

R E V I E W S

SOCIETY TO-DAY.

POVERTY AND PROGRESS. By B. Seebohm Rowntree. (Longmans; 15s.)

Nearly a hundred years ago Le Play opened a new field of social study with his *Les Ouvriers Europeens*. This was followed up, though much later, in England; and, in one line of development, the names of Booth and Rowntree are outstanding. The social surveys they initiated, of London and York respectively, were landmarks in the progress of such studies in England. Some forty years ago Mr. Rowntree published his study of poverty in York; he has now followed it with the results of similar investigations repeated in 1936. It is a fascinating book, an important book ('crowned' by a first leader in *The Times*), but withal a saddening book.

As to its representative quality, one can say that it is a fair indication of social progress in industrial England. The method used was not that of samples (as in Gallup polls, for instance), but an actual house-to-house visitation of all the working-class homes in the city of York, covering 16,362 families. Moreover, the unemployment figures for York at that time were below rather than above the average for England. He has followed the Le Play formula very closely, covering food, housing, clothing, 'moral needs,' leisure, recreation and religion, so that the reader is given a complete picture of working class families, and of all those with incomes up to £250 a year, in a modern industrial city.

The resulting impression is more disturbing than comforting. By comparison with his findings of forty years ago, the author is able to show what social progress has been made, better housing, higher wages, shorter hours, and also how far off we still are from banishing poverty. Mr. Rowntree fixes a poverty line at 53/- (43/6 after payment of rent) for man, wife and three dependent children, and demonstrates how this is a modest minimum, certainly less than the papal 'frugal comfort.' Yet 31 per cent. of the working class families in York were living below that line in 1936, being 17.7 per cent. of the city's total population, while 7 per cent. had an income of less than 40/- a week, the absolute minimum for the satisfaction of sheer physical need. An analysis of the number of children in these groups gives an alarming result—*viz*, over 50 per cent. of the children of working class families were living below the poverty line. Further than this, the author shows that at least half the working class population passes through two periods of poverty, in childhood and old age, while a third of the working class population passes through a third period of poverty, in early middle life.

In the field of recreation, the public-house still holds pride of place, for the average number of visits to them works out (in a sample) at about two per week for every man, woman and child in the city. By comparison, the average for the cinema is only one visit a fortnight; and church attendance has dropped from forty years ago by 40 per cent. in Nonconformist churches and 27 per cent. in the Anglican, while the Catholics have increased by 26 per cent. Very disturbing figures when one considers that the population has increased by 50 per cent. since the beginning of the century.

Most of the social improvements which are noted are due to increased social services and to the expenditure of public money. Surely some of the most significant figures are those for the increase in cash social service payments, from approximately £6,000 at the beginning of the century to £275,000 in 1936. Very little progress can be attributed to the beneficent working of economic laws.

The author is careful to point out that he is presenting a statistical survey and analysis, and is not concerned with suggesting remedies, but he does note that there are two remedies which immediately suggest themselves: a statutory minimum wage and family allowances. The former has already been adopted in many industries, and the principle is being more and more extended through pressure of war conditions; but the latter, while its supporters are continually increasing, is still being debated both in principle and practice.

JOHN FITZSIMONS.

THE HERESY OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM. By Irene Marinoff. (Present Problems Series; Burns Oates; 3s.)

Dr. Marinoff's study is one of the most valuable contributions in the vast field of literature on National Socialism. As the Archbishop of Liverpool has pointed out in his foreword, one of the most pleasant and convincing features of the book is its admirable detachment and objectivity, which is probably due to the fact that the author—unlike so many emigrants from the Continent—is herself firmly rooted in traditional Christianity. From this standpoint she views Nazism not as a political party, but as the typical heresy of the modern mind, which, having broken loose from true authority, sets up idols of its own making which become its own worst tyrants. The chapter on 'The Background' will be particularly illuminating to the English reader, because it shows conclusively that Nazism is no sudden mushroom growth, but the outcome of centuries of German thought and history.

There is, however, one point where we think Dr. Marinoff has suffered herself to be deceived by Nazi propaganda. She writes: 'We miss the meaning of the National Socialist movement if we do not realise that it is essentially a revolt against modern conditions of life' (p. 45). We would rather maintain that the contrary is true. Nazism with its utter contempt for human personality which views