 Ibid., p. 801.
stage, there was a commotion in the political world both at home and abroad. His detractors rejected the play as a blasphemy against Democracy and carried on the propaganda that he was a reactionary. Others felt that Shaw changed colour and became an ardent Royalist. They accused him of an act of "political apostasy". Shaw himself described the reaction thus: 'The first performances of this play at home and abroad provoked several confident anticipations that it would be published with an elaborate prefatory treatise on Democracy to explain why I, formerly a notorious democrat, have apparently veered round to the opposite quarter and become a devoted Royalist. In Dresden the performance was actually prohibited as a blasphemy against Democracy.'

Shaw is a champion of Democracy but not of the sham democracy which is at work in England and in other capitalist countries. He used to say it is not enough to be a democrat; he must be a Socialist too. Capitalism, he believes, is a negation of Democracy. The monster swallows democracy as easily as a big fish swallows a small one. Since the beginning of his dramatic career he consistently attacked capitalism and satirised the masquerades of Democracy in a number of plays. Significantly *Widowers' Houses*, his first play, and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, his third, have been bitter attacks on Capitalism

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31 Preface to *The Apple Cart* in *Prefaces* p. 325.
just as John Bull's Other Island, Major Barbara, Heartbreak House, have been, among other things, satires on Democracy. Those who are aware of his political conviction and of his method in the plays find nothing surprising or shocking in The Apple Cart. It is very much in harmony with his mission as a Socialist. Without the destruction of Capitalism there can be no real democracy. Hence his repeated attacks on the evil.

While Shaw's critics discover in The Apple Cart the triumph of Monarchy over Democracy in the conflict between them, he himself finds: "The conflict is really not between royalty and democracy. It is between both and plutocracy which, having destroyed the royal power by frank force under democratic pretexts, has bought and swallowed democracy. Money talks: money prints; money broadcasts; money reigns, and kings and labor leaders alike have to register its decrees, and even, by a staggering paradox, to finance its enterprises and guarantee its profits. Democracy is no longer bought: it is bilked." Shaw has neatly dramatised the truth in The Apple Cart. The futility and hopelessness of Democracy which seeks the country's economic safety in its "chocolate cream" industry and Christmas cracker trade, the quarrelling and squabbling nature of the Cabinet with no policy to guide it, selfish attempt of some of the ministers to induct a brother-in-law

33 Preface to The Apple Cart in Prefaces, p. 327.
into the cabinet or to make a nephew an admiral, have been brought under focus to the laughter of the Comic Muse. There may have been little exaggeration here and there, but the truth about democracy is there all the same, manifesting itself between the dialogues. What has outraged the critics more is the victory of King Magnus over the democratically elected Prime Minister Joseph Proteus on the question of the "royal vote" or of the king's freedom to address his countrymen in moments of crisis. Shaw himself calls it a "little tactical victory", perhaps in his concern to distinguish it from real or ultimate victory on his part on every question and in every crisis. But one thing is clear that he is not ready to accept the india-rubber stamp theory whether it relates to the king or the cabinet, for human beings, and not inanimate objects, are involved in the issue. Secondly, and that is still more important, if welfare of the people is the goal of Democracy, there must be some sort of a safety valve in every step, especially at the highest, even in the person of a titular head. The destiny of the country is never safe in the hands of a dozen duffers who know nothing but oratory and electioneering tricks, the sample of which we have seen in the person of Broadbent in *John Bull's Other Island*, and who can easily be won over by the temptation of gold in the coffer of plutocracy. Shaw has been careful enough to make King Magnus victorious in the conflict with his cabinet not by presenting him as a tyrant, who uses all underhand methods, but by making him invite a fair contest as a commoner [after
his abdication] in the election. If Proteus is a true democrat, he has nothing to fear. He should rather welcome his rival. But he retreats, tearing the note of ultimatum and maintaining status-quo in the democratic machinery. If more efficient persons with imagination, initiative and character cannot get in at least for a trial, where is the future of democracy? It will be proper at this moment to have a look at the working of the democratically elected government in England, as revealed in The Apple Cart:

Bill Boanerges, a veteran Trade Union leader, is the latest addition to Proteus's cabinet. In his official capacity as President of the Board of Trade he has come to meet king Magnus. The King who has followed his "career with interest" ever since he "contested Northampton twentyfive years ago", is naturally pleased to see him. The conversation between them soon turns into a lively debate as Boanerges reminds the King that the country has to be ruled not by him but by his ministers and that he is a constitutional monarch which, as the King interprets, means an indiarubber stamp. The King deplores that it is not only he but his ministers also that have been so for most of the time. "They bring us papers. We sign. You have no time to read them, luckily for you. But I am expected to read everything. I do not always agree; but I must sign: there is nothing else to be done. For instance, death warrants. Not only have I to sign the death warrants of persons who in my opinion ought not to be killed; but I may not even issue
death warrants for a great many people who in my opinion ought to be killed"\(^{34}\) (Act I). But he argues the point and convinces Boenerges that the indiarubber stamp theory will not work for the good reason that a king or a minister is not a block of wood.

If the king is reduced to a puppet, and the Cabinet pocketed or intimidated by plutocrats, who will safeguard the interest of the people and how can democracy work? It may appear, *The Apple Cart* raises these pertinent questions more than anything else. Let us consider the present position of the king as described by King Magnus himself:

"And what is the King? An idol set up by a group of plutocrats so that they can rule the country with the King as their scapegoat and puppet"\(^{35}\) (Act I). Now listen to Lysistrata, Powermistress General in Proteus's Cabinet: "One of their directors [or Breakages, Limited] told me to my face that by lifting up his finger he could get my windows broken by the mob; and that Breakages, Limited, would get the job of putting in new glass. And it is true. It is infamous; it is outrageous; but if I attempt to fight them I shall be hounded out of public life, and they will shove Mike [Brother-in-law of Balbus, Home Secretary] into the Cabinet to run my department in their interests: that is, to make such a failure of it that Joe will have to sell it

\(^{34}\) *Plays*, p. 1013.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., p. 1014.
to Breakages, Limited, at scrap iron prices" (Act I).
Boanerges, who has been associated with the Hydro-Electric Workers Federation for many years and who represents a workers' constituency, knows better than anybody else of the psychology of the voters. He says, "I talk democracy to these men and women. I tell them that they have the vote, and that theirs is the Kingdom and the power and the glory. I say to them "you are supreme: exercise your power". They say 'That's right: tell us what to do; and I tell them. I say 'Exercise your vote intelligently by voting for me', And they do. That's democracy; and a splendid thing it is too for putting the right man in the right place" (Act I).
If drama means "holding the mirror to Nature", few can rival Shaw in the art. Indeed his greatness lies in his power to present the truth divested of romantic perversions and pretences. King Magnus does not object to the peroration of Boanerges nor do we either, for he is a tested man; the interest of the people is safe in his hands. But the danger lies in other possibilities. As Magnus apprehends it, "Suppose a man with a bigger voice comes along! Some fool! Some windbag! Some upstart with a platform trick of gulling the multitude" (Act I). And "talkers are very formidable

36 Plays, p. 1027.
37 Ibid., p. 1014.
38 Ibid., p. 1014.
rivals for popular favor. The multitude understands talk: it does not understand work", brain work like that of Magnus or of Boanerges. It is this riddle of Democracy, and not Democracy as such, over which Shaw spent most of his political wisdom, his dramatic power and his physical energy, drawing the attention of his hearers and readers to it time and again. Those who stigmatise him as a reactionary or as an anti-democrat have obviously ignored these facts.

On the economic side Democracy has proved still more disastrous, as pointed out by King Magnus. Members of the cabinet headed by Proteus are ignorant of modern economy and so they feel complacent the country's prosperity the measure of which, according to them, is to be found in its "confectionery works", "christmas cracker trade", its output of chocolate creams totalling up to twenty thousand tons per day, its potteries, tapestries, golf club and in its production of motor boats and cars. The king sarcastically remarks, "It is certainly a consoling thought that if we were peacefully blockaded by the League of Nations we could live for at least three weeks on our chocolate creams" (Act I). But it seems to have no effect on their blissful ignorance. The Prime Minister rather prides himself on having "the best paid proletariat in the world" on his side and on having "abolished poverty and hardship".

\[39\] Plays, p. 1020.
in the country. True, wages are high and the Ministers have "the people of England in comfort - solid middle class comfort" at their backs, but who has abolished poverty and how? Does the Government of the land control its economy? Here is the answer coming from King Magnus: "No, we have not abolished poverty and hardship. Our big business men have abolished them. But how? By sending our capital abroad to places where poverty and hardship still exist: in other words, where labor is cheap. We live in comfort on the imported profits of that capital. We are all ladies and gentlemen now."\(^4^0\)

(Act I). England may be immune from revolution, as Boanerges satirically says to Magnus - "But a revolution in England!!! Put that out of your head, sir. Not if you were to tear up Magna Carta in Trafalgar Square, and light the fires of Smithfield to burn every member of the House of Commons,"\(^4^1\) but if those countries, on whose tribute she is living, stop paying it because of revolution, what will happen? This is what makes King Magnus worried. "The more I see," he says, "of the prosperity that comes from your leaving our vital industries to big business men as long as they keep your constituents quiet with high wages, the more I feel as if I were sitting on a volcano."\(^4^2\) Even if the Ministers understand the problem, they cannot do anything, because they are very much

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\(^{40}\) Plays, p. 1018.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 1020.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., p. 1020.
in the grip of plutocrats; moreover, they cannot ignore their brother-in-law or their nephew or their uncle or their stepson's father-in-law who always expect some favour of them in the shape of a contract or a high ranking post. Listen to Lysistrata on the failure of her department to supply power from the tides: "My department was perfectly able and ready to deal with the supply of power from the tides in the north of Scotland, and you gave it away, like the boqbs you are, to the Pentland Firth Syndicate: a gang of foreign capitalists who will make billions out of it at the people's expense while we are bungling and squabbling. Crassus [Colonial Secretary] worked that. His uncle is chairman." The Colonial Secretary, however, protests that he is only his stepson's father-in-law. Let it be so. But is he not a man of Breakages, Limited? "Can you really tear yourself away from politics?" asks King Magnus. "Only too glad to be well out of them, if Breakages will let me. They shoved me into it; and I daresay they'll find another job for me," replies Crassus (Act II). Now it is Balbus, Home Secretary, who faces an insinuation from a colleague about his collousness. "It was not I", replies Balbus, "who bungled the Factory Bill. I found it on my desk when I took office, with all His Majesty's suggestions in the margin, and

\[43\] Plays, p. 1020.
\[44\] Ibid., p. 1043.
you know it." It is not difficult to understand that he maintains close connections with the industrial magnates through his brother-in-law, who represents Breakages, Limited, the biggest industrial corporation in the country, and whom he wanted to induct into the Cabinet. "If I had not put my foot down, Mr Balbus", says King Magnus, "the Prime Minister would have been unable to keep your brother-in-law out of the cabinet." Indeed nowhere else is the veil of democratic hypocrisy so ruthlessly rent as here. Another member of the Cabinet whose feeling is said to have been hurt by the Prime Minister himself is Amanda, the Post-mistress General. "The Post-mistress General has never forgiven me," says Proteus, "for not making her First Lady of the Admiralty. She has three nephews in the navy." Thus half the Cabinet is guided by the interests other than those of the country and the whole has no policy to pursue except that of dependence on the capitalists for economic development in the country. But the question which Shaw raises in the play is — Do the capitalists want real development or the maximum profit by blocking the latest scientific and technological means of development? One need not go far for the answer; Lysistrata, Power-mistress General, gives it from her own painful experience. "Here am I, the power-mistress Royal. I have to organise and administer
all the motor power in the country for the good of the country. I have to harness the winds and the tides, the oils and the coal seams. I have to see that every little sewing machine in the Hebrides, every dentist's drill in Shotland, every carpet sweeper in Morgate, has its stream of driving power on tap from a switch in the wall as punctually as the great thundering dynamos of our big industrial plants. I do it; but it costs twice as much as it should. Why? Because every new invention is bought up and suppressed by Breakages, Limited. Every breakdown, every accident, every smash and crash is a job for them. But for them we should have unbreakable glass, unbreakable steel, imperishable materials of all sorts. But for them our goods trains could be started and stopped without battering and tearing the vitals out of every wagon and sending it to their repair shops once a week instead of once a year.”

(Act I).

As a result of this, as the Powermistress says, the national repair bill runs up to hundreds of millions. But enormous economies in breakages and breakdowns could have been effected but for the big industrial houses like the Breakages, Limited which buy off the inventors of new machines and devices, taking advantage of their economic helplessness, and bury the inventions for their own interest or muffle the inventors by foul means. The Ministers also feel helpless; they dare not

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48 Plays, p. 1027.
speak out the truth for fear of 'private police' of the Capitalists. Here is Lysistrata who says: "They would dig up the very machines they have buried, and make out that it is my fault that they have never been brought into use. They would set their private police to watch me day and night to get something against my private character." Yet the ministers elected on sound democratic principle pin the future of their country on this monster! No democrat with a minimum understanding of the democratic ideal can accept such irrational happenings, let alone Shaw who fought against the conspiracy of the Plutocrats for more than fifty years. But the people are still under the impression that the country is ruled by the "elected government" and that they are enjoying real democracy in life. They are too simple, too ignorant to understand what lies inside the mask of Democracy. In The Apple Cart the emphasis is clearly laid on the evil of sham democracy rather than on the conflict between Monarchy and Democracy.

Shaw's next play, concerned with the same problem, the problem of Democracy, is On the Rocks written in 1933. His creative power is evidently on the decline in this play but it epitomises his political wisdom in dramatic form in a more effective manner. To say that it is, as usual, merely a Shavian tirade against democracy is not the whole truth; it

49 *Plays*, p. 1027.
traces the failure of the democratic machinery in tackling the complex socio-economic problems of modern times, and on the other hand it shows the ways and means by which civilization can be saved. On the Rocks has added a new dimension to his political play by *letting* a fair deal to all points of view, to the Conservative as much as to the Liberal, to the Capitalist as much as to the Socialist, on the social problem and by tagging the question of evolution of the human race to it. Above all, Shaw reveals himself and his political convictions much more clearly in this play which in parts, in phrases and in ideas look like an adaptation from his Prefaces on the subject.

The scene is laid, as usual, in England, homeland of Democracy. Sir Arthur Chavender, a Liberal, happens to head a National Government at a time when the country is facing a great economic problem which, in turn, threatens its political integrity. The "streets are becoming quite impassable with the crowds of the unemployed", says Hilda to Sir Arthur (Act I). The Prime Minister himself warns the Chief Commissioner of Police that "these street corner meetings are going beyond all bounds." and he wants him to put a stop to it by arresting "the sedition mongers", for "that will shut old Dexy’s mouth" (Act I). Sir Dexter Rightside is a Conservative member of the Coalition Government headed by Sir Arthur

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50 *Plays*, p. 1180.
and the two leaders are up against each other. They do not seem to be so much worried about the fate of the unemployed as about their party position in the Government in the face of the problem. "I am up against my Conservative colleagues all the time," says Sir Arthur to his Police Chief, "and they can't swallow the rank sedition that goes on every day at these meetings. Sir Dexter Rightside - you know what a regular old diehard he is - heard a speaker says that if the police used tear gas the unemployed would give old Dexy something to cry for without any tear gas. That has brought matters to a head in the Cabinet." But Sir Broadfoot Basham, who, as Police Chief, knows the crowd psychology better than the Prime Minister, disagrees saying that "crowds are dangerous when they've nothing to listen to or look at. The meetings keep them amused. They save us trouble." And in England, according to him, things are still easier, for neither the listeners nor the speakers do anything but talking. "An English crowd will never do anything, mischievous or the reverse, while it is listening to speeches. And the fellows who make the speeches can be depended on never to do anything else. In the first place, they don't know how. In the second, they are afraid. I am instructing my agents to press all the talking societies, the Ethical Societies, the Socialist societies, the Communists, the

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53 Plays, p. 1161.
the Fascists, the Anarchists, the Syndicalists, the official Labor Party, the Independent Labor Party, the Salvation Army, the Church Army, and the Atheists, to send their best tubthumpers into the streets to seize the opportunity." Indeed it would be an unpleasant surprise to those who accused Shaw of being an arm-chair Socialist, a mere talker, that he can be so derisive, so impatient of talkers. He never had any expectation of the Rightists, but now he lost faith in the English Leftists who turned out to be "gasbags" and nothing else.

Although Sir Arthur is a Liberal leader and heads the Coalition Government, he has no grounding in modern Economics. He does not seem to have heard of Karl Marx until he met Hipney, a member of the deputation from the Isle of Cats, but popularly known as "old and tried friend of the working class." The deputation led by Tom Humphries, the Mayor, wants to know what Sir Arthur's Government is going to do on the question of the unemployed whose resentment and threatened violence pose a national threat. Sir Arthur sees no danger in it except that they "may break every window in the West End, beginning with every pane of glass in this house" only to be in prison next day "with their heads broken." "I am in the grip of economic forces," says Sir Arthur, "that are beyond human control. What mortal men could do this Government

54 Plays, p. 1182
55 Ibid., p. 1188.
has done. We have saved the people from starvation by stretching unemployment benefit to the utmost limit of our national resources. "That provision has cost us great sacrifices; but we have made the sacrifices without complaining," 56

The Oxford Youth, another member of the deputation, scoffs at the Prime Minister for making such tall claim: "Sacrifices! What sacrifices? Are you starving? Have you pawned your overcoat? Are you sleeping ten in a room?" 58 Naturally Sir Arthur, having no answer, indulges in frivolous talk. It becomes clear that at the moment he has no remedy for the problem of unemployment which, according to Hipney, has grown chronic; his only hope, however, lies in the revival of trade. But it does not occur to him that the position of his country as an exporter has changed considerably after the war. "We was the workshop of the world then," says Hipney. "But you gentlemen went out of the workshop business to make a war. And while that was going on our customers had to find out how to make things for themselves. Now we shall have to be their customers when weve any money to buy with." 59 Moreover, Sri Arthur feels, being in Parliament or being even Prime Minister does not enjoin any special responsibility on him. He says, Parliament, Mr Hipney, is what the people of England have made it.

56 Plays, p. 1189.
57 Ibid., p. 1188.
58 Ibid., p. 1188.
59 Ibid., 1190.
For good or evil we have committed ourselves to democracy. I am here because the people have sent me here. Promptly comes the retort: "Just so. That's all the use they could make of the vote when they got it. Their hopes was in you; and your hopes is in Spanish onions." Once again, though for a moment, the readers are face to face with the Shavian comic art at its height. How amusing and yet how revealing the stroke is! Who else can explode the myth of Democracy with such precision? The slump, the terrible trade depression, which swept all over the Capitalist world in the early thirties threatening its political collapse, as the number of the unemployed was swelling into millions, has been the basis of the play, but Shaw has put it on a wider canvas. The despair and helplessness which accompanied the crisis breathe through the lines as Sir Arthur says: "But the Government is not responsible for that. The Government cannot compel traders to buy goods that they cannot sell. The Government cannot compel manufacturers to produce goods that the traders will not buy. Without demand there can be no supply." In a word, the Government has nothing to do! But what "demand" the Prime Minister speaks of? How can he say there is no demand while millions are clamouring for food and clothes? Hipney replies that it is a cliche of Economics taught at college and has

60 Plays, p. 1191.
61 Ibid., p. 1191.
62 Ibid., p. 1191.
nothing to do with "the real problem." If he is looking for demand, "there is a powerful demand just now", says the Labour leader, "in our children's bellies and in our own." To have a clear understanding of the problem Sir Arthur should have read Karl Marx.

Sir Arthur is under an illusion, as most Prime Ministers are, that he is governing the country while, in fact, it is not governed at all. "But you dont govern the country, Arthur," says his wife. "The country isnt governed : it just slummocks along anyhow." Similarly, he feels that he is "suffering acutely from brain fag" due to overwork. But his Private Secretary says, "you say you havent attended to anything for three weeks, but you have not attended to anything since the session began." The truth is that he has been only talking and making speeches. Even when the Lady with a cure for his nervous breakdown comes in unnoticed, he is busy rehearsing a speech before an imaginary gathering. The interesting part of the situation is that he, being under an emotional stress, mistakes the Lady for a phantom, a ghost, and she also starts talking in his own terms. Thus a fine dramatic illusion is created during which Shaw communicates some serious ideas to

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63 Plays p. 1191.
64 Ibid., p. 1185.
65 Ibid., p. 1192.
the readers. Sir Arthur with his pre-Marxian knowledge of political economy is a misfit in modern politics, and, in the Prime Minister's chair looks like a round peg in a square hole. Intellectually, he is a ghost like his visitor, but worse for being "a ghost from the past" rather than "a ghost from the future". "As I listen to you," says the Lady, "I seem to hear a ghost preparing a speech for his fellow ghosts, ghosts from a long dead past. To me it means nothing, because I am a ghost from the future." 66 Who are the ghosts from the future? How do they differ from ghosts from the past? "Yes: women and men who are ahead of their time. They alone can lead the present into the future. They are ghosts from the future. The ghosts from the past are those who are behind the times, and can only drag the present back." 67 The Lady has to give another sermon to Sir Arthur when he attaches undue importance to speeches: "Sermons and speeches are not religion, not patriotism, not politics: they are only the gibbering of ghosts from the past. You are a ghost from a very dead past. Why do you not die your bodily death? Is it fair for a ghost to go about with a live body?" 68 (Act I). This part of the play is fraught with wisdom which Shaw had gathered from his active political life. To use his metaphor, Sir Arthur is a

66 Plays p. 1194.
67 Ibid., p. 1194.
68 Ibid., p. 1195.
ghost from the past and ghosts like him cannot govern a modern state with any success. They always lead the country to disaster, as Sir Arthur has "piloted England on to the rocks."

Here indeed is a strong plea for discarding outdated notions and ideas of political economy.

In Act II (which is also the final Act) Sir Arthur emerges, from his retreat into the Lady's "meditation parlor", quite a changed man, a "ghost from the future." He is now well versed in Marx and Lenin. The economic problem, the question of the unemployed no longer perplexes him nor does he seek a remedy in the revival of trade in Spanish onions. His speech at the Guild hall banquet has created a lot of sensation in the country. Sir Dexter, conservative member of the Coalition Government, goes so far as to suspect that the Lady, who got Sir Arthur in her grip for six weeks, might have done something to him and that "there may be money from Moscow behind this."69

Whatever it may be, he has been converted to Socialism. Describing the Guildhall incident, Sir Basham says, "they [his audience] wanted some of his best soothing syrup about law and order after the attack on the Lord Mayor's Show in the afternoon by the unemployed; but according to the Daily Herald here he gave them a dose of boiling Socialism instead."70

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69 Plays. p. 1198.

70 Ibid., p. 1198.

Sir Arthur's programme of Socialism may be taken as Shaw's own, although by no means it is his whole. In his Prefaces and other prose writings including The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism he explained and elaborated his idea of Socialism time and again, but in dramatic form he does it for the first time in On the Rocks. The reactions to it are as divergent as there are parties, the Conservative opposing it totally, the Labour raising objection against Nationalization with compensation, the Capitalist (Sir Jafna) supporting extinction of the landed class, but not concerned with other parts, the Democrat clamouring for Liberty, the Navy and the

71 Plays, p. 1199.
police supporting only that part of the programme which benefits their respective classes and not bothering about others, the Duke welcoming the proposed abolition of Death duties and so on, but none accepting it wholly. In this context it is worth-while to record the reaction of the Marxists to Shaw. They find fault with him for his disbelief in "Class War" and for advocating Nationalization with compensation, a point which will be examined in the last chapter.

Two things have become clear to Sir Arthur. First, Socialism alone can save England, can restore her to a healthy, handsome state from her present perilous condition "on the rock." Second, and that is more important, he cannot get his programme through Parliament. Glenmorison, President of the Board of Trade, a Liberal and a devoted parliamentarian, says, "To carry out the program will involve the introduction of at least twelve bills. They are highly controversial bills: every one of them will be resisted and obstructed to the very last clause. You may have to go to the country on several of them. The committee stages will last for weeks and weeks; no matter how hard you work the guillotine: there will be thousands of amendments. Then, when you have got through what is left of your Bill and carried it, the House of Lords will turn it down; and you will have to wait two years and go through the whole job again before you can get your Bill on the statute book as an Act of Parliament. This program is not a matter of today or tomorrow. I calculate that at the very least it
will take fifty years to get it through" \(^72\) (Act II). Sir Arthur asks: "And you think the world will wait for that, Sandy?" "What else can it do?" is the answer. Sir Arthur warns him saying: "It won't wait. Unless we can find a shorter way, the program will be fought out in the streets." \(^73\) Does it not show once again Shaw's belief in the revolutionary means as an alternative to the Parliamentary one? With him it has always been a question of expediency, of effectiveness, and not of morality. He emphatically said more than once that a well kept garden needs to be weeded. Social pests and parasites, if they are found incorrigible, must be exterminated. The failure of the British Government to work as an effective instrument of social change came under criticism from his pen, tempered with bantering satire, from the time of *Major Barbara* in 1905. For example, in describing the salutary effect of Bodger's whisky Andrew Undershaft says, "It enables Parliament to do things at eleven at night that no sane person would do at eleven in the morning." Can a Parliament working under the influence of liquor tackle great national or international problems? If the political parties, an essential organ of Parliamentary Democracy, are dependent on the distiller or the cannon maker for money, can they follow any fair principles and policies in the national field? Here is an example

\(^72\) *Plays*, p. 1210.

\(^73\) Ibid., p. 1210.
of money power in politics. "Who is Lord Saxmundham?" asks Barbara. "A new oration, my dear," replies Undershaft. How it has all been possible he explains to his daughter thus: "He is one of the greatest of our public benefactors. He restored the Cathedral at Hakington. They made him a baronet for that. He gave half a million to the funds of his party: they made him a baron for that" (Act II). And he earns his millions by selling whisky which has been the cause of ruin to hundreds of poor families and against which she has been fighting with all her strength. She asks her Commissioner "Do you remember how we implored the County Council to stop him from writing Bodger's whisky in letters of fire against the sky; so that the poor drink-ruined creatures on the Embankment could not wake up from their snatches of sleep without being reminded of their deadly thirst by that wicked sky sign? Do you know that the worst thing I have had to fight here is not the devil, but Bodger, Bodger, Bodger, with his whisky, his distilleries, and his tied houses? Are you going to make our shelter another tied house for him and ask me to keep it?" Whether we agree with Barbara or not is not the question. The question is - assuming that the party in power shares her view, can it take any action against Bodger? None. In and around Parliament has grown a vicious circle out of which neither the Socialists nor the Labour members can come any more.

74 Flays, p. 483.

75 Ibid., p. 484.
than the Liberals or the Conservatives; they all behave like sheep of the same flock! Now listen to Hipney who alone, among the deputationists, has a correct understanding of Parliamentary Democracy. They've often wanted me to go into Parliament. And I could win the seat. Put up old Hipney for the Isle of Cats and your best man wouldn't have a chance against him. But not me: I know too much. It would be the end of me, as it's been the end of all the Labor men that have done it. The Cabinet is full of Labor men that started as red-hot Socialists; and what change has it made except that they're in and out at Bucknam Palace like peers of the realm?  

(Act I). Sir Arthur has no answer to it. Old Hipney "is the only politician", as the Duke of Domesday says to Sir Basham, "who had learnt anything from experience". The Police Commissioner knows what stuff he is made of: "Hipney: I may so well tell you that I have had my eye on you for some time. Take care. I have no objection to your calling yourself a revolutionary Socialist: they all do that. But I suspect you of really meaning business." Hipney replies: "I do, Sir Broadfoot: I do, And if Sir Arthur [for Sir Arthur] means business, then let him come out of Parliament and keep out. It will take the life out of him and leave him a walking talking shell of a man with nothing inside. The only man that

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76 *One the Rocks* in *Plays* p. 1190.

77 Ibid., p. 1212.
ever had a proper understanding of Parliament was old Guy Fawkes" (Act II). In a lecture entitled "In Praise of Guy Fawkes" and delivered on November 25, 1932 under the auspices of the Fabian Society, Shaw, speaking of the function of Parliament, said: "I think that the real function of Parliament in this country is to prevent anything being done by endlessly talking about it." Elaborating the point he continued: "All this guff and bugaboo, all this deception, all this stampeding, all this perpetual talk, talk, talk, with the central talk machine blowing off noisily and wasting the national steam, is supposed to be Democracy. What is the effect of it? It keeps Congress and the State Legislatures in countenance in America. It keeps copies of them in countenance in Europe. In this country it keeps Parliament in countenance." Shaw admired Guy Fawkes, because he "wanted the Government to do something, and saw that the first thing to enable the Government to do anything was to blow up Parliament." None had greater faith in Democracy than old Hipney, but he has become as much disillusioned of it as his creator Shaw. His criticism of Democracy is much like Shaw's in the Prefaces. Here is an account of Democracy by Hipney:

78 One the Rocks in Plays p. 1212.
80 Ibid., p. 240.
81 Ibid., p. 241.
"Democracy was a good thing when I was young and we had no votes. We talked about public opinion and what the British people would stand and what they wouldn't stand. And it had weight, I tell you, sir: it held Government in check: it frightened the stoutest of the tyrants and the bosses and the police: it brought a real reverence into the voices of great orators like Bright and Gladstone. But that was when it was a dream and a vision, a hope and a faith and a promise. It lasted until they dragged it down to earth, as you might say, and made it a reality by giving everybody votes. The moment they gave the working men votes they found that they'd stand anything. They gave votes to the women and found they were worse than the men; for men would vote for men - the wrong men, but men all the same but the women wouldn't even vote for women. Since then politics have been a laughing stock. Parliamentary leaders say one thing on Monday and just the opposite on Wednesday; and nobody notices any difference. They put down the people in Egypt, in Ireland, and in India with fire and sword, with floggings and hangings, burning the houses over their heads and bombing their little stores for the winter out of existence; and at the next election they'd be sent back to Parliament by working class constituencies as if they were plaster saints, while men and woman like me, that had spent their lives in the service of the people, were booted out at the polls like convicted criminals. It wasn't that the poor silly sheen did it on purpose: they didn't notice: they didn't remember: they couldn't understand: they were taken in by any nonsense they
heard at the meetings or read in the morning paper. You could stampede them by crying out that the Russians were coming, or rally them by promising them to hang the Kaiser, or Lord knows what silliness that shouldnt have imposed on a child of four. That was the end of democracy for me; though there was no man alive that had hoped as much from it, nor spoke deeper from his heart about all the good things that would happen when the people came to their own and had votes like the gentry. Adult suffrage : that was what was to save us all. My God! It delivered us into the hands of our spoilers and oppressors, bound hand and foot by our own folly and ignorance"²²(Act I).

Now let us listen to Shaw :

"The establishment of representative government in England is assumed to have been completed by the enfranchisement of women in 1928. The enormous hiatus left by their previous disenfranchisement is supposed to have been filled up and finished with. As a matter of fact it has only reduced Votes for Women to absurdity; for the women immediately used their Vote to keep women out of Parliament. After seventeen years of it the nation, consisting of men and women in virtually equal numbers, is misrepresented at Westminster by 24 women and 616 men."²³.

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²² Plays p. 1213.

²³ Preface to In Good King Charles's Golden Days in Prefaces p. 889.
With the extension of suffrage the Democratic ideal, in the eyes of Shaw, seemed to be receding more and more, giving way to greater chaos and confusion, "The wider the suffrage, the greater the confusion." "Swings to the Left" followed by "swings to the Right" kept the newspapers and the political windbags amused and hopeful. "We are still humbugging ourselves into the belief that the swings to the Left are democratic and those to the Right imperial. They are only swings from failure to failure to secure substantial democracy, which means impartial government for the good of the governed by qualified rulers. Popular anarchism defeats them all."\(^8^4\) Shaw's disillusionment of democracy based on adult suffrage was complete when, one year before his death, he said: "Adult suffrage is Mobocracy."\(^8^5\) His loss of faith in Parliamentary Democracy, needless to say, was not the result of a year or even a decade, but of seven decades of painful observation of its failures.

Again, when old Hipney out of sheer disgust expresses his predilection for a Napoleon or a Mussolini or a Lenin, he reminds us of Shaw's observation on the subject that the failure of Democracy paves the way for Dictatorship just as the failure of Capitalism on the distribution side leads to

\(^8^4\) Preface to Geneva in Prefaces p. 883.

\(^8^5\) Preface to Farfetched Fables in Prefaces, p. 907.
Socialism. When it is a question of choice between a riff-raff democrat and a competent dictator, Shaw does not hide his feelings that he is for the latter. Like Hipney, he might say: "Better one dictator standing up responsible before the world for the good and evil he does than a dirty little dictator in every street responsible to nobody, to turn you out of your house if you don't pay him for the right to exist on the earth, or to fire you out of your job if you stand up to him as a man and an equal." But this does not mean that Shaw became a champion of dictators as some of his critics say he did. In the same way he was charged with becoming a Royalist after the publication of The Apple Cart. To understand Shaw's contention we have to bear in mind certain facts. First, he always distinguishes between sham democracy and real democracy. In the existing socio-economic set up real democracy is impossible. But when it will come, as, Shaw believes, it has come in Russia, it will be a fulfilment of his lifelong dream and a success of his persistent struggle. Secondly, Shaw knows that the dictatorship of an individual, however great the dictator might be, is always a passing phenomenon, for it dies out with the death of the dictator. There are periods in history, in the life of nations, marked by chaos, anarchy, lawlessness, penury, despair etc., which pave the ground for the dictator to rise. But, Shaw argues, it is no good letting the dictator rise first and then raising hue and cry against him.

The conditions which favour his growth should not be allowed to prevail. Here is Shaw's ultimate view on dictatorship:

"But dictatorships, like proclamations of martial law, are emergency measures; and they are subject to the standard objection to martial law that it is no law at all. When a nation's affairs drift into a hopeless mess some strongminded person seizes it by the scruff of the neck and bullies it into order when it has suffered as much from disorder that it is only too glad to be taken in hand and drilled, however autocratically." 87 Again, speaking of the fate of Mussolini and Hitler, Shaw said, "They were finally scrapped as failures and nuisances, though they all began by effecting some obvious reforms over which party parliaments had been boggling for centuries. Such successes as they had were reactions from the failures of the futile parliamentary talking shops, which were themselves reactions from the bankruptcies of incompetent monarchs, both mobs and monarchs being products of political idolatry and ignorance." 88

Coming back to the play, one finds Sir Arthur has learnt his lesson. He too, like Hipney, has lost faith in Parliament. His experience now is very much like Hipney's and that is the reason why he thinks of sidetracking Parliament to get his programme implemented. At this stage it is worth while

87 Preface to 1931 reprint of Fabian Essays in Prefaces p 825.
to recall Shaw's observation on Plutocracy which has bought and swallowed Democracy. He says, "Money talks; money prints; money broadcasts; money reigns; and kings and labor leaders alike have to register its decrees and even, by a staggering paradox, to finance its enterprises and guarantee its profits. Democracy is no longer bought: it is bilked. Ministers who are Socialists to the backbone are as helpless in the grip of Breakages, Limited as its acknowledged henchmen; from the moment when they attain to what is with unintentional irony called power (meaning the drudgery of carrying on for the plutocrats) they no longer dare even to talk of nationalizing any industry, however specially vital, that has a farthing of profit for plutocracy still left in it, or that can be made to yield a farthing for it by subsidies." Not that Sir Arthur, at the beginning, was an ignoramus, totally unaware of his folly; no, far from that; but, he thought, there was no way out. "Do you think," he asks his wife, "I didn't know, in the days of my great speeches and my roaring popularity, that I was only white washing the slums? I did it very well - I don't care who hears me say so - and there is always a sort of artistic satisfaction in doing a thing very well, whether it's getting a Bill through the House, or carrying a big meeting off its feet, or winning a golf championship. It was all very jolly; and I'm still a little proud of it. But even if I had not had you here to remind me that it was all hot air,

89 Preface to The Apple Cart in Prefaces p. 327.
I couldn't help knowing as well as any of those damned Socialists that though the West End of London was chockful of money and nice people all calling one another by their Christian names, the lives of the millions of people whose labor was keeping the whole show going were not worth living. I knew it quite well; but I was able to put it out of my mind because I thought it couldn't be helped and I was doing the best that could be done. I know better now: I know that it can be helped, and how it can be helped. Finally, however, Sir Arthur withdraws giving way to the men who can do the work, for, by his own confession, he is "not a man of action, only a talker." Sir Arthur has already given consent to his son David for marrying the working class girl, a proletarian, bone and blood; and that perhaps is the only redeeming feature in his life. Whatever it may be, the play ends amid the report, "the unemployed have broken into Downing Street, and they're breaking the windows of the Colonial Office," and to the marching tune of "England, arise."

Geneva (1938) is the last of Shaw's political plays and being the last, it may be taken as the finale to his political vision and judgment which came to him after thirty years of active participation in the politics of his time. The play is unique in its presentation of the two dictators of Europe between the wars in the persons of Signor Bomberdone and

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90 *Plays*, pp 1218-19.

91 Ibid., p. 1214.
Battler, without sacrificing any of their essential traits, besides General Flanco of the Earthly Paradise, Posky, the Commissar from Russia and Sir Orpheus, British Foreign Secretary, all arguing their case before the Judge from the International Court of Justice. The canvas on which Shaw holds up his mirror this time is wider than that of *The Apple Cart* or *On the Rocks*, the scene opening in the International Committee for Intellectual Co-operation in Geneva, a wing of the League of Nations. But things here are no better; one finds the same futility, the same hopelessness. The intellectual co-operation of sixty nations under the banner of the League is supposed to be the world's most valuable asset, but, in practice, it turns out to be the poorest of human enterprise; its existence in Geneva being proclaimed by its lone typist official, Begonia, a young English woman with suburban manners, presently engaged in compiling the names of all the universities and their Vice-Chancellors. The Jew, who has come all the way seeking redress to his grievances, is surprised to see the state of affairs in the Committee for Intellectual Co-operation. He asks Begonia: "How are the intellectual giants who form your committee bringing the enormous dynamic force of their brains, their prestige, their authority to bear on the destinies of the nations? What are they doing to correct the mistakes of our ignorant politicians?"\(^2\) (Act I).

\(^2\) *Plays*, p. 1290.
"Well," answers Begonia, "We have their names on our notepaper, you know, what more can they do? You can't expect them to sit in this little hole talking to people. I have never seen one of them."

Nothing perhaps could have made Shaw more indignant than this sort of callousness on the part of a World organization. The sole justification for its existence, according to Shaw, lies in its wisdom, its capability to guide the world in the right path, in its preparedness to rise above national prejudices and eccentricities and to foster fraternity among the nations. But Geneva presents a different look. Most of the members of the Intellectual Cooperation Committee "did not know that they are members." Neither the British Foreign Secretary nor the Judge from the International Court of Justice nor the Secretary of the League of Nations seemed to be aware of its existence, although "it is part of the League" and members are tremendous swells with European reputations. They've all published translations from the Greek or discovered new planets or something of that sort." Obviously, Shaw is satirical, but he has reason to be so. Can anything be more ridiculous? Can the world expect anything from such a committee or, for that matter, from the League itself? If ignorance is a folly, the world body suffers as much from it as the national leaders. When the Powers joined the League, they did not care to read even its Covenant. "They signed the Covenant,"

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93 Plays, p. 1290.
says the Judge, "without reading it to oblige President Wilson. The United States then refused to sign it to disoblige President Wilson, also without reading it. Since then the Powers have behaved in every respect as if the League did not exist except when they could use it for their own purposes" (Act II). Within a year the World conflagration showed how true Shaw was in his prognosis of the disease from which the League was suffering. Indeed, his political plays, especially "On the Rocks and Geneva are a strong plea for political education of the leaders.

Coming to Miss Begonia, we see what flippancy in world politics can do. Of course, it is symbolic. By issuing warrants of arrest, in the name of the International Court of Justice at the Hague, against the world leaders, she has created a first class political crisis for the League of Nations. The crisis, as the Secretary says, is that "Germany has withdrawn from the League.... The British Empire has declared war on Russia.... the war is one of sanctions only ... In consequence Japan has declared war on Russia and is therefore in military alliance with Britain. And the result of that is that Australia, New Zealand and Canada have repudiated the war and formed an anti-Japanese alliance with the United States under the title of the New British Federation. South Africa may join

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94 Plays, p. 1302.
them at any moment."\textsuperscript{95} (Act II). Yet how blissfully ignorant she is of her own folly! At the moment she has her mind fixed on Jack Palamades, the hero in her dancing tournament and has staked ten francs on him. How was she picked up for so responsible a job at the International Co-operation Committee?

"Were you examined," says the Secretary, "as to your knowledge and understanding of the Covenant of the League, and its constitutions?" Begonia replies: "No, they didn't need to examine me to find out that I was educated. I had lots of prizes and certificates, and there was my L.C.C. scholarship. You see, I have such a good memory: examinations are no trouble to me. There's a book in the office about the League. I tried to read it; but it was such dry stuff I went to sleep over it."\textsuperscript{96} In addition to all these qualifications she knew shorthand and a bit of French, and above all, she could be a worthy dancing partner of the Conservative candidate who came to open a branch of the League of Nations Union in her own place Camberwell. His intimacy with her ultimately resulted in his being sent off by his people "for a tour round the Empire" and in her being selected for the post in Geneva by them. Thus Begonia Brown comes to control the destiny of the nations as the solitary representative of the International Co-operation Committee in Geneva, an organ of the League of Nations.

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Plays}, p. 1294.

\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1300.
Begonia has other laurels too at her credit, this time at the national level. The Conservatives want her to stand at the by-election in Camberwell. Things have become easier for her, for her fiancé, the original Conservative candidate, a nephew of Sir Orpheus, has withdrawn, proposing her name and promising to pay her election expenses. She is quite confident of her success. She says, "I have been a lot in the papers lately. It's six hundred a year for me if I get in. I shall be the patriotic candidate; and the Labor vote will be a split vote; for the Communists are putting up a candidate against the Labor man; and the Liberals are contesting the seat as well. It will be just a walk-over for me."\(^{97}\) (Act II). But is she politically qualified to be a candidate in the election? Is election a plaything of the child? This is the most important question from the Shavian standpoint and this is the reason why he has been persistently advocating political education for the electorate and their leaders. Begonia's emergence as a political agent is too great a surprise for Sir Orpheus. He says, "And do you think you will be able to make a better impression at the meetings? You are not a politician, are you?" "The same as anybody else, I suppose. I shall pick up all the politics I need when I get into the House because there are lots of people in Camberwell who think as I do. You bet I shall romp in at the head of the poll,"\(^{98}\) replies Begonia. No

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\(^{97}\) Plays, p. 1304

\(^{98}\) Ibid., p. 1304
doubt, she will romp in at the head of the poll as Tom, Dick, John are romping in at every election. Can we, in the face of such facts, disagree with Shaw when he attributes the failure of Democracy to lack of political consciousness among the people? Begonia, as the Secretary says, "is a complete ignoramus. She will give herself away every time she opens her mouth. She has not a political idea in her head." 99 True to his principle, Shaw used his art to propagate his political views even to the last stage of his dramatic career.

Another important feature of Geneva is its exposure of intolerance, obviously the result of fanaticism, of the English Bishop of Commissar Posky. This too is symbolic and so more important. The Bishop has come all the way despite his weak health to Geneva, seeking redress to what he considers a great danger to "the very existence of civilized society, of religion, of the family, of the purity of womanhood," and even of English "commercial prosperity." 100 (Act I). It is the danger of Communism. "Sir," he says, "they are actually preaching Communism in my diocese. Communism ::: My butler, who has been in the palace for forty years, a most devoted and respectable man, tells me that my footman - I am the only bishop in England who can afford to keep a footman now - that my footmen is a

98 Plays, p. 1304.
99 Ibid., p. 1305.
100 Ibid., p. 1295.
cell.... A communist cell. Like a bee in a hive. Planted on me by the Communists to make their dreadful propaganda in my household! And my grandson at Oxford has joined a Communist club. The Union - the Oxford Union - has raised the red flag. It is dreadful. And my granddaughter a nudist! So, as he means, it is all the doing of the Russians, an abominable species on earth. Now consider how his psychology works and that is what Shaw wants his readers to note carefully, for it prognosticates the relations the Communists and non-Communists are going to develop between them. The Bishop has been quite happy in the company of a gentleman in his hotel, but the moment the gentleman discloses his identity the Bishop faints. Shaw's own account of the incident stands thus:

"Bishop (rising) Ah, my dear Sir, we meet again.
(To the others) I had the pleasure of making the gentleman's acquaintance last night at my hotel. His interest in the Church of England kept us up talking long after my usual hour for retirement. (Shaking his hand warmly) How do you do, my dear friend? how do you do?

Russian Quite well, thank you, my lord. Am I interrupting your business?

Bishop No no no no: I beg you to remain. You will help, you will sympathize....

Russian Let me introduce myself. I am Commissar Posky of Sovnarkom and Politbureau, Soviet delegate to the League Council.

101 Plays, pp 1295-96.
Bishop (aghast, staggering to his feet) You are a Bolshevik! 102

When the reply "Assuredly" comes, the Bishop "faints" (Act I). It is the name, not the man, the name of Bolshevik that causes so terrible a shock to the Bishop. If civilized people become so allergic to certain names, and never care to see what lies behind those names, how can there be progress in socio-economic and political patterns of the world? Would Shakespeare have ever written "What is in a name?" if he had witnessed the Bishop's fall? As the encounter between the Bishop and the Russian continues we come to know of the charges and countercharges they bring against each other. Here is Commissar Posky, for example, refuting the charge: "I know nothing of your footman. If he is intelligent enough to become a Communist, as so many famous Englishman did long before the Russian Revolution, we cannot prevent him. But we do not employ him as our agent nor support him financially in any way." 103 Then he brings the countercharge: "We have just discovered that there is a most dangerous organization at work in Russia, financed from the British Isles, having for its object the overthrow of the Soviet system and the substitution of the Church of England and the British Constitution." 104 (Act I). The Bishop,

102 Plays, p. 1296.
103 Ibid., pp. 1296-97.
104 Ibid., p. 1297.
however, finds nothing wrong in advocating a system which is "universally admitted to be the best and freest in the world."

"We do not think so," replies Commissar Posky and he goes to explain how the seditious organization known as the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts" has indoctrinated and hypnotized his old, faithful housekeeper Feodorovna Ballyboushka and in such a way that "she refused to do any work that was not immediately necessary, on the ground that the end of the world is at hand. She declared that she was in a condition which she described as 'saved', and interrupted my work continually with attempts to save me. She had long fits of crying because she could not bear the thought of my wife spending eternity in hell. She accused the Soviets of being hornets prophesied in the Book of Revelation." 105

Four missionaries were found involved in the case and, consequently, arrested by the Russian police. The "official psychologists who made a thorough examination of the convicts" report that they "can discover nothing that could reasonably be called religion in their minds. They are obsessed with tribal superstitions of the most barbarous kind. They believe in human sacrifices, in what they call the remission of sins by the shedding of blood. No man's life would be safe in Russia if such doctrines were propagated there." 106

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105 *Plavs*, p. 1297.

is that the Russian police have found "a secret document of your State Church, called the Thirty-nine Articles" and that "all Russians are to be held accursed." Commissar Posky wants to know his reaction if the Komintern, the chief cultural institution endowed by the Russian government, were to send its agents into England to teach that every Englishman is to be held accursed." The Bishop has no answer to all this but gets infuriated when Posky says, "Comrade Bishop: the Komintern is the State Church in Russia exactly as the Church of England is the State Church in Britain." Nothing can be more abominable for him than the comparison; hence he "slides to the floor in another faint." He, however, recovers soon to make the final onslaught thus: "I still have life enough left in me to deny it. Karl Marx - Antichrist - said that the sweet and ennobling consolations of our faith are opium given to the poor to enable them to endure the hardships of that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. Does your Komintern teach that blasphemy or does it not?"

"Impossible. There are no poor in Russia," replies Posky and it at once puts an end to flickering flame in the Bishop who falls dead before him. Clearly, the revelation has come as a crushing blow to his faith that Communism means sin and suffering. Seeing the second fainting-fit of the Bishop, Commissar

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107 Plays, p. 1297.
108 Ibid., p. 1298.
Posky says, "I have said nothing that could possibly shock any educated reasonable person; but this man does not seem to know what sort of world he is living in ... Is he not a rational human being?" The accent in these lines is certainly that of Shaw. Indeed throughout the debate just concluded he has not only vindicated Socialism but has put forward a strong plea that man has to be rational, reasonable in politics, religion and in morals.

Another important lesson that Geneva teaches is that the future of mankind lies in "Supernationalism", and not in Internationalism as we understand it. Supernationalism is a new concept enunciated by Shaw, implying the obliteration of national anthems, national flags and cultivating a "genuine political and social catholicism", and to that extent it differs from internationalism. It is akin to Marx's idea of Communism which aims, among other things, at the abolition of State and its accoutrements. To be precise, it is the Shavianization of Marx, his political mentor. Shaw has rightly put it in the mouth of the Secretary of the League of Nations who corrects Sir Orpheus, the British Foreign Secretary, when he, without reflection, equates Supernationalism with Internationalism. He says, "No, Internationalism is nonsense. Pushing all the

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109 Plays, p. 1298.
nations into Geneva is like throwing all the fishes into the same pond: they just begin eating one another. We need something higher than nationalism: a genuine political and social catholicism. How are you to get that from these patriots, with their national anthems and flags and dreams of war and conquest rubbed into them from their childhood? The organization of nations is the organization of world war. If two men want to fight how do you prevent them? By keeping them apart, not by bringing them together. When the nations kept apart war was an occasional and exceptional thing: now the League hangs over Europe like a perpetual warcloud\footnote{Plays, p. 1304.} (Act II). It is so, because the member nations forming the League cannot rise above their petty interests or forget their racial and cultural superiority, although they all speak in terms of Internationalism. This is how the Secretary of the League remarks to Sir Orpheus: "Oh, there is no use talking to you. You all come here to push your own countries without the faintest notion of what the League is for; and I have to sit here listening to foreign ministers explaining to me that their countries are the greatest countries in the world and their people God's chosen race. You are supposed to be international statesmen; but none of you could keep a coffee stall at Limehouse because you would have to be equally civil to sailors of all nations."\footnote{Ibid., p. 1306.}
Subsequent political events in the world since 1938 have shown once again how prophetic Shaw is! Can we say that things are any better now? To Shaw, Socialism and Democracy are complementary; true Democracy is impossible without Socialism and Socialism is not wholesome without Democracy and both go beyond the national frontier and embrace mankind as a whole. It is in this sense only that his Supernationalism has a relevance to his concept of Democracy and becomes a true "political and social Catholicism."

Shaw's criticism of the existing form of Democracy has led many to think that he is an enemy of this universally admired political system. The truth is that he is an enemy of all sorts of falsehood and fraud. Democracy in name but Plutocracy in practice - this is something which outrages his sense of Equality, Liberty and of Fraternity and makes him bitter. Much has been said about his distrust of the people, but here again, the truth is that he distrusts not the people but the system that keeps the people ignorant or, at best, half educated. He has amply demonstrated in his Prefaces and in his Plays that under the right system right type of people grow. For instance, in the preface to On the Rocks he says: "Russian proletariat is now growing its own professional and organizing class; and the ex-bourgeois is dying out, after seeing his children receive a sound Communist education and being lectured by them on his old-fashioned prejudices ... The notion that a civilized State can be made out of any sort of human material is one of our
old Radical delusions. As to building Communism with such trash as the Capitalist system produces it is out of the question. For a Communist Utopia we need a population of Utopians; and Utopians do not grow wild on the bushes nor are they to be picked up in the slums: they have to be cultivated very carefully and expensively." Again, in the play Geneva, the Judge sermonises to Sir Orpheus on what his country should do to get into the right path, giving up the sophistication. He says, "How do you find the world? You find it sophisticated to the verge of suicidal insanity. This makes trouble for you as Foreign Secretary. Why not cut out the sophistication? Why not bring your economics, your religion, your history, your political philosophy up to date? Russia has made a gigantic effort to do this; and now her politicians are only about fifty years behind her philosophers and saints whilst the rest of the civilized world is from five hundred to five thousand behind it. In the West the vested interests in ignorance and sophistication are so overwhelming that no teacher can tell his young pupils the truth without finding himself starving in the street. The result is that here we despair of human nature, whereas Russia has hopes that have carried her through the most appalling sufferings to the forefront of civilization. Then why despair of human nature when it costs us so much trouble to corrupt it? Why not stop telling it lies? Are we not as

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112 Prefaces, p. 363.
capable of that heroic feat as the Russians?" (Act III).

"Apparently not," replies the Commissar. "There are qualities which are produced on the Russian soil alone. There may be a future for the Western World if it accepts the guidance of Moscow; but left to its childish self it will decline and fall like all the old capitalist civilizations." Whether the Western World voluntarily accepts the Moscow line or not is a different matter. But to make Democracy meaningful in some way at least some reforms must be made, according to Shaw.

First, there must be several legislatures in place of the existing Parliament, for a modern government is much more complex than any government in the past and has to deal with problems hitherto unknown to human society both at the national and international levels. To quote Shaw, "Our present parliament is obsolete: it can no more do the work of a modern State than Julius Caesar's galley could do the work of an Atlantic liner. We need in these islands two or three additional federal legislatures, working on our municipal committee system instead of our parliamentary party system. We need a central authority to co-ordinate the federal work. Our obsolete little internal frontiers must be obliterated and our units of local government enlarged to dimensions compatible with the recent prodigious advances in facility of communication and co-operation. Commonwealth affairs and supernational activities


114 Ibid., p. 1313.
through the League of Nations or otherwise will have to be provided for, and Cabinet function to be transformed. All the pseudo-democratic obstructive functions of our political machinery must be ruthlessly scrapped, and the general problem of government approached from a positive viewpoint at which mere anarchistic national sovereignty as distinguished from self-government will have no meaning.\footnote{Preface to The Apple Cart in Prefaces p. 336.}

He, however, does not mean that the parliamentary growth must be pulled up by the roots. No government can make great changes until "a long propaganda and inculcation of its principles and hopes has persuaded the mass of the people, if not to understand them critically, at least to follow the flags and echo the catchwords of its advocates." But he is opposed to the idea of "Mr and Mrs Everybody" electing "Mr and Mrs Anybody" as rulers. "Yet Parliament must survive as a congress of plaintive and plangent Anybodies with unlimited licence to complain, to criticize, to denounce, to demand, to suggest, to supply and discuss firsthand information, to move resolutions and take a vote on them: in short, to keep the Government abreast of public sentiment."... "But assemblies of agitators and petitioners must not be legislators. Such plausible pseudo-democratic devices as the legislative Initiative and Referendum, which offer Mr and Mrs Everyman a direct immediate power to bind and loose, must be ruled out, because even when they know..."
exactly what they want, they do not know how to get it, just as they may want a motor car, but cannot make the blue print which the engineer must have before he can construct one for them. Legislation must be by 'the quality', not by the mob.\textsuperscript{116} It means that the people should be judges of legislators and not legislators themselves until they become tested and found suitable for the job. This explains why Shaw felt so happy when Sidney and Beatrice Webb came to the rescue of the British in 1920 with their volume entitled \textit{A Constitution for the Socialist Commonwealth of Great Britain} which, among other things, proposed two Parliaments for the country, one dealing with the political affairs etc. and the other with the industrial affairs, and so sad when the country paid no heed to it.

Secondly, the Party System of government, which is regarded as an inseparable part of modern democracy, should be replaced by the Municipal Committee System (of which Shaw had direct knowledge as a Borough Councillor). Since this is the most sensitive and easily misunderstood part of his proposed reforms, Shaw himself has explained it elaborately, tracing its historical origin in the necessity felt by "William III at the end of the seventeenth century to secure the support of Parliament for his war against Louis XIV", and giving reasons why it should be scrapped in favour of the Municipal System. In the Preface to 1931 Edition of \textit{Fabian Essays in Socialism} \underline{\textsuperscript{116}}

he says, "The effect of this system is that measures brought before the House by the Government are never voted on their merits but solely on the question whether the Government shall remain in office or not and whether all the members of the House shall be put to the expense and trouble of an immediate election at which their seats will be at stake. Cross-voting by members of independent character according to their conviction, information, or caprice, which made it impossible for William III to foresee from session to session whether the House of Commons would vote him supplies for his continental warfare, is eliminated: indeed such characters are eliminated from parliament, as only candidates with a party label, pledged to vote for their party right or wrong have more than the slenderest chance of being elected" (p. xiv). Three years before it, in The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism, he wrote, "Within my lifetime I have seen the Conservatives, when in opposition, vehemently opposing and denouncing a measure proposed by the Liberals, and when they had defeated the Liberals and come to power, pass that very measure themselves in a rather more advanced form. And I have seen the Liberals do the same and this, too, not in matters of no great consequences but in such far-reaching social changes as Free Trade, the enfranchisement of the working classes, the democratization of local government, and the buying out of the Irish landlords." (p. 343)

The Municipal Committee System, although it, too, according to Shaw, sprang from the same root as the Party System, is
free from the defects from which the latter suffers. In the Preface to the 1931 Edition of Fabian Essays in Socialism he says, 'This system [Party System] was never introduced in the municipalities. In them the corporation or council is elected for a fixed period during which there can be no appeal to the electorate. Business is conducted, not by a single Cabinet drawn from one party only, but by a string of committees on which all parties are represented, each dealing with its own special branch of public work. These committees, working independently, submit their measures to the general body of members, who vote on them quite freely, as nothing whatever is at stake except the measure itself, a rejection of it involving neither change of government nor general election. Obstruction, or opposition for the sake of opposition, which means an absolutely uncritical insincere opposition and thus destroys the whole value of opposition in parliament, cannot occur: the conflict between the conservative and progressive temperaments is natural and honest: the Conservative is not, as in the House of Commons, repeatedly obliged to vote against advances of which he approves nor the Progressive for changes which he believes to be mistaken. The practical result is that the municipalities get through their work without excessive attendance at the Town Hall, whilst the House of Commons, sitting all day and sometimes all night, is hopelessly unable to keep abreast of its business, and finds that its overworked ministers have no control of the departments they are
nominally responsible for, and often no real knowledge of the work done by them, the effective Government being really the bureaucracy or permanent Civil Service, which is unaffected by the Party System.

Hence the demand for the abolition of the Party System and a return to the older municipal system for all governing bodies.

The second main change needed is an absolute division of labor and specialization of function among our rulers. At present Cabinets of about twenty persons (complained of as being too numerous) assisted by a dozen under-secretaries, are expected to deal with a body of work which ranges from the widest and weightiest problems of world policy, finance, and constitutional legislation to the most trumpery details of the farmyard and workshop" (pp xiv-xv).

The inefficiency of the British Government run on the Party System came to be the butt of his satire time and again in his plays. Now in his political treatise entitled Everybody's Political What's What? he asks his readers to "contrast what it has done with what an efficient and entirely public spirited government might and should have done during the two centuries of its deplorable existence, with what the Russian Soviet Government has done in twenty years, and all our Whig Macaulayism drops dead before the facts" (p. 29).

Thirdly, to make the democratic government efficient Shaw suggests there must be two Cabinets instead of one Cabinet;
the same set of ministers should not be both makers and executors of policy. Here again Shaw draws inspiration from the Russian experiment which, in his opinion, has delivered the desired goods to the people. He says, "Democratic government needs a Cabinet of Thinkers (Politbureau) as well as a Cabinet of Administrators (Commissars)." But the difficulty is that "Adult Suffrage can never supply this, especially in England, where intellect is hated and dreaded, not wholly without reason, as it is dangerous unless disciplined and politically educated; whilst acting and oratory, professional and amateur, are popular, and are the keys to success in elections."

Fourthly, Shaw argues, Adult Suffrage or Vote for Everybody does not lead Democracy to success but it is the surest way to its defeat. As, for instance, he says, "The establishment of representative government in England is assumed to have been completed by the enfranchisement of women in 1928. The enormous hiatus left by their previous disenfranchisement is supposed to have been filled up and finished with. As a matter of fact it has only reduced Votes for Women to absurdity; for the women immediately used their vote to keep women out of

117 Preface to Farfetched Fables in Prefaces p. 907.

118 Ibid., p. 907.
Parliament."\textsuperscript{119} and "when it was introduced in England not a single woman was returned at the ensuing General Election, though there were women of proved ability in the field. They were all defeated by male candidates who were competitive noodles and nobodies."\textsuperscript{120} Continuing his observation, Shaw says, "So far no great harm has been done by their legal disabilities because men and women are so alike that for the purposes of our crude legislation it matters little whether juries and parliaments are packed with men or women; but now that the activities of government have been greatly extended, detailed criticism by women has become indispensable in Cabinets."\textsuperscript{121} It is true that "political capacity is rare; but it is not rarer in women than in men. Nature's supply of five per cent or so of born political thinkers and administrators are all urgently needed in modern civilization; and if half of that natural supply is cut off by the exclusion of women from Parliament and Cabinets the social machinery will fall short and perhaps break down for lack of sufficient direction."\textsuperscript{122} But the enfranchisement of women - giving all women the vote - does not ensure equal representation of men and women as is evident from the statistics Shaw has supplied. It "doubles the resistance to any change." Incidentally, as Democracy means

\textsuperscript{113} Preface to \textit{In Good King Charles's Golden Days} in \textit{Prefaces} p. 889.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p. 890.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., p. 890.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p. 890.
the opinion or rule of the majority, it results in Conserva-
tism, and sometimes in retrogression, for, according to Shaw
"the majority is always against any change, and it takes at
least thirty years to convert it; whilst only ten per cent or
thereabouts of the population has sufficient mental capacity
to foresee its necessity or desirability", and so "a time lag
is created during which the majority is always out-of-date."
In the face of these difficulties, can there be a system that
will ensure equal representation of males and females? Shaw's
answer is the "Coupled Vote." Therefore I suggest and advocate
the Coupled Vote, making all votes invalid except those for
bisexed couple, and thus ensuring the return of a body in which
men and women are present in equal numbers. Until this is done,
adult suffrage will remain the least democratic of all politi-
cal systems."

Shaw's opposition to Adult Suffrage comes out when he says,
"I do not mean that Mr and Mrs Everybody should be allowed to
elect Mr and Mrs Anybody as rulers, though our democratic politi-
cians still seem to think so." It is therefore no wonder that
he disputed Voltair's claim that "Mr Everybody was wiser than
Mr Anybody." When Voltaire said that Mr Everybody was wiser than
Mr Anybody," says Shaw, "he had never seen adult suffrage at

123 Preface to Perfetched Fables in Prefaces p. 907.
124 Preface to In Good King Charles's Golden Days in Prefaces p. 890.
work. It takes all sorts to make a world and to maintain civilization. Some of these sorts have to be killed like mad dogs whilst others have to be put in command of the State. Until the differences are classified we cannot have a scientific suffrage and without a scientific suffrage every attempt at democracy will defeat itself as it has always done." It is the result not of his disbelief in the natural political capacity of Mr Everybody but of the socio-economic system which makes Mr Everybody unfit for this political function by making him ignorant or passive or helpless in the hands of Plutocracy. Shaw firmly believes that under a fair system as, for example, in Russia, Mr Everybody will have necessary freedom to cultivate his political faculty and to learn the truth of politics so as to be able to exercise his franchise properly. Yet there may be a few incorrigible individuals here and there, and they, like mad dogs, deserve to be liquidated. Happily, Shaw has a dynamic mind that seeks, like his Life Force, the truth through what he calls "trial and error method." This accounts for his approbation of "the new political technique which is evolving under pressure of circumstances in Russia", which fulfils the essential conditions; first, it follows the trial and error method; secondly, "it is more immediately responsive to the continual need for reforms and adaptations to changing circumstances." As to political


capacity of the average citizen, Shaw says, "My experience as an enlightener, which is considerable, is that what is wrong with the average citizen is not altogether deficient political capacity. It is largely ignorance of facts, creating a vacuum into which all sorts of romantic antiquarian junk and cast-off primitive religion rushes." Political education is a must for the political man just as musical education is for the musician or mathematical education for the mathematician.

Fifthly, "we must get rid of the tradition of heredity altogether," the reason being that even if the Lord is qualified enough to be the ruler or legislator, there is no guarantee that his son will be a chip of the old block.

Sixthly, "political decisions must not be the whims or phobias of men demented by absolute authority like those of Nero or Tsar Paul", but "such decisions must be made in council with competent assessors in the light of the best advice and widest information available. We shall need regional councils, vocational councils, industrial councils, co-operative consumers' councils, financial councils, educational councils, planning and co-ordinating councils, councils for supranational affairs, all in constant session as well as parliamentary congresses( at not

128 Prefaces to Farfetched Fables in Prefaces p. 907.
130 Everybody's Political That's What, p. 32.
too frequent intervals) to ventilate national grievances and contribute any political suggestions Mr Everybody may be capable of. This is what it has come to in ultra-democratic Russia under the inexorable necessities of human nature and circumstances.\textsuperscript{131}

Shaw draws freely from the Russian system, because, as a Freethinker and a Socialist, he finds it working better than any other system known to mankind till now, but he will be the first man to discard it in favour of a better one if ever such a system be invented. He also points out that "the Russian system is not really a revolutionary departure from our own. We are governed more by trade unions, co-operative societies, professional association of doctors and lawyers, and judicial bench, the committees of the Privy Council, the bureaucracy, and by Boards of all sorts than by the Houses of Parliament."\textsuperscript{132}

However, the multiplicity of governing bodies as such will not serve the purpose of Democracy; they "should be controlled and co-ordinated in the interest of the general welfare, and staffed from panels of competent and responsible persons. At present they are a jumble of casual growths, often unpopular because some of them are out of dates, led by Party

\textsuperscript{131} *Everybody's Political What's What* p. 35.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 35.
politicians, and operated by petty tyrants, ignorant halfwits, or incurable stick-in-the-mud who are virtually irremovable. But they need not be. In Russia the governing bodies are purged and the slackers 'liquidated' (the word covers shooting in grave cases) pretty promptly when they are found out. What the Russians can do we can do.\footnote{\textit{Everybody's Political What's What}, p. 35.}

This naturally leads us to the question of forming panels, the most difficult part of Shaw's reforms. He himself was aware of the difficulty and, although he had been insisting for many years on the formation of panels of tested persons eligible for different government posts, rejecting competitive examination as a basis for such panels, he could not suggest the means until he wrote the Preface to \textit{Too True to be Good} in 1931, the year of his visit to Russia. His observation on the question runs thus: "Years ago, I said that what democracy needed was a trustworthy anthropometric machine for the selection of qualified rulers. Since then I have elaborated this by demanding the formation of panels of tested persons eligible for the different grades in the governmental hierarchy. Panel A would be for diplomacy and international finance, Panel B for national affairs, Panel C for municipal and country affairs, Panel D for the village councils and so forth. Under such a panel system the voters would lose their..."
present liberty to return such candidates as the late Horatio Bottomley to parliament by enormous majorities; but they would gain the advantage of at least knowing that their rulers know how to read and write, which they do not enjoy at present.

"Nobody ventured to disagree with me when I urged the need for such panels; but when I was challenged to produce my anthropometric machine or my endocrine or phrenological tests, I was obliged to confess that they had not yet been invented and that such existing attempts at them as competitive examinations are as irrelevant and misleading as to be worse than useless as tests of vocation. But the Soviet system, hammered out under the sternest pressure of circumstances, supplies an excellent provisional solution, which turns out to be the solution of the old Catholic Church purged of supernatural pretension, assumption of final perfection, and the poison of private property with its fatal consequences. Mr Stalin is not in the least like an Emperor, nor an Archbishop, nor a Prime Minister, nor a Chancellor; but he would be strikingly like a Pope, claiming for form's sake an apostolic succession from Marx, were it not for his frank method of Trial and Error, his entirely human footing, and his liability to removal at a moment's notice if his eminence should upset his mental balance. At the other end of the scale are the rank and file of Communist Party, doing an ordinary day's work with the common folk, and giving only their leisure to the Party. For their election as representatives of the commons they must depend on the votes of their intimate and equal neighbours and workmates.
They have no incentive to seek election except the vocational incentive; for success, in the first instance, means, not release from the day's ordinary work, but the sacrifice of all one's leisure to politics, and, if promotion to the whole-time grades be achieved, a comparatively ascetic discipline and virtually no pecuniary gain."\(^{134}\) This, by contrast, would remind one of Begonia in Shaw's *Geneva*. Some of his critics found it difficult to accept his observation that Stalin could be removed from office "at a moment's notice." But it is on record that in the post-Stalin era the Party General Secretary and the Prime Minister have been removed from office in that country.

Why does Shaw refer to the Soviet system time and again, even in a discussion on Democracy? His answer, firm and clear, is: "I harp on Russia because the Moscow experiment is the only really new departure from Tweedledum and Tweedledee: Fascism is still wavering between Empire and Church, between private property and Communism."\(^{135}\) What Shaw has advocated in his own person, Sir Arthur, British Prime Minister, advocates in the play *On the Rocks*. He says, "Yet they (the Russians) got their ideas from us. Karl Marx thought it all in Bloomsbury. Lenin learnt his lesson in Holford Square, Islington. Why can we never think out anything, nor learn any lessons?"\(^{136}\) (Act II).

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134 Preface to *Too True to be Good* in *Prefaces*. p. 352.
136 *Plays*, p. 1212.