



ADVANCE SHEET – MARCH 29, 2024

President's Letter

In this issue, we include a biographical sketch I composed some years ago for a book entitled *Six Lost Leaders* (Lexington Books) of a forgotten woman, Mary Parker Follett. Her life is of interest for four reasons: 1) Her first book advanced the proposition that the Speaker of the House of Representatives, not the President, should be the nation's leader with respect to domestic legislation 2) Her second book, *The New State*, is the only book by a woman included in some histories of political theory, and explores the potential of very local institutions 3) She was a pioneer in advocating Alternative Dispute Resolution; the American Arbitration Association gives a prize in her honor 4) Late in life, she concluded that businessmen could innovate more rapidly than politicians; her writings on business management emphasizing coordination among suppliers below the chief executive level and just-in-time production were taken up by the Japanese.

George W. Liebmann

Good Friday

Today is Good Friday. Although I have treasured each day God has bestowed upon me, even the bad ones, I truly have an animus toward this day. I avoid music and laughter, anything that contains sugar or tastes sweet, eating between certain hours and I try to engage in prayer and contemplation. Yet, it is not enough. Not nearly enough. All that we give, or could ever hope to give, pales in comparison to what was given for us on this day.

Although Good Friday is defined by depravation, traditional Christian honoring of the Sabbath, except for attending church, is defined by how much fun you can pack into a day. Trips to the zoo or even an amusement park, days at the beach or almost anywhere you can think of as long as it is not the office. As far as sugary concoctions, Sunday dinner is judged by how good the cake or pie being served that day happens to be.

For me, however, someone raised by a man who lived a good deal of his early life at the height of the Great Depression, work has always been a holy thing, a veritable gift from God. So, I have always thought of the Bar Library as more than a place to work. The physicality of the Library lends much to my thoughts about it. It is a place that lends itself not only to work, but of work at a certain level. A friend has told me that just walking into the Library adds a certain amount of points to your i. q. level. I propose that you come by when you are faced with a daunting legal research issue and see for yourself whether the majesty of it all does in fact instill in you a sort of “intellectual call to arms.”

I look forward to seeing you soon.

Joe Bennett



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This past Tuesday, David M. Rubenstein, who is, among many other things, the new majority owner of the Baltimore Orioles, spoke at the Bar Library. A gifted speaker, exhibiting humor and intelligence in great abundance, he talked about everything from growing up in Baltimore, to the upcoming Presidential election to his purchase of the Orioles. The evening was, (please excuse me) a definite home run.

The following is the introduction of Mr. Rubenstein that was given by the President of the Bar Library's Board George W. Liebmann, Esquire.

REMARKS OF GEORGE W. LIEBMANN, PRESIDENT OF THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF THE BALTIMORE BAR, INTRODUCING DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN, March 26, 2024

I have always proceeded on the premise that introductions should not exceed three minutes in length. Our speaker's monumental resume would make that difficult, but you all have read it. I shall therefore mention a lesser-known aspect of our speaker's career.

As a scourge of the second-hand bookstalls, I recently came across the 900 page memoir of the Prince of Darkness, the conservative journalist Robert Novak. He talks in passing of our speaker's very peripheral role, as a former junior member of the Carter White House staff, in former Vice President Mondale's later selection of his running mate in the 1984 Presidential election, Geraldine Ferrero.

This experience gives him an acute understanding of the carelessness with which the nation usually selects its Vice Presidents.

This is a year in which the probable Presidential candidates are older men, though several years short of my age. According to the publicists of their opposing parties, they are each doddering, dilapidated, and descending into desuetude.

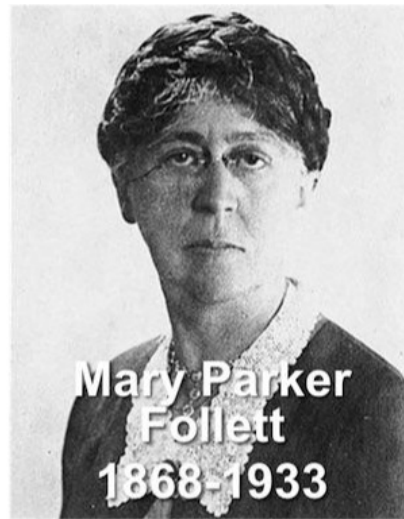
It is thus reasonable to ask our civic leaders, among whom our speaker is certainly one, to champion the cause of great care in selection of Vice

Presidential candidates. In this year we do not need another William Miller, Sarah Palin, or even Geraldine Ferrero. Our elder statesmen, in business and in government, are largely powerless to change the Presidential nominees, but their voices, individually and collectively, can urge that they be judged in large measure by their selection of running-mates.

Whatever else may be said of former President Trump, he made a wise and responsible choice in 2016 and 2020. The difference this made was amply and ironically revealed on January 6, 2021.

At the risk of ruining our speaker's evening, let me urge him to do what he can, with his friends in both parties, to insure that wise choices are made of Vice-Presidential nominees, and that the Presidential nominees are judged on the basis of what they aspire to give to posterity.

Despite this disagreeable assignment, I am happy to introduce a man who has been and is a fine citizen of this country, and who certainly has not forgotten the city that he came from, David M. Rubenstein.



Mary Parker Follett: “The Prophet of Management”

Mary Parker Follett was born in Quincy, Massachusetts, in 1868. Her father died while she was still in her teens, her mother was a nervous invalid; she thus in practical terms had no immediate family in her maturing years save a younger brother. Her mother came from a prosperous family, which allowed her to attend the Thayer Academy in Braintree, where she was influenced by Anna Boynton Thompson, a writer on Fichte and a student of Josiah Royce.¹ In 1888, at the age of twenty, she enrolled in the Collegiate Institute for Women in Cambridge, which became Radcliffe College in 1894, during what has been described as “the Golden Age of Harvard,” and almost immediately fell under the influence of Alfred Bushnell Hart. Under his direction she departed from ordinary coursework and prepared a treatise on the speaker of the House of Representatives.

In December 1891 she presented an essay on her subject at the American Historical Society, having previously presented a similar paper at the Newnham Historical Society at Cambridge University in England during a period of residence there in 1890-91. Her book was published by Longman's Green in 1896 and immediately on its appearance was the subject of a flattering review by Theodore Roosevelt, then New York police commissioner, in the *American Historical Review*.² Another reviewer, A. D. Morse of Amherst College, referred to its “rare excellence . . . well-chosen theme, grasp of subject, mastery of material, patient, long-continued, wisely-directed labor, good sense and good taste.”³ John Quincy Adams praised its “insight into the functional activity of government.”⁴

She was graduated from Radcliffe in June 1898, summa cum laude, ten years after she began, and thereafter undertook a short period of graduate study in Paris, where she became fluent in French and German. She thus had the benefit of the best formal education available to women in her time

or subsequently.

Role of the Speaker of the House

Follett's first book was in many respects a conventional work of political science, unusual only in her boldness in securing interviews with all the living and former speakers of the House; her ability to gain the confidence of her interlocutors of all classes was a consistent theme throughout her career. She was described as "plain in appearance, lacking in style, a gaunt Bostonian spinster lady with a forbidding exterior . . . [who] charmed almost everyone she met."⁵ The book was distinguished by another characteristic: its robust realism, another Follett characteristic. The book betrayed little of the interest in neighborhood institutions characteristic of Follett's later writing: "It would be absurd to retard our development by a too strict adherence to an ideal of democracy impossible for a great nation; in state and even in city affairs; we have long since passed the New England town meeting of all the voters; the democracy most to be desired is that in which the representative assembly shall legislate for those who elect it. It would certainly be advantageous to secure efficiency without concentration were it possible."⁶

In her then-expressed view, "The central vital fault of our political system is its lack of leadership. There is no one man or body whose duty it is to bring forward public measures. . . . Upon [the speaker] must be laid the duty of bringing forward legislation needed by the country."⁷ She deplored the condition, not addressed until the Gramm-Rudman legislation nearly a century later, in which "It is notorious that the national income is raised by one set of men and the national expenditures managed by another," and urged that the speaker "come into office with a certain definite declared policy; the country would have that policy to look forward to, could see whether or not it was carried out and could finally place upon him or his adversaries the responsibility for its success or failure." Under such a system, "the hope of attaining the Speakership might induce able men to seek legislative service."⁸ She found the source of the speaker's influence in three powers: acting against filibustering, appointing committees, and recognizing members. The eclipse of the speakership since 1933 was in no small measure due to the embrace of the seniority system; the dramatic if fleeting success of Speaker Newt Gingrich in 1994-96 was due to his following of two Follettian prescriptions: declaration of a program,

and the exercise of discretion in the making of committee appointments. Most State of the Union messages by presidents are stillborn, Follett notes, though this would not be the case if a president secures a speaker's acquiescence before sending or delivering the message.⁹ The book's conclusions were summarized by Theodore Roosevelt in his review: "It is in the interest of good government that [the speaker] should wisely, firmly and boldly exercise the powers and accept the great responsibilities which have come to be associated with an office which can now only be successfully filled by a man who is both a great statesman and a great party leader."

In her general attitude toward reform of institutions, Follett was neither hidebound nor radical. On the one hand, "American government has proceeded by experience rather than experiment."¹⁰ On the other hand, "the Constitution was adopted with great fear and foreboding as a possible solution of a difficult problem . . . and its framers proceeded to add to it a body of statutes and practice which represent experience . . . To act in new ways parallel with the Constitution is statesmanship."¹¹

Community Organization

Beginning in 1900, Follett was employed by a series of social agencies, and it was the experience thus gained which twenty years later was assimilated into her mature and influential works. In 1900, she became involved in the affairs of the Roxbury boys clubs, which met in rented quarters. This in turn led to her interest in stimulating community use of school buildings, including use by the Roxbury League, which met at the Albert Palmer School. In 1908 she became chairman of the Committee on Extended Use of School Buildings of the Women's Municipal League of Boston, an active reform organization with 2,000 members. This led to study of community centers elsewhere in the country and to establishment in 1911 of a center in the East Boston High School with a membership of 500. In 1912 the Boston School Board assumed responsibility for it and appointed her as chairman of its Advisory Committee for Evening Centers. By 1914, there were evening centers in six high schools with an average weekly attendance of 7,000.

After a trip to London and Edinburgh in 1902, Follett had developed a parallel interest in the problems of introducing young men to the work force, and she saw a role for the new evening centers in establishing

placement bureaus. The activity of these was expanded to include the whole city of Boston, students from Harvard and Radcliffe being engaged to locate job opportunities; by the spring of 1913 the bureaus had files with 1,000 jobs. A special study was undertaken of job opportunities for Negro boys. The Placement Bureau also became part of the school system.

In April 1917, Follett was elected vice president of the National Community Center Association and helped subsidize its publication, *Community Center*. She remained active in this organization until her death in 1933.¹²

During her period of work on community centers, Follett delivered reports on her activities appearing in the Women's Municipal League bulletin from 1909 to 1917,¹³ and addresses on evening recreation centers and the aims of adult recreation were published in *Playground*, a journal of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, in January and October 1913. A paper on evening centers delivered in 1913 was reprinted by the City of Boston Printing Department.

Neighborhood Governance

In the later part of the period of her involvement with community centers, Miss Follett began work on what was initially intended as an account of her work with the school centers.¹⁴ Her account of group psychology turned into an appeal for a new approach to politics as part of what she described in her introduction as "feeling out for a new conception of modes of association" to "vitalize" politics. "'Representative government,' party organization, majority rule, with all their excrescences, are dead-wood. In their stead must appear the organization of non-partisan groups for the begetting, the bringing into being, of common ideas, a common purpose and a collective will."¹⁵

She acknowledged a "stream of reaction against the state," which she attributed to "(1) . . . demands that labor have a share in political power; (2) the trend of political thought toward pluralism; (3) a progressive legal theory of the 'real personality' of groups; (4) antagonism to the state because it is supposed to embody the crowd mind; (5) increasing intercourse which has made us see voluntary associations as real and intimate; and (6) increasing alignment before the war of interests across state lines." However, she feared "particularism merely transferred from the individual to the group." Her introduction acknowledged the influence on her thinking

of Anna Boynton Thompson, "my teacher and counsellor of many years," who reviewed the manuscript. Other reviewers of the manuscript included her mentor in political science, Albert Bushnell Hart, the psychologist H. A. Overstreet, the idealist philosopher W. Ernest Hocking, and Roscoe Pound, who was to become a noted exponent of sociological jurisprudence.

She credited the book's inception to discussions with three co-workers, one of whom, significantly, was the wife of Justice Louis Brandeis; the others were Arthur Woodworth and Mrs. Richard Cabot. Her *New State* referred approvingly to Brandeis's garment protocol as an example of integration. Her companion Isobel Briggs, a woman twenty years older, whom she had met in 1891 and in whose home she had maintained an apartment since 1896, was credited with the revision of manuscript and proofs; a friend characterized their relationship as "one of the closest, most fertile and noble friendships I have known."¹⁶ Among the books at least obliquely referred to were Graham Wallas's *The Great Society* and Herbert Croly's *Human Nature in Politics*.

She characterized the book as an attempt "to show the need of a wide and systematic study. . . . Much interweaving of thought will be necessary before the form of the new state appears to us."¹⁷ While the book is an appeal for neighborhood association, there is an absence of concreteness about its proposals which partially explains why they were largely stillborn. The earlier portions of the book, however, contained reflections on group psychology which proved highly influential and are credited by some as being seminal to the literature of business management. Her central conception was that "the study of democracy has been based largely on the study of institutions; it should be based on the study of how men behave together."¹⁸ In groups, Follett said, men learn through interpenetration of ideas, rather than through suggestion and imitation, as in the crowds of the crowd psychologists: "Men are more often at present under the laws of the crowd than of the group." She found hope in some contemporary developments in industry: the operation by competitors of cooperative credit systems and apprentice schools. "When our large stores compete to give the highest class goods and best quality service and meet in conference to make this 'competition' effective, then competition itself becomes a kind of cooperation." She alluded to standardization, joint promotion, uniform contracts, cost accounting, and statistical reports.

Turning to the problems of industrial relations, she found little hope in syndicalism or in collective bargaining as commonly understood. This led to unprincipled compromise, in which "the more 'concessions' we make,

the less 'peace' we will get." She continued, "Whenever you have balance in your premise, you have anarchy in your conclusion."¹⁹ She held up as an alternative model Justice Brandeis's protocol scheme for the New York garment industry: "The workman ought to know the cost of production and of transportation, the relative value of different processes of production, the state of the market, the conditions governing the production and marketing of the competing product; the employer must know the new conditions of labor and the laborer's point of view."

The collective contract must in time go the way of the individual contract. . . . It is a mistake to think that social progress is to depend upon anything happening to the working people; some say that they are to be given more material goods and all will be well; some think that they are to be given more education and the world will be saved. . . . Those who advocate profit sharing are not helping us. . . . The crux is not profits and wages—it is the joint control of industry.

She applauded the few employers that had qualified their right to discharge particular workers by making it dependent on a vote of employees. Her vision was of a time when "we shall give up the notion of antagonisms which belong to a static world and see only difference—that is, that which is capable of integration. Increase of wages and reduction of cost of production were once considered an irreconcilable antagonism. . . . In distribution too we shall be able to see the coincident interests of labor and capital."²⁰ In the meantime, however, she elsewhere acknowledged, "Collective bargaining is necessary at present; without it both wages and working conditions would fall below even minimum standards."²¹

She also made some penetrating observations about moral standards, in flux in wartime: "No ideal is worthwhile which does not grow from our actual life. . . . Men cannot live by taboos; that means stagnation. Insofar as we obey old standards without interpenetrating them with the actual world, we are abdicating our creative power. Morality is not the refraining from doing certain things—it is a constructive force. The craving for self-expression and self-realization must see quite naturally for its field of operation the community. . . . There is no such thing as an individual conscience in the sense in which the term is often used. . . . To obey the moral law is to obey the social ideal. To make a conscience by myself would be as difficult as to try to make a language by myself."²²

Basic to both her political and managerial thinking was the reciprocal and educative value of relationships: "Loyalty to a collective will we have

not created and of which we therefore are not an integral part is slavery. We belong to our community insofar as we are helping to make that community; then loyalty follows, then love follows."

Her reflections on society's loners were pungent: "Evil is non-relation. . . . Non-relation is death. . . . Difference which is not capable of relation is eccentricity."²³

For her, politics went well beyond elections and voting: "No question in history will seem more astonishing than the one so often reiterated in these days: 'Should woman be given a place in politics.' Woman is in politics; no power under the sun can put her out."²⁴ She considered the women's movement as "belong[ing] to the past because it is merely the end of the movement for the extension of suffrage."²⁵

Although *The New State* did not elaborate the details or legal structure of its proposed neighborhood organizations, Follett saw these groups as "bring[ing] to the surface needs, desires and aspirations. . . . These needs should become the substance of politics and these neighborhood groups the recognized political unit."²⁶ The advantages of a neighborhood basis were "fuller acquaintance. . . . We certainly do feel more kindly to the people we actually see . . . [and with whom we have] constant and regular intercourse . . . common interests, the school, recreational opportunities, the placing of their children in industry, hygiene, housing, etc." as well as a mixture of occupations. "Sameness indicates a meager personality. I go to the medical association to meet doctors. I go to my neighborhood club to meet men. It is just because my next door neighbor has never been to college that he is good for me."²⁷ She even declared "a deeper sense of our communal life is going to be the substitute for what men now get in war. . . . The lure of war is neither the instinct of hate nor the love of fighting, it is the joining of one with another in a common purpose," quoting a soldier who declared, "There we are doing something all together," and who referred to "the deadly separateness of our ordinary life." That this is more than a rhetorical flight is suggested by the persistence of volunteer fire and rescue companies.²⁸

She noted the customary criticism of neighborhood relationships:

Those who disagree become violent. They tell me of the pettiness of neighborhood life, from small gossip to determined boycotts. Intolerance and narrowness thrive in the neighborhood group, they say; in the wider group they do not. But I am not proposing to substitute the neighborhood group for others. You can have narrow interests as well as narrow spaces. The only place in the world we can change ourselves

is on that level where we are real. . . . It is the same people who talk gossip in their neighborhood who are impersonal and noble in another part of the city. Homogeneity in which we can find all the comfort of a down pillow does not provide the differences in which alone we can grow.

She viewed neighborhood organization as "a protest against both utopias on the one hand and a mechanized humanity on the other" and saw it as "not one more association but the means of coordinating and translating into other community values other local groups." She conceded that ease of communication made neighborhood less important for the mobile, but urged that "Fluctuating population makes it all the more necessary that some organization should be ready at hand to assimilate the newcomers. We can never reform American politics from above. We shall never know how to be one of a nation until we are one of a neighborhood."²⁹ "We all are interested in our own affairs. No one comes to his neighborhood group pledged beforehand to any particular way of thinking."³⁰ She viewed neighborhood associations as providing a

process by which ability of all sorts should come to the top. . . . Nearly all our needs are satisfied by external agencies, government or institutional. . . . I am constantly being acted upon, no one is encouraging me to act. . . . We can operate as government as well as with government. It is not a municipal dance-hall regulated by the city authorities which expresses the right relation between civics and dancing, but dances planned and managed by a neighborhood for itself.³¹

She viewed the defeat by Tammany Hall of the reform mayor John Purroy Mitchel as a question "not of 'good' government or 'bad' government but only of self-government and the only way they have of expressing this is to vote against a government which seems to disregard them."³²

Although her proposals were nonspecific, she viewed it as essential that the neighborhood entities hold regular and not ad hoc meetings and forecast that they would gradually assume increased responsibilities and establish connections with higher levels of government. "The reason we want neighborhood organization is not to keep people within their neighborhood but to get them out." She saw the neighborhood groupings as ultimately selecting city councillors and state legislators. "The local units must grow sovereignty. The pluralists object to the One that comes before the Many. They are right, but we need not therefore give up oneness. . . . Multiple

citizenship in its spontaneous unifying is the foundation of the new state."³³

Follett's view of federalism has recently enjoyed a revival. "Our civil war was not the blow to states' rights and the victory of centralization. The United States is neither to ignore the states, transcend the states nor to balance the states, it is to be the states in their united capacity. For the federal government to do that which the states should do or perhaps even can do means loss of force and loss of education by experience for the states. On the other hand, not to see when federal action means local development and national strength means a serious retardation of growth."³⁴ There are echoes here of Follett's previously expressed admiration for the public works sponsored by Henry Clay.³⁵

Her celebration of federalism and neighborhood institutions was not intended as a defense of vested rights. On the contrary, she thought of neighborhood assemblies as a way of making "every man and his daily needs the basis of the substance of politics."³⁶

We have had legislation to protect home industries, we have encouraged agriculture, we have helped the railroads by concessions and land grants, but we have not until recently had legislation for the individual . . . health laws, shorter hours of work, workmen's compensation, old age pensions, minimum wage, prevention of industrial accidents, prohibition of child labor. . . . The individual has never been so appreciated as in the awakening social world of today.

She decried

a false political philosophy, which taught "individual rights," distorted ideas of liberty and equality, and thought of man versus the state. . . . The trusts were to be let alone—freedom of contract was called liberty. . . . The power of single men or single corporations at the end of the nineteenth century marked the height of our particularism, of our subordination of the state to individual members. They were like *pate de foie gras* made by the enlargement of the goose's liver. It is usual to disregard the goose. The result of our false individualism has been non-conservation of our natural resources, exploitation of labor, and political corruption.³⁷

While she was not hostile to social legislation, she was not unaware of the resulting problem of controlling the executive. "Why do we consider our present constructive policies more democratic? Are they necessarily so? Has not paternalistic Germany constructive social policies?" While she saw the executive budget and concentration of appointment powers in the

governor, progressive measures of the period, as positive steps and also was sympathetic to the introduction of devices of direct democracy such as the referendum and recall, she believed that these "will bear little fruit unless something is done at the same time to break the power of the party. . . . Direct government can be beneficial only if accompanied by the organization of voters in nonpartisan groups for the production of common ideas and a collective purpose. Shall we give the initiative and referendum to a crowd or to an interpenetrating group?"³⁸

This discussion undervalued the extent to which growing bureaucracies themselves broke the power of party. Follett was perhaps overcomplacent as to the resulting problems. "Aristocracy is a necessary part of democracy. . . . Administrative responsibility and expert service are as necessary a part of genuine democracy as popular control is a necessary accompaniment of administrative responsibility. The idea that any honest citizen was fit for most administrative offices is rapidly disappearing."³⁹ The overstated comment of the *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* (1968) has some justice to it: "Follett did not appreciate the role of institutional structures, bureaucracy or force."⁴⁰ It would be more accurate to say that she sought through grass-roots activity to minimize their importance, but her political writing is vaguest and least satisfactory where it discusses the connection between local and national institutions.

Her views as to the importance of reciprocal relationships produced some persuasive statements about international relations. "We shall probably first get nations into an international league through their economic interests, then when we have a genuine union the sense of belonging begins. . . . To make sacrifices for strangers will never succeed. We shall make sacrifices for a league of nations when we get the same feeling of a bond"⁴¹— a reasonable description of the process of European unification. "With the union, the purpose comes into being and with its every step forward, the purpose changes."

She also would have deprecated the current practice of treating militarily defeated nations such as Iraq and Serbia as pariah states or attempting to impose artificial boundaries or fictitious unified governments: "You can never aim directly at peace, peace is what you get through other things. It is the conviction of separateness which has to be conquered before civilization can proceed."⁴² "We shall never be able to make an international settlement and erect some power to enforce it; the settlement must be such as to provide its own momentum."⁴³ "If the Allies win, Germany should not be punished by keeping her out of a European league;

she must be shown how to take her place within it."⁴⁴ She later observed, "You can[not] declare peace. That is what the Allies tried to do at Versailles. . . . Peace is a process and an attainment."⁴⁵

On its appearance, *The New State* was praised in *The Nation* as offering "a suggestion of political organization through the neighborhood group which is not only fascinatingly simple and sane but deep-reaching in its social and political implications," and by Charles F. Ellwood of the University of Missouri in the *American Journal of Sociology* as providing "a clear summary of modern psychological sociology," while noting that its theory of constructive conflict "detracts overmuch from Professor Giddings' theory of the importance of like-mindedness and similarity in our social life."⁴⁶ Sybella Branford, while finding much to admire in the book, reproached it for ignoring Auguste Comte's similar approach, and observed, "she is generalizing from her experience of the intellectual group of friends in Boston."⁴⁷ James H. Tufts summarized her reflections on suffrage and neighborhoods as meaning "the extensive work of the democratic impulse has ended. Now the intensive work must begin," while mildly pointing out that "where people are nearly all renters it is impossible to get any group consciousness; neighbors are too much of a kind to give the most fruitful group contacts."⁴⁸ Professor H. J. Ford of Princeton University provided a harshly dismissive review: "belongs to the literature of unrest. . . . Throughout runs a vague emotionalism. . . . [It] fails to convey clear and exact ideas upon the subjects it discusses . . . [and is] interesting chiefly as a product of the times."⁴⁹ Political scientist Howard Lee McBain was the most penetrating of the severe critics, zeroing in on Follett's failure to make clear the relationship of state and national groups in her political scheme, on a careless statement praising collective sanctions for individual wrongs, and on the proposition that she "rates both our capacity and our desire for cooperation far above anything that is warranted by the facts of our life [or] human nature at its present stage of progress toward cooperation. She is not a practicalist. The neighborhood center however is a very practical . . . institution."⁵⁰

Lord Haldane contributed an introduction to the third impression of *The New State*, published in 1920, declaring "The principles relative to the future of the state, set by her before the public in the scientific and systematic fashion which is characteristic of her volume, ought to influence opinion deeply, not only in her country but in my own." He quoted Professor Bernard Bosanquet's description of the book as "the most sane and brilliant of recent works on political theory."⁵¹ G. Watts Cunningham

of the University of Texas, writing in the *Philosophical Review*, observed that the book “interests the reader from the beginning, stimulates thought always and not infrequently compels agreement,”⁵² while H. A. Overstreet referred to it as “a philosophy come back to earth. . . . Few books go so deeply to the foundations of our social and political problems.”⁵³ The noted political scientist R. M. MacIver, writing in 1926, praised Follett’s books as “fine and constructive,” while noting that her vision of the integration of all competing interests was an ideal unlikely to be realized which could not provide the condition of the sanction of law;⁵⁴ it is doubtful that Miss Follett would have disagreed. Later, MacIver pertinently observed: “The attempt to integrate the social life of an area through a community center when the interests of the inhabitants are no longer contained within the area can hardly be expected to succeed and experiments in this direction have generally failed. . . . Groups are likely to be special-interest groups in a local setting, rather than neighborhood groups in the old significance of that term. . . . The local unit has a more important role the more personal the service which the organization renders.”⁵⁵

At a distance of seventy years, Rosabeth Moss Kanter wrote, “Her ideas are rooted in American optimism and egalitarianism, yet they also run counter to American individualism and belief in social engineering.”⁵⁶ Follett’s admirers Elliot Fox and Lyndall Urwick observed thirty-five years later that “her optimistic appeal for creative use of the highest human potential was easily submerged in the struggles of an era when bare survival was considered to be an accomplishment,” noting that “it is possible to argue that [it] places more faith in the unaided force of the face-to-face group for national and international reform than it can reasonably bear.”⁵⁷ Peter Drucker concurred, observing:

What she had to say, the 1930s and 1940s simply did not hear and equally important did not want to hear. . . . They did not believe in conflict resolution but in unconditional surrender. . . . Society was dominated and permeated in fact by a profound belief in class war, in which the very attempt to understand what was important to the other side was a sellout. . . . The center of thought in politics and economics increasingly shifted to the question of how to make government more controlling, bigger and more powerful. For 40 years all countries, the totalitarians in the vanguard, the others following—believed in the mega-state. . . . Citizens existed only as a rhetorical flourish.⁵⁸

Group Psychology

In 1919, Follett published a more concise version of her reflections on the community center movement in an essay in the *Philosophical Review*.⁵⁹ Her writings led to her appointment as a public representative on various arbitration boards, including the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Board. Increasingly her attention was focused on problems of business management, having concluded that "unlike politicians, economists and academicians, businessmen were doers." This led to the writing and publication of her third book, *Creative Experience*, in 1924. Her acknowledgments in that work were to Professor Albert Dwight Sheffield, a psychologist and author of *Joining in Discussion*; to Professor E. C. Lindeman, a student of cooperative marketing organizations; and to the progressive writer and publicist Herbert Croly.

Creative Experience stressed themes which she elaborated in her later writings: "The potentialities of the individual remain potentialities until they are released by group life." Conflict is "a normal process by which socially valuable differences register themselves for the enrichment of all. . . . Compromise is still on the same plane as fighting. . . . A better way is to find the integrative solution, the approach that solves a conflict by accommodating the real demands of the parties involved." "Begin by making costless exchanges: what is essential for the other party may be unimportant for you. . . . The involved parties must find their own solution." "Give the workers a chance to grow capacity and power for themselves." These insights, while valuable in a management setting, ultimately also helped give rise to the movement for alternative dispute resolution; the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution in 1991 established the Mary Parker Follett award.

The later chapters of the book contained more general political reflections. "The people's will can be found only in their motor mechanisms or habit systems. If [Woodrow] Wilson had creative genius he would have known the futility of the formal acceptance of principles."⁶⁰ "The difficulty of all revolutions is this: the leaders think that they can substitute new ideas for old before they have changed the action tendencies, habit systems of the people. . . . Behavior must be changed through experience, it cannot be changed by the impact of ideas. You will always in the end be ruled by force unless you are governed in accordance with tradition—a developing tradition. We cannot be satisfied with a political will that is not a psychological will."⁶¹

Returning to her neighborhood proposals, Follett observed: "The relation of his own activity to the satisfaction of his desires should be part of the education of every citizen."⁶² "I believe so wholly in decentralization that I dread to think we may lose its fruits unless we are basing that decentralization not on mere changes in structure but on vital modes of association. . . . The form cannot be imposed and the activity follow . . . they influence each other simultaneously."⁶³ "The political pluralists now run the danger of merely substituting group tyranny for state tyranny. The problem of democracy is how to make our daily life creative. Every man has his interests; at those points, his attention can be enlisted."⁶⁴ Alfred De Grazia's view that Follett was a pluralist has been properly disputed, but there can be no doubt that in jurisprudence she was a functionalist who acknowledged her indebtedness to Leon Duguit,⁶⁵ and she was not hostile to some of the pluralist tendencies of her time and ours: "It is impossible to have undenominational instruction in the schools of England because of the claims of the church. The state in England is passing Home Rule Acts . . . to meet the claims of national groups. Trade unions have recovered more in Parliament than they have lost in the courts."⁶⁶

Her view of the legal system, though shared by our greatest judges, is a reproach to the legal doctrinaires of our time:

[Roscoe] Pound in giving us the end of law as the satisfaction of human desire brings the school of legal realism in line with our most advanced psychology. The aim of law is, I believe, to free, to "release energy." The doctrine of equal rights finds a place again in our thinking, but now within the doctrine of integrating desires. With the doctrine of integrating wills or integrating activities, with the idea that conflict itself may be made creative, the individual may with safety be reinstated. . . . Among the mitigations of the rule that law follows power, among the many reasons that the war between the classes has not been fought out crudely to extreme positions, apart from the services of our great lawyers, is the idea of relation inherited from feudal law . . . [which] has always tempered the individualism of our law. Law is to find the way of uniting interests. It is to seek to limit the area of mutually exclusive interests but it is to do this not by arbitrary declaration but by suggesting and encouraging those activities which will produce interests that are capable of uniting. . . . [It] should be one of the great creative forces of our social life.⁶⁷

Though thus favoring a form of sociological jurisprudence, she was aware of its dangers, summarized by Oliver Wendell Holmes in the aphorism "when the ignorant are taught to doubt, they know not what they

may safely believe." "The objective trend has its dangers in law. . . . It sometimes takes away from our responsibility when it should not do so, that is, moral obligation may tend to grow dim, while on the other hand it only changes the field of manipulation for the unscrupulous. With superficial thinkers there indeed lurk many dangers in the objective trend of law."⁶⁸ She found the cure for these dangers in an "enlarged understanding of good faith," a solution adopted by one noted legal realist, Karl Llewellyn, in preparing the Uniform Commercial Code. R. M. MacIver criticized her indulgence toward sociological jurisprudence on the ground, which resonates today, that "helping us to understand our interests . . . is a function for the fulfillment of which the necessary methods of legal settlement render it less adequate than various other institutions which society has evolved."⁶⁹ Follett, in her reflections on international unification at least, did not disagree: "We need . . . not a Hague court but an international legislature."⁷⁰

The reviews of *Creative Experience* were generally complimentary, C.F. Ellwood referring to its author as "the foremost woman thinker along social and political lines of our time and perhaps one of the most philosophical thinkers in the field of social theory of all time."⁷¹ Walter Shepard of Washington University, St. Louis, found it to be a "significant contribution" of behavioristic psychology to politics along the lines explored by Graham Wallas and Walter Lippmann.⁷² J. H. Tufts said that its detailed group psychology rendered it "a genuine working tool instead of a museum specimen."⁷³ A caustic dissenting view was expressed by Russell Gordon Smith of Columbia University. He conceded that its description of "creative conflict" provided "a salutary point of view for the more intelligent toreadors of committee-meetings, conferences, and talks" but denied it had any wider application:

Those students of human society who have come under the evil influence of William Graham Sumner and the later critical ethnologists will only marvel at the persistence of that sound and fury which signify nothing. . . . We find what Sumner calls the masses . . . engrossed in the activities of eating, sleeping, excreting, reproducing, bootlegging, crossword-puzzling and dying in ways more or less predetermined by the cultural crazy-quilt in which they became entangled by the bloody accident of birth.⁷⁴

In a similar but milder vein, R. M. MacIver quoted one of Follett's more extravagant rhetorical flights, "the things we do together give us much

greater satisfaction than the things we do and achieve for ourselves," and then asked his students, "How far, and in what respects, and with what limitations do you find this true in your own experience?"⁷⁵

The most balanced assessment was that supplied in an extended essay on both of Follett's books by Arthur E. Wood of the University of Michigan.⁷⁶ After deploring Follett's uneven style and over-homely illustrations, he agreed as to the insufficiency of formal democracy: "The machinery of direct government, notoriously the primary, comes under party control." He concurred in Follett's view as to the possibilities of neighborhood organization: "'why not.' Neighborhood and not party organization achieved that unity and cooperation necessary for the successful prosecution of the war." This in his view would require "more settled industrial conditions and a cessation of immigration" to render neighborhoods more stable. He found merit in Follett's propositions that "most serious conflicts are amenable to treatment through breaking up main contentions into their component issues" and that institutions can grow out of cooperative activity: "The United States was created more through the building of the National Pike than through the Constitution." He further noted that "the ward system was almost universal in our cities until destroyed by centralization and the social changes due to immigration. . . . An effective ward democracy is an entirely reasonable proposition." Nonetheless, "so long as there are social structures that will not integrate, disruption and violence are menacing possibilities." He went on to allude to the intransigence of the recently fallen Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and Romanovs and that of the Catholic Church and the sanguinary history of intermingled races, but concluded, "If we all agree to think in terms of long enough periods of time, there is no further reply [to Follett]."

Business Management

In the years that ensued, Follett was called upon to consult with a number of progressive businesses, including Filene's and the Dennison Manufacturing Company in Massachusetts and Rowntree and Company in England; she also worked with Sir Arthur Salter with the Economic Division of the League of Nations. In 1925 and subsequent years, she was invited by Henry Metcalf to speak at the Bureau of Personnel Administration in New York, a management study group which had been founded in 1920, and from 1926 on was invited to a series of management conferences organized by

Seebohm Rowntree at Baillol College, Oxford.

Follett's management literature elaborated on her central themes. "If you want integration . . . the process of the interpenetration of policies must begin . . . while they are still in the formative stage. . . . Machinery for coordination [must be] continuous, not set up for special occasions."⁷⁷ She condemned the old theory of management "that one man was to impose his will on others. The wiser teachers say to their students: do not exploit your personality, learn your job."⁷⁸ This stress on participation in the workplace was not consistent with the emphasis on class conflict in the 1930s and 1940s, and Follett was not backward herself in perceiving its political implications.

She gave comfort to pluralists by lauding the persistence of group codes in the professions, since these made it easier for professionals within large organizations to speak up on issues. The function of group codes was to establish, maintain, improve, and enforce standards; to foster loyalty to work, not merely to the company; and to give managers a platform from which to reject improper requests.⁷⁹ Notwithstanding her urging, the development of codes for managers and the institutions to enforce them has been fitful at best; Follett herself was a conceptualizer rather than an organizer. She adhered to the view that, in her disciple Pauline Graham's words, "power is self-developing; it comes from interactions among people in which respect is earned." She deplored the tendency of executives to think of community service as something for evenings or retirement and viewed work as community service. She urged greater cooperation among competitors in trade associations, credit systems and apprentice schools, a cause taken up by Herbert Hoover as secretary of commerce in the 1920s.⁸⁰ She stressed the value of diversity and what she described as "constructive conflict," leading one modern writer to observe "as for diversity, the very stuff of true interdependence and democratic governance, we are now beginning to appreciate what Follett saw as invaluable decades ago."⁸¹ She was credited with stressing the "underappreciated importance of effective followers [with the] most important characteristic a willingness to tell the truth."⁸² As paraphrased by Pauline Graham: "The best leader has no followers but men and women working with him. The great leader wants to be a leader of leaders. . . . The function of any follower is to be an active participant."⁸³

Follett's views on the growth of welfare-state institutions were colored by her emphasis on personal and neighborhood responsibility. "We are looking forward to the time when the making of healthy babies will not

devolve on extra-social agencies which would be unnecessary if society were what we hope it will someday become. You see, I do not call pre-milk stations social agencies, as do most people, but extra-social."⁸⁴

Although little of her later writing expressly dealt with political problems, animating all of it was her hope that "whatever problems we solve in business management may help toward the solution of world problems since the principles which are discovered as best for business can be applied to government and international relations."⁸⁵ "The solution of world problems must eventually be built up from all the little bits of experience wherever people are consciously trying to solve problems of relation." With the spread of emphasis on her ideas about decentralized management and conflict resolution in business, she occasionally gave vent to her frustration at the slowness of progress in the wider world: "I do wish that when a principle has been worked out in ethics, it did not have to be discovered all over again in psychology, in economics, in government, in business, in biology, in sociology. It's such a waste of time."⁸⁶ But there were few who had her breadth of knowledge in all these fields.

On the basis of her work with Salter at the League of Nations, she projected to the international stage her recommendations for the internal management of business corporations: "Adjustments between nations should be made, not through their foreign offices but between those who exercise responsible authority in the matters concerned, that is, between the departmental ministers."⁸⁷ At least in financial and economic matters, that is increasingly the practice since World War II.

In both industrial and national matters, and even in educational ones, she was an opponent of the party spirit: she opposed the perverse incentive provided by arbitration: "Plan your life so that you will have bitter and intractable conflicts on your hands and then get someone to arbitrate."⁸⁸ "If democracy means only all taking part, I do not believe in democracy. It is organization we want, the relating of parts, co-fashioning organic inter-activities. The great weakness of the English Labor Party is in my opinion, that it does not see this."⁸⁹ Conventional adversarial politics was "like the sculptor who tried to make a sexless head by using both a man and a woman as models."⁹⁰ "Mere voting is a gesture of agreement rather than real agreement. We cannot obtain genuine consent by a vote." "What vitiated the social contract theory was that assent, mere assent, was in that theory the foundation of power."⁹¹ Proxy voting was especially objectionable, since it vitiates the "advantage of the process of what we call interacting."⁹² As for debating societies, "their influence is pernicious and

they should be abolished. . . . The object is always to win, it is never to discover the truth . . . [which is] wretched preparation for the kind of politics we wish to see because there is no effort to think together."⁹³

Toward the end of her life, Follett gave three lectures on the role of the nursing, psychiatric, and teaching professions. She viewed the role of the industrial nurse as involving not merely care of the injured or ill but the teaching of rules of hygiene and diet, lessening fatigue through suggested changes in work practices, helping workers overcome troubles hampering work, securing the transfer of misfit or undertrained workers, and interpreting workers to management and vice versa. To the teachers, she noted, "It is advocated rather convincingly that clergymen do some other work in the rest of their time which shall bring them in contact with their fellows in another way—one which has to do with the everyday life of business or affairs. It may be that some day this will be advocated for teachers also."⁹⁴

In the least satisfying of her essays, that on "Individualism in a Planned Society," Follett expressed sympathy for a scheme of national planning, but one involving "fact control rather than man-control—correlation of many controls rather than a superimposed control."⁹⁵ While those aware of what Professor Friedrich Hayek described as "the problem of knowledge" in his essays on the errors of socialism are skeptical of all such schemes, Follett made clear that her support was predicated on preconditions which would command the assent of the later critics. Among these preconditions were more cooperative research, correlation of policies, greater provision of information flow in both directions, mechanisms for obtaining contributions from the intelligent opinion of the country, and maintaining flexibility of any ensuing organizations. "She regarded as fundamental the joint study of facts and the bringing of objective differences into the open. . . . The core of her contribution is the proposition that in a democratic society the primary task of management is so to arrange the situation that people cooperate readily of their own accord."⁹⁶

Follett's legacy to management is now a well-known one: emphasis on participative management ("devising methods by which we can discover the order integral to a particular situation")⁹⁷ and quality centers, peer networks, depersonalization in the giving of orders, and an interest in the total organization and not only in procedures. Allied to this is a conviction that ideas grow out of relationships: the "more diverse the groups the individual belongs to, the more he or she develops as a person";⁹⁸ "the responding is not merely to another activity but to the relating between the

self-activity and the other activity.” The latter notion resembles the concept of “reflexivity” advanced by currency speculator George Soros in recent writings. It has been said that “Japanese-style business management is in fact American in origin.” The first Japanese article on the work of Chester Barnard appeared in Japan in 1950 and that on Follett in 1951. Japanese scholars had found that Barnard “had read and annotated Follett’s work . . . [which was] well known to quite a number of the mid and upper level managers who staff [Japanese] government institutions and business organizations.”⁹⁹ The Japanese *kan-ban* (“just in time”) method of production requiring limited maintenance of inventories is said to be founded on attention to Follettian precepts: “Continuous and reciprocal exchange of information and letting facts speak for themselves.”¹⁰⁰

The Japanese recovery of Follett is ascribed to the fact that Japanese “have a different view of history. We have a strong sense of the past. For us the past is important and hold values.”¹⁰¹ It has also been suggested that Follett’s emphasis on conflict management has received revived prominence because of its usefulness in negotiating the introduction into companies of new information technology and in dealing with the problems of international business ventures.¹⁰² While there was continuous interest in Follett in Britain largely because of the influence of Lyndall Urwick, her emphasis on worker co-determination was corrupted into a managerial technique favoring indirect and remote rather than direct and immediate control of workers; there is a difference between shared decision-making and manipulation.¹⁰³

Her method of conciliation and integration of conflicting desires was spelled out in detail: first eliciting from both sides a full listing of their desires; breaking the demands into constituent parts; critically examining symbolic demands to understand the underlying realities; anticipation by both sides of the other’s responses, and of further, circular responses; care in the use of language; and focusing on the concrete on the premise that “disagreement disappears when theorizing ends.”¹⁰⁴

Another commentator credits Follett with being “the first modern management thinker to propose a mode of organization that could serve as alternative to the traditional bureaucratic hierarchy.” The limits to her thinking are found in the fact that “organizations based on the principle of empowerment will always remain especially susceptible to reversion to a command and control system during times of change in their leadership” and in Robert Michel’s “iron law of oligarchy”: “All organizations eventually become divided into a minority of directors and a majority of

directed."¹⁰⁵ Follett's enthusiasm for plural executives has not been widely shared.¹⁰⁶ The rejoinder to this is that Follett's structures at least have the effect of recruiting directors from a broader group, and she was aware of the tendency:

Is there any way of preventing an executive overhead from acquiring a solidarity of its own and drifting apart from the rank and file which created it. Many trade unionists feel that [Samuel] Gompers and his followers are acting in ways mainly intended to keep themselves in power. . . . The central body acquires a self-interest of its own apart from the functional relating.¹⁰⁷

Follett favored joint management-labor works councils apart from the collective bargaining process; these are now proscribed by American labor legislation except where expressly agreed to by union leadership, a relatively rare occurrence. This proposal contemplated that both sides be paid for participation in the councils, that standards be jointly developed, and that there be no sharp line between management and labor in the development of standards. The function of the councils in Follett's view would be sometimes advisory, sometimes legislative, sometimes judicial, but never executive: orders once jointly arrived at would be carried out by management.¹⁰⁸ Follett observed sixty years ago: "Though the employee representation movement began partly as a concession, partly to make things go more smoothly, partly to counter trade unions, it is considered by many men as an asset, as an essential part of sound organization."¹⁰⁹ It has taken seventy years, the virtual disappearance of private-sector unions in the United States, and the introduction of the concept by American affiliates of Japanese corporations, for there to be renewed discussion of the proposal in America.

Creative Experience contains a sophisticated chapter on "The Dynamics of Representation." In it Follett observed, "There seems something artificial about mere trade-union representation: roughly speaking, the trade union representatives on the Minimum Wage Boards tend to represent trade union 'stereotypes,' the girls from the shop to represent facts."¹¹⁰ That book contains Follett's fullest exposition of her ideas about the connection of lower and higher level governments: representatives should be viewed as negotiators, not persons who will vindicate fixed views; should be expected to report back to and maintain a relationship with their electors; should endeavor to share their experience on a "motor level"; but must recognize that the representative body has a

dynamic of its own.¹¹¹

Legacy and Influence

In 1933, shortly before her death, Follett was invited by one of her British admirers, Lyndall Urwick, to give the lectures inaugurating the Department of Business Administration at the London School of Economics, a signal honor. After the death of Isobel Briggs in 1926, she moved to England, where she resided with Dame Katherine Furse, head of the Women's Royal Naval Service during World War I and later head of the World Association of Girl Guides and Scouts. Follett returned to Boston to deal with some financial matters in 1933. Her health had not been good for several years and after an unsuccessful goiter operation she died in Boston of cancer on December 18, 1933. Her ashes were scattered on a field at the summer house in Putney, Vermont, which she and Briggs had shared for many years.

After *Creative Experience*, Follett wrote no other books. Her American lectures were published singly in various conference proceedings¹¹² and in four compilations of management papers by various authorities edited by Henry Metcalf in 1925, 1927, and 1931.¹¹³ Her British papers likewise were published in conference proceedings.¹¹⁴ No collection of Follett's management papers appeared in book form until 1941, eight years after her death, when Metcalf and Urwick edited a compilation entitled *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett*, which was reissued in 1973. A thesis by Avrum I. Cohen, "Mary Parker Follett: Spokesman for Democracy, Philosopher for Social Group Work," was prepared at the Tulane School for Social Work in 1971, as were a thesis on her management thought by Elliott Fox at Columbia in 1970 and one on her concept of "power with" by Frances Cooper at the University of Southern California in 1980.¹¹⁵ Her lectures at the London School of Economics were edited by Urwick and published in book form in 1949, twelve years after they were given, under the title *Freedom and Coordination*, and were reissued in 1987. Urwick contributed a fulsome introduction:

Her intellectual output was limited by her rigid self-criticism, her determination to be simple and understandable at all costs, her great modesty and her wish to be of practical use in quite humble capacities. How can it be said that so quiet a life with so little to show for it is of the order of importance to which the word "genius" can properly be

applied? History judges a human being more by quality than by quantity. Of the quality of Mary Follett's thinking, of its applicability to the difficulties of the century in which her life was set, of its fidelity to the realities of human nature, there can be no question.¹¹⁶

In 1986, a compilation of Follett's management lectures was published in Japan.¹¹⁷ In the following year a number of Japanese professors founded the Mary P. Follett Association of Japan, which is devoted to study and application of her works and which has eighty members, including scholars and business people.¹¹⁸ The Idaho Systems Institute has recently announced the creation of a website devoted to her work.¹¹⁹ In 1987, one of her British admirers, Pauline Graham, published *Dynamic Managing—The Follett Way*, an explanation of her management philosophy. In 1995, a "celebration" of her writings edited by Graham, with commentary, was published by the Harvard Business School Press under the title *Mary Parker Follett: Prophet of Management*.¹²⁰ Two biographies are now said to be in preparation, one entitled *Liquid Logic* by Albie M. Davis, director of mediation of the District Court of Massachusetts, and one by Joan Tonn of the College of Management, University of Massachusetts, Boston. The fugitive character of her writings helped account for their delayed influence.

Follett was not without influence on another of our subjects, the omnivorous reader Mary Ellen Richmond. In 1919 in a speech on the training of volunteer workers, Richmond repeatedly alluded to *The New State*: "Miss Follett tells us that it is not a knowledge of his specialty which makes an expert of service to society, but his insight into the relation of his specialty to the whole."¹²¹ "Too few [schools of social work] have any equipment for teaching by doing, and this is four-fifths of the secret. . . . To quote Miss Follett, 'I learn my duty by . . . learning by experience the obligations friendship demands.'"¹²² In lauding case committees, Richmond in the following year paraphrased Follett: "Group thinking, she makes clear, brings us a more valuable product than solitary thinking, and is a far different product from the crowd suggestion upon which much of our social publicity is at present based."¹²³ Later in the same year, Richmond gave a paper, "Next Steps in Social Treatment," on the use of a client's natural group connections to greater advantage in social work, alluding to *The New State*'s "voic[ing] the need of a group psychology on which to base neighborhood and community work." Richmond called for "trained observation of the reactions of human beings to one another in their normal group settings" as a method of both investigation and treatment in social

work.¹²⁴

There has recently, under the influence of the “communitarian” movement in the United States, been renewed interest in Follett’s writing about neighborhood government. *The New State* was reissued in 1998, with a preface by Matthew Shapiro of the International Systems Institute lauding it for being “free of much of the partisan thinking and rhetoric that clouds political thought of late.” An introductory article by Benjamin Barber on “Mary Parker Follett as Democratic Hero” declared that Follett had realized that “the representative institutions that rescued America from the parochialism and inefficiencies of small republics . . . also compromised its capacity for local self-government,” a defect found particularly in large cities where “the racial crisis has become for America what Philoctetes’ wound was for him—a septic laceration that shadows the nation everywhere at a slight distance from it, symbol and metaphor for the pathology seemingly inborn into America’s aspiring democracy.”¹²⁵ Today’s politics are portrayed as a duel between “Republicans . . . appalled by the encroaching programs of welfare bureaucracies [and] Democrats disturbed by the alienation of people of color. . . . Never has the debate about democracy, federalism and top-down and bottom-up approaches to governance been more necessary. Never have social scientists seemed less interested in it.”¹²⁶ Follett, he declared, “distinguishes deliberative, education-grounded forms of direct democracy from the mob-rule caricatures first drawn and then assailed by [Walter] Lippmann and other liberal critics of too much participation. . . . It has been far less read than comparable works by John Dewey, Herbert Croly, Walter Lippmann, Harold Laski and other contemporaries.”

Political scientist Jane Mansbridge in her introduction noted the resemblance of Follett’s concept of “power with” to ideas espoused by Dorothy Emmet and Hannah Arendt, the first acknowledging her indebtedness to Follett,¹²⁷ —and attributed the commonality of these views to “gender socialization, organizational positions of lesser power, bias against female leaders and the greater social skills of women.” Mansbridge notes that “majority rule has often crowded out attempts at ‘power with’” and deplores the fact that while “we expect juries to address the question of truth, . . . most other political processes address differences of opinion as interests where most settlements have losers who may later legitimately want to reopen the question.” She rightly lauds Follett’s emphasis on “unceasing reciprocal adjustment which brings out and gives force to truth.”

This insight is not pressed far enough by Mansbridge. Juries address "the question of truth," as Professor Hans Zeisel pointed out, because and to the extent that they are subject to a unanimity rule. The Senate is a more deliberative body than the House of Representatives because it requires a three-fifths vote to terminate a filibuster, not a phenomenon that frequently wins applause from typical American political scientists. Judicial review of legislative acts on the American pattern is objectionable precisely because, as Judge Learned Hand noted, it forecloses the rights of "losers who may later legitimately want to reopen the question." It is also far from deliberative; as in the abortion cases, the faction opposing judicial activism is usually less prepared, and inadequately represented; in the famous case of *Doe v. Bolton*, it was not represented at all.

Mansbridge notes that Follett's rhetoric on the blessings of group life was far too strong: "We must live the group life." "When she described, accurately, the exhilaration of group participation, she used images, such as men singing as they march to battle, that prefigure the very impulses on which Nazi rallies later drew in the service of evil."¹²⁸

Kenneth Mattson, in another introduction to the 1998 edition of *The New State* entitled "Reading Follett," similarly notes that she and other leaders of the community center movement permitted it to be co-opted by the Wilson administration's war mobilization measures—measures described by Robert Nisbet as the closest approach to totalitarianism that has been seen in the United States: "the mistake of building their hopes on the nation, when a nation at war encourages a monolithic unity, was a mistake that many Progressive Era activists made."¹²⁹ Here Follett, who was at heart a pluralist, was seduced by the idealism which gave rise to her half-baked writing about the creation of a national consensus by her neighborhood groups: in Mattson's words, "to believe that unity is based on objective law ignores reality."¹³⁰ Elsewhere, however, Follett expressed views that gave little comfort to centralizers: "Not upon socialism or any rule, any order, any plan or any utopia can we rest our hearts, but only on the force of a united and creative citizenship. . . . The wish for socialism is a longing for the ideal state. . . . That state must be grown—its branches will widen as its roots spread."¹³¹ Further, "Why are provincial people more interesting than cosmopolitan people. . . . Because cosmopolitan people are all alike—that has been the aim of their existence and they have accomplished it. . . . We have not a true federalism in the United States today."¹³² "The period of laissez-faire is indeed over, but I do not think we want to put in its place a forcibly controlled society, whether it be controlled by the

state of the socialists or the experts of a planning board. The aim and the process of the organization of government, of industry, of international relations should be I think a control not imposed from without the regular functioning of a society but one which is a coordination of all those functions, that is a collective self-control."¹³³

If Follett's writing makes little appeal to proponents either of *laissez faire* or social Darwinism, it has similarly been denounced by more left-wing critics. Thus R. Jeffrey Lustig in his *Corporate Liberalism* concedes that Follett

argued, the proper thing to do was to make "mere numbers" into real collectives. Her thinking was identical to Tocqueville's a century earlier. The real task was to "educate democracy." Such a claim broke with the traditional thrust of American political thought. This, as Madison put it, had been to provide institutional balances for "the defect of better motives." Follett proposed to correct that defect. She would use neighborhood groups to "develop a higher kind of social motive . . . to find means to enable people to be politics."¹³⁴

Follett was said to have emphasized "the neglected member of the bourgeois trinity: the concept of fraternity;" of group thinkers she "came closest to a truly democratic vision with her emphasis on neighborhood participation," but without specifying "the political rights that members would enjoy in these groups in order to guarantee a democratic group process."¹³⁵ "Outside of stray proposals for co-management from Follett and Commons, worker participation in industry was not a concern of the American thinkers,"¹³⁶ who are charged with a subservience to technology which "could [not] do anything but augment the 'devotion to external standardization and the mass-quantity ideal.'" Even Brandeis is charged, against the evidence, with cursing bigness "not from the perspective of the agrarian democrats but . . . out of a concern for productive efficiency."¹³⁷

The flaw in this is found in Lustig's statement that "[i]n arguing that membership in a neighborhood group . . . should become an acknowledged and primary fact of modern life, the group thinkers also in effect converted voluntary into compulsory associations."¹³⁸ There is no showing that Follett contemplated compulsory associations, nor that government's role in creating neighborhood associations was to be other than an enabling role. Nor will many share Lustig's logic that what is required is "to redistribute income . . . to 'regulate' corporations which had assumed to speak in the name of the people [and] to create an alternative to the corporatist state

as the guarantor of popular sovereignty."¹³⁹

Warren Bennis has asked, "Is the climate of opinion today, the zeitgeist, any more congenial today than it was during her heyday 60 or 70 years ago?"¹⁴⁰ Henry Mintzberg has noted that "barely experienced MBAs still command high salaries to command and control (albeit through empowerment or reengineering or whatever is the latest fad), the medium inevitably driving out the message."¹⁴¹

Follett was a realist who acknowledged that "to confer authority where capacity has not been developed is fatal to both government and business."¹⁴² Unlike many reformers, she did not decry the drive for profit and wealth: "We work for profit, for service, for our own development, for the love of creating something. But whatever these motives are labelled—ethical or service motive, engineer's motive, craftsman's motive, the creative urge of the artist, the pecuniary gain motive—whatever, I say, the various motives, I do not think we should give any up, but try to get more rather than fewer. . . . We can purify and elevate our desires, we can add to them, but there is no individual or social progress in curtailment of desires."¹⁴³ But the best apostrophe on her work is that of Peter Drucker:

Reinventing the citizen was Mary Parker Follett's primary and constant endeavor. . . . Major management challenges and opportunities are to be found not only in businesses but also in the military, local government, hospitals, and schools. . . . Restoring citizenship is the crucial challenge. If one lesson was taught by the collapse of the ultimate megastate, totalitarian Communism, it is that nothing can work unless it is based on a functioning civil society—on citizens and citizenship.¹⁴⁴

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