

Franklin Ford Collection

edited by
Dominique Trudel &
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FRANKLIN FORD COLLECTION

A MEDIASTUDIES.PRESS PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

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The Simple Idea of Government

FRANKLIN FORD

Leaflet from the News Office, June 13,
1910 (doi)

GOVERNMENT BEGAN, the social relation came to view, on the appearance of one who was surer and quicker than his fellows in the scientific power to determine fact, to find the way or law. Men govern, and are governed, by means of all the relations which they hold to society. The fact-finder, the man of uplifting influence, is a governing centre for all who are in contact with him. The strong man, in the first instance, was always the direction-giver, the element of physical force being secondary. When Warwick,¹ the king-maker, failed to detect the incoming of new and revolutionary conditions he was himself unmade. Science, exact inquiry, is the source of law and government. The soldier or policeman is but incidental to any scheme of government; he is an attendant upon the court of arbitration, his function being to compel obedience whenever necessary. The bouncer in a hotel is an important official at certain junctures, relative to the hotel, but after all he does not direct the business.

¹ [Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick (1428–1471), is known as “the King-maker” for the central role he played in English politics during the first half of the Wars of the Roses (1455–1485) which opposed the House of Lancaster to the House of York.]

REGULATION OF THE MILK TRADE

The state of the milk trade in leading cities will help to make clear the whole question of government or commercial regulation. As now, under the accepted theory, the trade is governed from the City Hall. The milk inspectors are appointed by the city government, and so the regulating agency stands apart from the trade. The results are indifferent. Inspection is perfunctory, spasmodic; it does not inspect. The interest of the inspectors is not that the trade shall reach perfect regulation, but instead that the milk shall stand in constant need of inspection, and of course from the City Hall. In this way a false or ‘government’ interest comes to exist.

The truth is that the milk trade of any city will not get right save through self-regulation; to be well governed it must govern itself. There are two parties in the milk trade: one standing for honest and the other for dishonest milk. It is to the real interest of both parties to be honest, but in spite of this the dishonest minority has to be coerced. The correcting force must proceed from among themselves where the interest is actual. Scientific testing instruments are now in the hands of the pure-milk men. The need is to organize or unify the trade, and so bring it to the point of self-inspection. This done, every dairyman would sell under the one brand, while the public, coming to be rightly informed, would not buy from parties outside the organized trade, or Trust. Through the resulting identity of interest between producers, distributors, and consumers, the one trade mark would find ample protection; that is to say, the quality of all milk sold would be as certain as that of the postage stamp.

All this illustrates, or goes to make clear, the forward stride in self-government which commerce is making under the new conditions; thro. [*sic*] it the entire Trust question is laid bare. The notion that voting at a ballot-box was the limit in self-government is a strange survival.

Franklin Ford

Columbia University, New York,
June 13, 1910