

BOOK REVIEW

The Servile State

Belloc Was a Leader in Identifying Corporatism

MAY 01, 1996 by LEONARD P. LIGGIO

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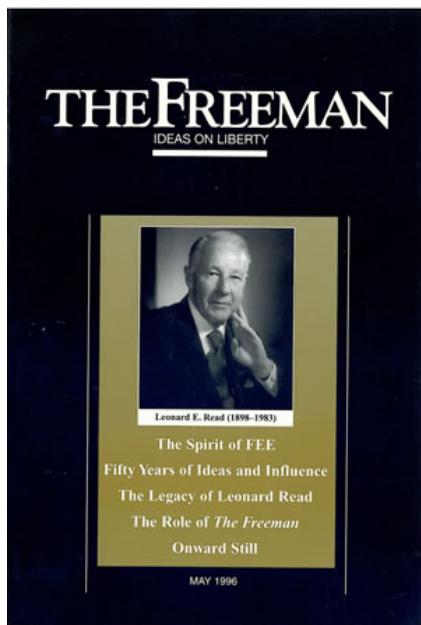
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Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953) was indeed an Edwardian Radical as described in John McCarthy's biography (also published by Liberty Press). *The Servile State* represented Belloc's disgust with politics after serving in the House of Commons. He found politicians in control of organizing any new industries; cabinet officers determining which businessmen would control new industries. If capitalism were absolutely recognized, according to Belloc, government-created monopolies could not continue. But, from inside parliament, he saw "executive statesmen" determining which group of businessmen would operate that sphere of industry.

The system described by Belloc in 1913 emerged most fully as the corporatism of the 1930s; it extended from Berlin to Washington. F. A. Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom* saw Belloc as a prophet; and Robert Nisbet, in his introduction to this edition, notes "just as Belloc predicted, we find the real liberties of individuals diminished and constricted by the Leviathan we have built in the name of equality."

Belloc's attempt to place *The Servile State* in a historical causation does not succeed, any more than his foray into economic theory. But, he saw clearly what was happening around him, that business leaders were the ones who wished to replace private institutions with state systems of social security and unemployment insurance—to replace liberty and free markets with *The Servile State*. Thus, he showed that the socialist, the reformer, the politician, and the state-connected industrialist, whatever their philosophies, all are channeled into legislating *The Servile State*.

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