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Lilienthal: THIS I DO BELIEVE

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THIS I DO BELIEVE. By *David E. Lilienthal*. New York: Harpers. 1949. Pp. xxiii, 208. \$2.50.

This book is described by the author, in an introductory note, as "a book of democratic faith." Intrinsically, it is just that. Mr. Lilienthal wastes no time with eloquent definitions of "democracy," nor does he suggest a panacea for the ills of our post-war world. Rather, looking back over his twenty years of public service, he measures the progress of our democratic structure by asking the ethical and spiritual question: what has happened to the individual in America? Mr. Lilienthal believes that freedom for men is our primary concern and that this freedom has caused, and not been caused by, our material wealth. The rise of world Communism is not so much a cause for fear as are those tendencies, here at home, away from our fundamental respect for the integrity of the individual. In technological and scientific advance, with the attendant concentrations of industrial power, the author sees a potentially dehumanizing force. He would have us administer our physical assets in a way that will magnify, not stultify, man's spiritual worth and in a way that will stimulate pride in workmanship and in cooperative effort. Closely allied to this problem is the twentieth century development of specialization. The technical man is often guilty of a disunity of thinking which causes him to see the work of others as a mere adjunct to his own highly specialized province. When a sense of social relationship is absent, the activities of two groups may cancel out each other. In "Big Government," Mr. Lilienthal sees perhaps the greatest danger of all. As we progress farther and farther from the town meeting stage, it becomes increasingly easy and tempting for the individual citizen to abdicate his political responsibilities and for the bureaucrat, in Washington, to fall into wasteful excesses. Because problems once predominately local in scope today have repercussions in other parts of the country, the author believes we need a unified national policy in many areas. But it does not always follow that there must be a central administration of that policy. Decentralization, with administrators at the local level empowered to make their own decisions, means that local diversities, which will always exist, will best be understood, and, more important, that the local citizen will be able to see, appraise, and criticize his government in action. Mr. Lilienthal offers certain suggestions to aid in the solution of the various problems he poses. Unfortunately, some of these proposals, while emotionally appealing, are of questionable practical value. For example, some sort of universal public service by those qualified is urged. This smacks somewhat of Platonic idealism. Again, the author has an understandable tendency to evaluate many facets of our industrial structure by reference to the Tennessee Valley Authority. Thus, the collective bargaining experience of a governmental corporation founded, it is fair to say, by an administration generally sympathetic to labor's aims, may not aid in the solution of many labor questions which face a private company. In spite of a few possible over-simplifications, however, this book is an intellectual and highly readable account of one man's view of democracy, as it is practiced, or should be practiced, in the United States.