

CYCLOPÆDIA
OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE,
POLITICAL ECONOMY,
AND OF THE
POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES,

BY THE BEST AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN WRITERS.

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is scarcely true even of a small part. The wars of the first 15 years of the nineteenth century, the armed peace of the years succeeding 1848, and the wars of 1866 and 1870, created and increased the national debts of Europe to an amazing degree. The source of the evil being so evident, the remedy is easy to discover. It is not to be supposed that, with the increasing wants which social development requires the state to satisfy, civil expenses can be reduced very soon. The military budget, on the contrary, is everywhere susceptible of the greatest reduction without injury to the security of states and with great benefit to social, political and economic progress. Let us imagine only a part of the money, at present withdrawn from circulation, in the debtor state, returning by degrees to the creditors who would be obliged to seek new investments for it, would not production and consumption immediately feel the benefit of this capital? If a continually increasing portion of the 3,000,000,000 now spent in paying the interest of the debt, were employed by the state in works of public utility or remained in the hands of taxpayers to increase their instruments of labor or their means of enjoyment, would there not be the wherewithal to compensate liberally and seriously for the petty and fictitious advantages which self-satisfied dreamers attribute to the existence of great national debts?

J. E. HORN.

DECENTRALIZATION. This word signifies the action which tends to diminish centralization, that is, the concentration of power.—For some time the word decentralization has also been used to mean the opposite of centralization. It is often confounded also with self-government, which is the opposite of tutelary administration. All these terms, however clear the ideas they represent may appear to us, designate things which are very complicated. It would no doubt be difficult to deny that a country is centralized, but it would sometimes be more difficult still to prove that it is too much so. A certain degree of centralization is in fact necessary to maintain unity in a state, and to insure it a good administration, but how determine this degree? Should it not differ in different countries, according to the tendencies of their population, the extent of their territory, and political, economic and other circumstances? Should there not be a greater degree of centralization in a state which contains the more or less active germs of dissolution, than in a country whose unity is invulnerable?—Since we were speaking of degrees, does “political” centralization differ in nature or in degree from “administrative” centralization? This distinction, which was invented to furnish an argument both to those who demand centralization, and to those who reject it, seems to us vague and idle. Vague, for what is political centralization? Is it the concentration of all power in the hands of one man, or absolutism? Is it the concentration of all power in one constitutional government, as opposed to a more or less explicit federation, or

unity in opposition to the confederation of states? Or does it rather refer to a greater or less extension accorded to the legislative power? The distinction is idle, for political centralization signifies what might be more clearly expressed by other words. We therefore speak only of administrative centralization, and hasten to give positive details regarding it, in order not to lose ourselves in the vagueness with which we reproach others. We shall seek to determine where centralization is appropriate, and where it is injurious. To this end, therefore, let us pass in review the different branches of the administration and examine them from this point of view.—First of all we must mention the administration of the military and marine services. In these centralization is evidently indispensable. Could any one wish that the army should be decentralized; that the provinces should nominate their generals; that the council general be called upon to vote the calibre of the guns used by the troops of the department; that the seaport towns should be consulted as to the thickness of the plates for iron-clad ships of war?—The administration of finances should also be centralized. Formerly a special tax was levied for each important expense, and the multiplicity of the accounts rendered all control impracticable, not to speak of the other inconveniences of this system. At last the state funds (*fonds*) were centralized, and all difficulty disappeared. We wish it distinctly understood, that we here speak only of the national funds.—The administration of justice also should be centralized. No one will deny the necessity of a court of appeal, and of a supreme court in judicial organization. It would indeed be very strange if the civil, commercial or penal laws were different in different departments of the same country.—In confederations centralization has not always been complete. Such is the case for instance in the United States, where an individual state can not enter into relations with foreign nations. It was not thus in Switzerland before 1848, nor in Germany before 1871, where particular agreements might inconveniently affect the treaties negotiated for the entire confederation.—Religious worship should not, in our opinion, form part of the public service; as to education, we do not believe it could be rendered sufficiently flourishing by means of the mere free initiative of citizens; facts do not show that it could be, and rather seem to demonstrate that it can not. The intervention of the state is therefore necessary here. Unfortunately, this intervention is for the most part too great; states wish to take charge of and regulate education entirely, here some degree of decentralization would be a decided improvement.—Agriculture and commerce do not demand centralization. The mission of the ministry having charge of these interests is rather one of encouragement and protection. Public works, on the contrary, may tempt the administration to go beyond what is necessary, but in proportion as the influence of the provincial and communal representations increases, these encroachments

become more rare. Moreover, here also the just limit may be a matter for discussion.—In France, and many other countries, centralization is usually confounded with administrative guardianship. And yet these two things are as different from each other as form and substance. Centralization is the form. An affair which, instead of being decided by the mayor or the prefect, goes to Paris, is centralized; to decentralize we have but to have it returned before the prefect as a court of last resort. In 1852 and 1861 decentralization was effected in France, but the guardianship remained as before, for, instead of the minister, it was the prefect who rendered decisions. Since then guardianship has been lightened, and it would not be difficult to show that French departmental and communal legislation, such as it was in 1873, is as liberal as that of most other European countries, including England, Belgium and Switzerland.—Centralization appears to be one of the natural phases of the administrative organization of every country. When it is insufficient, the people ask that it be increased; when it is too great, they demand a diminution of it. When society was in a rudimentary state there could be no question of centralization; men experienced but few general wants, had but few common interests; and things were done as often ill as well, or were not done at all. There was a time when Paris was neither swept nor lighted, and therefore could not have the Hotel de Ville, neither a street-cleaning department nor a gas department. Besides, for a long time one branch of the public service was intrusted to the feudal lords, another to the church; and at that epoch decentralization was very much like anarchy. Centralization was at first, therefore, an undoubted blessing; it introduced the branches of the public service. By a concurrence of circumstances, which history tells us of, France has made greater advancement in this respect than many other countries; and if some other countries were or appeared to be less centralized than France, it was at times because certain branches of the public service did not exist in them. A city which does not light its streets has fewer employes and less expense than a city which has taken this step in the way of progress.—If we were of the number of those who attribute a preponderant influence to race or nationality, we might say that the words of the law are of secondary importance in these matters, and that everything depends upon the zeal and intelligence with which the law is followed. Have we not seen admirable sculpturing done with a broken knife, and artistic engraving executed with a nail pulled out of the walls of a prison? Now, more or less liberal laws have remained a dead letter, because the nations for whom they were framed inclined to self-government. Is decentralization an affair of temperament? (See CENTRALIZATION.)—See A. de Tocqueville, *l'ancien Régime*; Odilon-Barrot, *la Décentralisation*; Dupout White, *la Centralisation*.

MAURICE BLOK.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

The struggle against Great Britain was begun by the English-speaking American colonies without any general idea of independence as a possible result. (See REVOLUTION.) Any such intention, however warmly favored in New England, was very distasteful to the other colonies, and was formally disavowed by congress, July 6, 1775. Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey, before the spring of 1776, had enjoined upon their delegates in congress the rejection of any proposition looking to a separation, and New York, Delaware and South Carolina were so much opposed to a separation that their delegates took no prominent part in promoting it. The transfer of the war to the south in May and June, 1776, did much to advance the idea of independence there, and in May the Virginia convention instructed the delegates of that state in congress to propose a resolution declaring for independence, which was done, June 7, by Richard Henry Lee, though his resolution was not formally adopted until July 2. Before July 1, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey had rescinded the former instructions, and ordered their delegates to vote for the declaration. After debating Lee's resolution, June 8 and 10, in committee of the whole, and appointing a committee of five to draw up a declaration, the question was dropped until July 1, when the declaration, which the committee had reported June 28, was taken up and debated in committee of the whole through July 3. By this time the delegates of South Carolina, who had hitherto voted against it, came over to the majority. Delaware's two delegates were divided, and the New York delegation refused to vote, although personally in favor of the measure. July 4, Rodney, the third delegate from Delaware, was brought hurriedly about 80 miles to secure the vote of his state, and in the evening of that day the declaration of independence was passed, no state in opposition, but New York still refusing to vote. July 9, the New York convention ratified it, and it thus became "The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America." The New York delegation did not sign until July 15, nor six new Pennsylvania members until July 20. One member, from New Hampshire, did not sign until Nov. 4.—The committee appointed to draft the declaration were Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston. Jefferson, who was no speaker, but had the reputation of being an able writer, was appointed to make the draft, and his draft was accepted, with some few changes, by the committee and by congress. The changes were generally omissions rather than alterations, so that the whole document, as we have it now, contains hardly any words which were not those of Jefferson. The most noteworthy omissions were those of the last two counts of his original indictment of the king, which were as follows: "He has incited treasonable insurrections of our fellow-citizens, with the allurements of forfeiture and con-