Book Reviews

Women as World Builders. Studies in Modern Feminism. By Floyd Dell. Chicago: Forbes and Co. 75 cents.

Social progress is a complex process. Many forces apparently antagonistic unite in promoting progress. This may seem a truism—and it is; but our "Marxists" (*sic*) no longer appreciate the fact, judging by their dogmatic denunciation of syndicalism, feminism, and other new ideas and movements. Only when interpreted in terms of the social and psychological process as a whole can the revolutionary movement maintain equilibrium in theory and practice.

This apropos of a book with a big idea incompletely expressed. Floyd Dell adumbrates the concept of social process, impelled thereto by observation of facts and not by analytical comprehension. He is not a monomaniac who conceives feminism exclusively in terms of one idea. A process deep and broad as life itself, that is his vital conception of the feminist movement.

And how is the conception developed? Mr. Dell calls his method "journalistic"; a severe critic might call it superficial. Through an analysis of various representative feminists he expresses the various phases of the woman movement. The method may or may not be judicious—that largely depends upon how it is used. Our author, however, uses it in a way which does not probe the depths of the subject.

His method is human and personal. This sort of thing has its place, providing it is not used as a basis for *social* conclusions. But Mr. Dell does draw social conclusions. And, inevitably, they possess no validity.

It is dangerous to appraise women's prospective influence in politics in the light of their personal and sex characteristics. Here the human factor is subordinate to the social class factor According to Mr. Dell, women are instinctively militant and not conciliative. He cites the failure of Jane Addams' attempt to "span the gulf between rich and poor" through social settlement work. "The splendid social idealism of the '80s, of which Miss Addams is representative, has disappeared, leaving two sides angry and hostile." The conciliatory Miss Addams has

failed to rally women to her banner, while "shop girls and college students and wives and old women" answer Mrs. Pankhurst's cry for militancy. Accordingly, women are instinctively militant: "have a fighting soul": in politics will be "an unruly Niagara." Women in politics will perform a "historic mission" —"subdue" politics "to their purposes, remold it nearer to their hearts' desire, change it as men would never dream of changing it, wreck it savagely in the face of our masculine protest and merrily rebuild it anew in the face of our despair."

All of which demonstrates the inadequacy of personal valuations as the basis of social conclusions. Attempts to "span the gulf between rich and poor" are dashed to pieces against the rock of the class struggle; and this explains Miss Addams' failure. Militancy was not "simply awakened where it lay sleeping in these women's hearts"; it is a social passion produced by social circumstances, just as similar social circumstances produced masculine militancy.

Women in politics are necessarily controlled by the identical social forces which control men. And to the extent that "Women as World Builders" is a humanist-pragmatic analysis, it does not thoroughly develop the vital concept of the woman movement being as broad and deep as life itself.

L. C. Fraina.