

# **CIVIL GOVERNMENT**

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Civil government by Paul S. Reinsch

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**PAUL S. REINSCH**

**CIVIL  
GOVERNMENT**





THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, D.C.

# CIVIL GOVERNMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

YOUNG persons are not alone in preferring to see how things are done in political life rather than to study the bare legal framework of the state. The author believes that emphasis on the structure of our government has been carried too far, especially in books for children and young students. The subject has been given too much of a legal character. Now to see men at work, to see them struggling for influence and power and performing the duties of office and of citizenship, is undoubtedly far more interesting than to consider the underlying legal principles of constitutional organization. The writer of this little book, the result of a period of leisure from more exacting duties, has therefore attempted to make it a portrayal of action in political life. Its prime purpose is to train boys and girls to notice and to understand what is going on about them in their town, state, and nation. However, for intelligent action in mat-



ters of politics, we need also some understanding of the outward form of government. After the more essential methods of political action have been described, some attention will therefore be given to the structure of the state in all its parts. To the ordinary citizen it is far more important to understand the meaning of such matters as elections, the action of the city council, and the police, than to dwell upon the refinements of constitutional law. Only the most essential features of state organization have therefore been pointed out.

Politics and government are human action — life and action of the most interesting kind. They are action, moreover, upon which our personal welfare and happiness are directly dependent. We cannot be members of a state in which corruption and injustice govern without feeling the bad results in our own life. The life of a state is our life written large. Without a well-arranged and orderly state life, complete private happiness is not possible. Moreover, there is no satisfaction in life so great as devotion to the welfare of the state. All private satisfaction seems small when compared with that of a man who has gained the confidence

of his fellow-citizens through honest action and personal sacrifice.

There is such a multitude of facts in connection with political life that it is necessary to select those which are most important for young Americans to know. A small book like this cannot pretend to be complete. If we should try to fill it with a description of every political institution, it would become a dreary catalogue of things that mean nothing to our minds. But while we cannot cover the ground completely, we can endeavor to point out those things which are most vital and important, in order that they may acquire a meaning in the minds of young persons which will help them much in after life. This is not a handbook on American government, but only the first introduction into that fascinating field.

Institutions differ so much in different parts of our country that some of them can be described only in general terms. It is for the young students themselves to see what particular form an institution takes in their own community and neighborhood. To make them find out these things by inquiry and observation is the best training that their minds can receive.

People should be able to see for themselves and interpret the meaning of what is going on around them. For this reason there have been added to each chapter a few questions to be answered by the pupil himself after inquiry and observation. These are, of course, only in the nature of suggestions to the teacher. The information is not to be taken from books, but is to be obtained through personal inquiry. The intelligent use of newspaper information, too, may be taught in this connection. Often these questions will be designed also to train the judgment in that they will call for a decision between two alternatives. The study of political action offers a rare opportunity for training the power of observation as well as the judgment. As in the natural sciences, a pupil must learn to observe accurately and to judge of what he sees. It is apparent that a republic is especially in need of citizens who are able to do their own thinking, and to see the real through the veil of outward appearances.

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