

THE GOOD DIE YOUNG OR BARELY LIVE

IT was not a rumor, but a series of editorial announcements, which recently informed the public that the *Progressive* is on the edge of financial collapse. As a monthly of serious opinion, the *Progressive* has been well tended by Editor Morris Rubin for some four years—four years during which the journal continued its last "progressive" change from representation of a particular political platform to an open forum for non-partisan thinkers. This was not a miraculous transition, of course. The little weekly founded in 1909 to explain and advance the political aspirations of the La Follettes has always welcomed courageous opinions in its contributors, even when they were a bit extreme from the La Follette point of view. (Robert La Follette knew a lot about unpopular opinions. He was once burned in effigy in front of the University of Wisconsin—to which he had brought great benefits—simply because he was one of six senators who voted against U. S. participation in World War I.) But the Wisconsin Progressive Party was a political party, none the less, and party contributions helped to make the continuance of the weekly possible. The last four years have been, in many respects, the *Progressive's* best years—its most mature years, perhaps, from an intellectual point of view—but they also have been the years of dwindling support. Why? Because a non-partisan *Progressive* made more enemies than the partisan *Progressive*? No. Apparently, because few people can stand the strain of being non-partisan for very long—long enough to afford solid, continuing support to a magazine.

The good magazines often die young, or if they don't die, they come uncomfortably close to it. *Common Sense*, long edited by Alfred Bingham and Selden Rodman, and briefly, later, by Sidney Hertzberg, couldn't last out the war. Albert Jay Nock's *Freeman* couldn't outlast the post-World-War-I boom of material prosperity, nor Dwight Macdonald's *Politics* the post-World-War-II apathy. And there have been many small socialist and

anarchist papers of merit with very short life-spans indeed.

Our argument is that the death of a good magazine doesn't necessarily mean "failure," and that if we convince ourselves of this we actually can feel more inspired to keep one or another such paper alive. There is a certain amount of evidence, even though most of it is "psychological," to indicate that when you back a good magazine, you can't lose, even if it doesn't survive more than three issues. And if the *Progressive* should die, we expect it to be a death worthy of mention and worthy of remembrance. The deaths of good magazines, like the deaths of good people, often achieve a positive, cheerful quality. This, we think, is very interesting.

In order to get some idea of what we are talking about, we suggest a purchase of the October *Progressive* and a thoughtful reading of Mr. Milton Mayer's summation of his own past relationship with the magazine. This tells us a lot about why the *Progressive* is a good magazine—so good that even if it should be dying, it will still be provocative and its editors and writers still levelheaded and cheerful.

Mayer begins by stating the reason for his own unflinching support of both the weekly and the monthly, as a regular contributor. His basis was *not* one of political agreement with the editors, but something more important. With Morris Rubin, he had the right of disagreement, and fair consideration for his own ideas, whereas Mayer once found himself "kicked out of every other publication for an article saying that the Jews were getting to be as bad as the Gentiles." This subject was *verboten*—especially if the author was himself Jewish, as Mayer happens to be. But Rubin took on Mayer's burdens, and we dare say he has been wiser and happier for packing them around. Of course, some editorial courage was necessary, too.

According to Mayer, he was bad for circulation before he was good for it:

My first piece for *The Progressive* was an attack on Father Silver Charley Coughlin and a lament that the United States Government had suppressed his rotten rag, *Social Justice*. Half the Jewish subscribers to *The Progressive* at once canceled their subscriptions because I was an anti-Semite, and half the Catholic subscribers canceled because I was an anti-Semitic Jew. Editor Rubin sighed, and the next week I attacked the Protestants.

This has gone on for 10 years now, 10 tough years for *The Progressive*, which, in addition to having to carry the ignominy of being truly radical in an increasingly reactionary world, has had to carry me besides.

Mayer's final tribute is not sanctimonious, for M. is the sort of man who would harass his dearest friend on a death-bed for the sake of something he calls "Truth." But only editors and writers who can do this sort of thing to each other—and keep on doing it—should be writing for the public anyway. Mayer's flat charge of wrong thinking and wrong doing in the matter of supporting the Korean war—Mayer is a pacifist—still lets Mayer and his editor love each other with enough understanding to make mutual support possible:

For five years *The Progressive* has been announcing month in and month out, that war is no longer practical, since war, whoever wins or loses, will now destroy civilization. At the end of the fifth year, *The Progressive*, along with everybody else, went off to the war which will destroy civilization, whoever wins or loses. Thus civilization came to an end, resisting Red aggression.

And still *The Progressive* is a blessing to me, and to all of us, because it was, and is willing at least to chronicle if not resist, the end of civilization, and to give voice to the few who will resist. No other publication of general circulation has been open to them for a long time.

The Progressive is the hope of this world, if not of the next, and while there is no hope for this world, except in the hope of the next, the hope for this one is never dead as long as we keep *The Progressive* alive and its editor in agony. He with his printer's bill to pay, and not we, with our sanctimonious irresponsibility, is, whether he knows it or not, the builder of the bridge all of us have got to cross.

There must be a kind of hidden brotherhood among all those who have fought "lost causes" from

editorial offices. They probably owe this brotherhood to a sharing of the secret that the best cause is always hopeless of perfect realization in the immediate present, yet always a winning cause if one has enough faith in man's ultimate preference for the Truth. Unless these people do have some kind of secret faith, at least, we are at a loss to account for their cheerfulness in adversity. Listen, for instance, to Oscar Ameringer's spice-of-life recital of his and his fellow socialist Victor Berger's two-man fight against the U.S. Government to keep the Milwaukee *Leader* going during World War I. Ameringer and Berger apparently enjoyed all this, even though they didn't know how long they were going to be able to eat, nor how long they could stay out of prison:

Without advertising, denied second-class mailing rights, deprived of the privilege of receiving and sending letters, it might appear that to continue to publish the *Leader* was a hopeless task. It just couldn't be done. Yet we did it. And because all that hadn't killed us, Washington indicted our editor-in-chief, Victor Berger, on so many counts that, had he been found guilty on all of them, it would have meant fifteen hundred years in the federal penitentiary. The accumulated total of Berger's bail bonds reached one million dollars. The million dollar bond, moreover, stipulated that Berger must not write a line in the paper of which he was the chief editor. Then, to relieve us of some more of our burdens they confiscated our files, books, and whatever else could be hauled or carried away.

There were at that time some 700,000 paid and unpaid spies assisting in saving democracy. Apparently about 678,347 were keeping 1,356,694 eyes on our little group. Our roost was so infested with dictaphones that we couldn't say "Pop goes the weasel" without causing the poppies in Flanders to pop. When Berger and I had something very important to discuss we used to climb into my little Ford and drive some twelve miles up the Milwaukee river to a spot where it was only two feet deep and had a smooth stone bottom. There was one slight inconvenience connected with that conference place, because I always had to step out into the water to crank my Ford. Victor, with all his marvelous learning, couldn't crank a Ford.

We may have noted several threads of connectedness between Mayer's commentary on the *Progressive* and Ameringer's struggle to keep the

Leader alive. In both cases a publication was criticizing the nation's participation in war. Criticism of war policy became increasingly unpopular, because conformity was so much easier when the pressure was really on. In one case the government, by a sort of attempted infanticide, almost rid the country of the embryonic *Leader*. The *Leader*, not the government, won that time, but it was close, and the government thought it had won more than once. The *Progressive* is threatened, today, not by government violence, but by something else just as tough. The *Progressive* is even less partisan than the *Leader* was, but because nonpartisan positions cannot be supported by emotional push—only by deep convictions about the values of nonpartisanship, and because there aren't enough deep convictions in the country to insure the *Progressive's* progress, the going is far from easy.

Mayer may be right in saying that the greatest weakness of Rubin—and of Alfred Bingham and Hertzberg of *Common Sense* before him—is the fact that they protest war and support its necessity at the same time. But ours is a cultural commentary, and we wish to point out that the non-partisan position is the hardest to maintain editorially, even harder than a pacifist position, though it might receive less unfavorable attention from the government. In the *Freeman*, Albert Jay Nock once did a good job of discussing the difficulties of non-partisan editorializing in regard to domestic relationships; he also knew something about similar difficulties in wartime:

To be heart and soul for labour wherever labour is exploited, which, under the present economic system, is everywhere, but to be dead against a dictatorship of the proletariat; to be strong for capital wherever it is bled by monopoly, which again is everywhere, but to repudiate and reprehend every advantage which capital gains through association with monopoly; to be for men's rights or women's rights, not in virtue of their being men's or women's, but in virtue of their being human rights; to be for women or for men wherever women or men get in any way the worst of it, but to withstand their encroachments wherever they do not; to resist class-consciousness as one would the devil, whether that consciousness be determined by sex, colour, birth,

race or economic status: this probably is the ideal of human life.

Well, when the good die young, they die happy, and also seem somehow to get reborn again. No, you can't lose when you prove that you have enough conviction to withstand prevailing prejudices, because you belong to a good fraternity—a fraternity whose members apparently know how to have a fine time even while the ship is sinking. Speaking of rebirths, we would like to suggest another quick incarnation (right now, in 1950, the time of the Korean debate), for George Tanguay Robinson, another of the *Freeman's* editorial writers, who composed the following:

At the review of the Grand Fleet at Hampton Roads the other day, the breaking waves dashed high, and President Harding rode upon the crest of them, singing a song of seapower. We can hardly blame the President for having felt uplifted. With submarines nosing up out of the ocean and dirigibles hiding the sun; with seaplanes zooming past the Mayflower's mast-head, and the continuous cannonading of the dreadnaughts fairly drowning the strains of the "Star-Spangled Banner," it must have been a fine business altogether, and enough to upset anybody. Maybe Mr. Harding did not mean anything at all, then, when he addressed the following immortal words to the officers of the fleet: "The United States does not want anything on earth not rightfully our own—no territories, no payment of tribute; but we want that which is righteously our own and, by the eternal, we mean to have that." If this really does mean something, then, by the eternal, we should like to know what it is that is righteously our own, and is yet so much some one else's that we have to have the biggest navy on earth to haul it home for us.

Have the issues really changed as much since then as we like to think they have? If they haven't, then Robinson and Nock and Ameringer are still forces pulling for the *Progressive*. May it manage to keep cheerfully but precariously alive. And of course, unless its existence is precarious, probably neither Mayer nor we can trust it.

Letter from INDIA

BOMBAY.—This is being written as India is celebrating the birthday of Gandhiji (October 2), who is now called the Father of the Nation. One of the ways in which the day can inspire the admirers of Gandhiji—and their name is legion—would be to consider some of the sources of his inspiration.

He is known as a man of religion. He called himself a Hindu. But his Hinduism is of a very distinctive species and it made many orthodox Brahmins inimical to Gandhiji. How was it that a Brahmin's hand was not restrained from murdering Gandhiji? There is a clue in the following words:

I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. My belief in the Hindu scriptures does not require me to accept every word and every verse as divinely inspired. Nor do I claim to have any first hand knowledge of these wonderful books. But I do claim to know and feel the truths of the essential teaching of the scriptures. I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense. I do most emphatically repudiate the claim (if they advance any such) of the present Sankaracharyas and Shastris to give a correct interpretation of the Hindu scriptures. On the contrary, I believe, that our present knowledge of these books is in a most chaotic state. (*The Gandhi Sutras*, p. 148.)

Gandhiji's concept of religion is as important as it is significant:

The tree of Religion is the same, there is not that physical equality between the branches. They are all growing and the person who belongs to the growing branch must not gloat over it and say, "Mine is a superior one!" None is superior, none is inferior to the others. (*Harijan*, March 13, 1937.)

But ultimately I came to the deliberate conviction that there was no such thing as only one true religion and every other false. There is no religion that is absolutely perfect. All are equally imperfect or more or less perfect, hence the conclusion that Christianity is as true and good as my own religion. But so also about Islam or Zoroastrianism or Judaism. (*Harijan*, March 6, 1937.)

Certain men and movements, certain authors and books influenced Gandhiji's being. There was Raychand, the man of multifarious actions, who, outwardly ever busy, was inwardly in repose. He was the very first of the major influences in the life of young Gandhi, ere he left India to study law in England. We shall let Gandhi speak of the second influence:

Towards the end of my second year in England I came across two Theosophists, brothers, and both unmarried. They talked to me about the *Gita*. They were reading Sir Edwin Arnold's translation—*The Song Celestial*—and they invited me to read the original with them. I felt ashamed, as I had read the Divine Poem neither in Sanskrit nor in Gujarati. I was constrained to tell them that I had not read the *Gita* but that I would gladly read it with them and that though my knowledge of Sanskrit was meagre, still I hoped to be able to understand the original to the extent of telling where the translation failed to bring out the meaning. I began reading the *Gita* with them. . . .

The brothers also recommended *The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold, whom I knew till then as the author only of *The Song Celestial*, and I read it with even greater interest than I did the *Bhagavad Gita*. Once I had begun it I could not leave off. They also took me on one occasion to the Blavatsky Lodge and introduced me to Madame Blavatsky. The friends advised me to join the Society, but I politely declined saying, 'With my meagre knowledge of my own religion I do not want to belong to any religious body.' I recall having read, at the brothers' instance, Madame Blavatsky's *Key to Theosophy*. This book stimulated in me the desire to read books on Hinduism and disabused me of the notion fostered by the missionaries that Hinduism was rife with superstition. (*My Experiments with Truth*, pp. 164-65, 166-67.)

Next came the influence of the New Testament, and Gandhiji felt the power of the Sermon on the Mount:

But the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the *Gita*. The verses, 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man take away thy coat let him have thy cloak too, delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of

Shamal Bhatt's 'For a bowl of water, give a goodly meal,' etc. My young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita*, the *Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly. (*My Experiments*, p. 168.)

Three modern books impelled to outward expression the faith so kindled. These were Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, Tolstoy's *Kingdom of God is Within You* and Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*. These influences brought to Gandhiji his asceticism, his self-reliance, and his cosmopolitanism. Spiritual and material, moral and mundane came to a close juxtaposition and Gandhiji finally came to define the function of religion thus:

Religion to be true must satisfy what may be termed humanitarian economics, i.e., where the income and the expenditure balance each other. (*Young India*, March 31, 1927.)

In this country, where at every street corner a guru is available and the difficulty is in finding a chela, Gandhiji lifted the concept of the real Guru and asserted:

An imperfect teacher in mundane matters may be tolerable, but not in spiritual matters. Only a perfect Gnyani deserves to be enthroned as Guru. There must therefore be ceaseless striving after perfection. For one gets the Guru that one deserves. (*My Experiments*, p. 210.)

He was humble enough to honour the sages of the ancient world while he courageously "experimented with Truth." He used to emphasise "the sum-total of the experience of the Sages of the World," which is not only available at the present hour, but in every yuga and cycle:

I claim to have no infallible guidance or inspiration. So far as my experience goes, the claim to infallibility on the part of a human being would be untenable, seeing that inspiration too can come only to one who is free from the action of the pairs of opposites, and it will be difficult to judge on a given occasion whether the claim to freedom from the pairs of opposites is justified. The claim to infallibility would thus always be a most dangerous claim to make. This, however, does not leave us without any guidance whatsoever. The sum-total of the experience of the sages of the world is available to us and would be for all time to come. Moreover there

are not many fundamental truths, but there is only one fundamental Truth which is Truth itself, otherwise known as Non-violence. Finite human beings shall never know in its fulness Truth and Love, which is in itself infinite. But we do know enough for our guidance. We shall err, and sometimes grievously, in our application. But man is a self-governing being and self-government necessarily includes the power as much to commit errors as to set them right as often as they are made. (*Young India*, April 21, 1927.)

Of his concept of Deity, of Brotherhood with all, of Prayer, silent and secret, he has gone on record thus:

The word "Satya" (Truth) is derived from "Sat" which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why "Sat" or Truth is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact, it is more correct to say that Truth is God, than to say that God is Truth. But as we cannot do without a ruler or a general, names of God such as King of Kings or the Almighty are and will remain more usually current. On deeper thinking, however, it will be realized that "Sat" is the only correct and fully significant name for God. (From *Yeravda Mandir*, pp. 1-2.)

I do not believe that an individual may gain spiritually and those who surround him suffer. I believe in *advaita*, I believe in the essential unity of man and, for that matter, of all that lives. Therefore I believe that if one gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him, and if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent. (*Young India*, Dec. 4, 1924.)

Here we have attempted to give some of the fundamental ideas which energized Gandhiji's consciousness. If the India of 1950 is not able to carry out his programme to any great extent through special legislation or routine administration, it is because most of our leaders have not made their own the inspiration of Gandhiji, nor have they studied sufficiently and assimilated adequately his writings.

Are there citizens of U. S. A. who will try to study and assimilate his writings, tap the sources of their inspiration, and succeed where his own loved motherland as yet has not?

INDIAN CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION—AGAIN

IT is a custom in these pages—a custom somewhat sanctified by repetition—to indict the Industrial Revolution as a kind of Pandora's Box of modern times, from which have emerged countless denaturing influences. Is there something to be said on the other side—something more important than a hackneyed recital of the "material benefits" which industry, and American industry in particular, has brought?

Frederick Allen, editor-in-chief of *Harper's Magazine*, has an article in *Harper's* large centennial issue (October), which suggests that there is. Mr. Allen's survey of the century of *Harper's* existence, printed along with some half dozen similar surveys, is of particular interest for the reason that he is not only *Harper's* editor, but also a social historian of some distinction, and he writes with the ease of one who has long had his facts at his fingertips. First comes a brief sketch of the impact of industrialism, which is really something quite new, historically speaking. New York City, for example, had no water from Croton until 1842, and no public sewerage until 1845. In Boston, due to similar conditions, the average age of all who died in the city was 21.43 years. Then a half-century of miraculous development began, bringing Bessemer steel and the hearth furnace, a network of railroads across the continent, water and sewerage systems, modern plumbing, home and public lighting—first gas, then electricity, steam and then electrical public transport, electric motors, the telegraph and telephone, the typewriter, the linotype, Howe's sewing machine. By 1900—

A land of formerly separate communities had been linked together. A land mostly of farmers and villagers had become a land mostly of cities and roaring industrial towns. Comforts, conveniences, and wealth had so piled up as to make possible a great extension of education on every level and a general widening of horizons. It was almost as if a whole new world had been invented for people to work and play in.

This brings Mr. Allen to his first major point:

But industrialism in those days of its raw growth brought abominations too. To begin with, wherever it advanced, ugliness came with it—smoke, soot, grime, the darkening of skies, once clear, the withering of foliage once green the pollution of rivers once clean. Indeed, so completely did men assume that money-making and beauty live in separate compartments—beauty being something which you could buy after you made the money, or must run away to, from the city or the factory where the money was produced—that even the profitable building of houses, except for the rich, was undertaken as if by blind men.

One of the first results of industrialism was to sink certain standards of human relations lower than they were in the Middle Ages. The working man was fair game. If he could be made to work for starvation wages, the employer was not regarded as a villain, but as clever and successful. In medieval times, the lord or squire was responsible for the welfare of his serfs and humbler neighbors, but not so the businessman of the Industrial Revolution. Before long, the rich and the poor were separated by a great abyss. At about the turn of the century, the average unskilled worker received \$460 a year in the North and less than \$300 in the South, while Andrew Carnegie's personal income for the three years, 1898, 1899, and 1900, totalled nearly forty-five million dollars. There were no income taxes in those days.

The second fifty years of *Harper's* life, Mr. Allen relates, has been a period of reforms, during which we "civilized" the Industrial Revolution. The Marxian theory of revolution, he notes, was developed during the ugliest days of Industrialism's youth, and today the industrialism of Marx's time is no more. The second great step in the evolution of industrialism has been marked by "*a narrowing of the difference between rich and poor in their ways of living.*" Look at the Ford motor car, says Mr. Allen. Early in the century, the Ford was a poor man's badge and advertisement; today, a Ford owner drives with pride alongside any other car. All the ladies wear nylons. Twenty or thirty years ago, the large

mail-order houses sold one sort of styles to rural housewives and daughters and another to city-bred folk. Today, fashions are standard for town and country. Democracy has so triumphed on this front that only a mink coat will set off a modern woman from her sisters as a pampered darling of fortune. Good taste rather than lots of money is important to the well-dressed woman of today.

Mr. Allen makes his point. You too can smoke a Comoy pipe, wear a Stetson hat, and ride to the beach on Saturday in a club convertible coupe. You too can dress like Linda Darnell, eat canapés out of a can, and escape from housework with a Hoover, a Bendix, and an automatic dishwasher. The power of the machine may have created a new social distance in the early days of the Industrial Revolution, but now the same power is cutting that distance down. So, Mr. Allen thinks, we have licked the Industrial Revolution. There are a couple of problems left over, like the Atom Bomb, the Welfare State, and the increasing Psychological Uniformity resulting from mass manipulation of minds, but Mr. Allen thinks, or hopes, that "American flexibility, horse sense, and humor" will be able to solve them.

But Mr. Allen never gets off the ground. All he seems to be saying is that we're pretty smart and we'll have to be smarter. Against the background of what larger human project did the Industrial Revolution take place? Can we say "Mission accomplished," just because everyone has a nice suit of clothes?

For every generation, History sets some sort of problem, and men set about solving it. But the problem of a particular generation is never the ultimate problem of life. Building the industrial machine was not the *real* thing to be busy at during the last half of the nineteenth century, even though most people seemed to think so. Nor is "democratizing" prosperity the supreme task of mankind in the twentieth. Men are not merely children of their age, but have their own peculiar work to do. That work is to become wiser, better men. If we had been more interested in becoming

wiser, better men than in becoming rich, the Industrial Revolution would not have spread ugliness and desolation, and would not have spawned millions of desperate Communists to haunt the present. And if we had become wiser, better men while trying to reform the Industrial Revolution, we would not have created an all-powerful State with its all-consuming taxes. Mr. Allen thinks that we have approached a condition of equally distributed benefits of industrialism, but equally distributed anxiety seems to be a commoner result.

There are certainly some good things to be said of the Industrial Revolution, but they are far from being the most important things to say.

COMMENTARY
MR. DeVOTO'S HALF-TRUTH

OUR lead for this week salutes the *Progressive*—a good paper that is having a hard time. Last month the literary world and some of the political world—including President Truman—saluted *Harper's Magazine* on its hundredth birthday. Most of the contributors to this issue saluted *Harper's*, too, and *Harper's* doubtless deserves all these tributes, for whatever may be said of this monthly, its motives can hardly be identified as primarily "commercial."

We could let all this justifiable happiness for *Harper's* pass by with no more comment than a slight gesture of appreciation, were it not for the talented Mr. DeVoto's contribution to "The Easy Chair" in the centennial number. Mr. DeVoto thinks that *Harper's* has done pretty well to keep going all these years, and there is no quarrel with that, but he adds as clincher that *Harper's* has been a profitable career untainted by subsidy. For Mr. DeVoto, *Harper's* reaches a pinnacle of editorial virtue by surviving the commercial struggle without help of Moscow Gold, the King's Shilling, honorariums from the Shakespeare Club or donations from the NAM. Mr. DeVoto is indeed clever about this. The subsidized magazine, he says,

is usually querulous and always pontifical. It so loves virtue that it appeals to nothing but the love of virtue. True believers doubtless find it *gemutlich*, but to sinful people, who greatly outnumber them, its self-righteousness is aggressively dull. . .

Theoretically, a magazine which need not worry about the payroll and the printer ought to be the best medium for unbiased inquiry but things have never worked out that way. The profit motive is the only warranty journalism has found for what Justice Holmes called "free trade in ideas." The best test of truth, he decided, "is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market." But all subsidies rig the market; they are in restraint of trade. If a magazine is kept, it does not matter in the least who keeps it.

Everything said here seems true up to a point. If Mr. DeVoto had named that point, we could heartily agree. But when we think of the publications which would never have seen the light of day without subsidy, that point becomes extremely important. Without subsidy, for example, there would have been no *Progressive*. Mr. DeVoto ought to have added that the best things, as well as the worst, are often done without thought of profit, and more often at a loss. He takes the standard of the commercially good, and makes it a universal rule.

Nevertheless, with this qualification, his "Easy Chair" contribution ought to be read over, periodically, by all editors who expect special support from their readers and friends. They could make no greater mistake than to suppose that Mr. DeVoto is *entirely* wrong.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

MOST of those who read newspaper or magazine "Letter to the Editor" commentaries on education are aware of a sort of continual verbal battle between parents and teachers. The *Reader's Digest* for November reprints an article by Ruth Fay, objecting to the school's "interference" in sex education; and in the October issue of *Family Circle*, Martha Grover, a Los Angeles County teacher, delicately points up the Case for the Teacher with remarks that many hard-working pedagogues must often find themselves wanting to make.

Mrs. Grover, a defender of the latest and rather carefully refined and defined version of Progressive education, pleads with parents to investigate carefully just what their children's teachers are doing before indulging the temptation to criticize. Granting that the educational results in nearly all schools are less than parents might hope for, it seems to Mrs. Grover that parents should recognize at least a trial obligation to help the teacher *in accordance with the lines followed by the teacher*, insofar as humanly possible:

Please, parents, do not let your child hear you criticize his teacher, his principal, or his school, even if you think they are the worst in the world. Why?

Because he is likely to imitate your attitude and take it to school with him. It may color his views of school so completely that he will not be able to cooperate and, therefore, will not be able to learn as well as he should. If you do have suggestions or criticisms to make, go to your school principal, or to the teacher, and explain your point of view. In 99 cases out of 100 they will be glad to listen and to accept suggestions.

Please, parents, do not ever complain in front of your child about his school's methods of teaching reading. Please don't let family or friends try all their methods of teaching reading or any other subject on your child. If several people try to teach a youngster by several different methods, he will become so confused that he will quickly unlearn whatever he has already achieved.

Now, to turn to the other side—the need for parents to assert *their* educational rights, which is a positive rather than a negative matter, or, shall we say, constructive criticism. Mrs. Fay's argument against the public schools' method of treating her children is not based upon a general criticism of "Progressive" methods. She simply wishes to handle all matters of "sex education" herself, believing that she is much more capable than a teacher who doesn't really know her child, and believing, too, that the home is the best possible environment for continued conversation on any subject of sufficient interest. Mrs. Fay succinctly summarizes the inadequacy of all mass instruction,—a view that is particularly impressive in connection with the subject under debate:

Who is to judge at what age a child is ready to comprehend even the most elementary sex information? No two children arrive at the same point of interest or curiosity at an identical age. Each child is a completely different human being developing on his own individual time schedule. To turn over the guidance of any part of this development which pertains to the understanding of sex to someone who has no knowledge of him as an individual is unthinkable.

Physiologists freely admit their limitations in defining normal body development. Normal emotional development is equally unpredictable. And there are other factors to consider: environment, the circumstance of the moment the individual reaction to natural phenomena. Children brought up in the country, surrounded by animals, learn earlier than city children that the reproductive urge in the animal kingdom is as fundamental as breathing. And they accept it as such.

Mrs. Fay concludes with the reverse side of Mrs. Grover's picture:

We present-day parents have been so preached at, so looked down the nose at by the whole roster of newly minted social-science experts, that we are in danger of losing our sense of proportion and our own place in the scheme of things. Badgered on every side as we are, no wonder so many of us encourage the arbitrary taking away from us of what is definitely a family responsibility.

Whether or not one gives the edge in importance of constructive emphasis to Mrs. Grover—as we would be inclined to do, because of her proposal of joint consultation on all vital matters—we must finally come to recognize that no educational improvements can ever be properly brought about on a large institutionalized scale. Probably the least attractive feature of school "sex education" is in its being done largely by rote. But, on the other hand, if Mrs. Fay were able to conduct a magnificently successful campaign to stop all public school sex education, she might be doing some pupils a disservice, for many teachers actually are more able instructors than the child's own parents.

Whether or not a paid servant of the public school is able to know each child intimately, the genius of real teaching can bring to any subject a certain appropriateness which indifferent parents may lack, for all their "opportunity" to know their child's special peculiarities and aptitudes. Similarly, some are much better teachers than the ones encountered at school. It is the quality or genius of a teacher which is, after all, important, and everything else subsidiary.

In conclusion, we should like to quote another section of Mrs. Grover's piece, pointing up the present importance of the school's entering more directly into the psychological life of the child. Most of today's parents, as well as their children, suffer from the same sort of lack as that Mrs. Grover describes:

The changes in modern ways of living have necessarily affected our children's education. The basic experiences of dealing firsthand with the earth, the weather, plants, and animals are no longer possible for many people. In the last century more families lived on or near farms. Children saw animals of all kinds in the woods and around their homes. Nowadays a large proportion of children live in big cities where even a blade of grass is scarce, where they never see a chicken or a cow. Families are smaller now, and there are fewer chores about the home. A great change has had to take place in our school curriculums, because experiences that children used to have at home are no longer possible. Yet

these are still basic experiences that every child should have in order to understand and appreciate his world. The school may have to give him a chance to see a cow, to find out how it is milked, fed, and cared for. If a child sees a real cow, compares its size to his own, knows how important the animal is to his life and health, then the word "cow" has significance for him.

FRONTIERS

Loyalty Oath or Political Test?

A SUBSCRIBER has sent us a questioning letter regarding the "loyalty oath" in California, and as the letter sums up the views of a large number of people, we print it as the basis for comment and discussion:

Dear Editor: It must be that I have struck a snag on the teacher's loyalty oath in California. I am sure it must be important or the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] would not have taken a hand. Yet, I do not understand it. I have been a teacher, probably as insurgent as the next one, when it came to rights and freedom. Still, I cannot understand a man not willing to state his loyalty to his country when the national issue seems to be so much more important than the personal one. In view of the world situation, it seems to me we are the greatest target for communism. We have come to grips with the greatest foe to human freedom we have ever known in this or any other country.

In the words of Benjamin Franklin, "Unless we hang together, we must surely hang separately." Unless we can defend our position nationally in this issue, where will our personal freedom ever be?

In order to get the record straight, let us first print the pledge of loyalty incorporated in the Constitution of the State of California in 1849:

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California, and that I will faithfully discharge the duties of my office according to the best of my ability.

The thirty-one professors who were discharged from the University of California had all signed this oath. What they objected to, and what they refused to sign, was an additional section, prescribed by the Regents, which read as follows:

. . . that I am not a member of the Communist Party, or under any oath or a party to any agreement or under any commitment that is in conflict with my obligations under this oath.

Now why should anyone object to signing this clause? In the first place, the State Constitution, having prescribed the original oath, goes on to say: "And no other oath, declaration or test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public

trust." The clause added by the Regents is in obvious violation of this provision of the State Constitution.

Why is this provision important?

Wise makers of constitutions know that a basic instrument of law, unless carefully written, can easily be turned to an abuse of power. The Constitution is the social compact of California. The citizens of the state are responsible to the Constitution, and not to some other system of government or code of laws. The Constitution defines the rights and obligations of citizenship. Suppose, for example, that a powerful clique of co-religionists decided that loyalty to a particular creed should be made the condition of service to the state in public office. The leaders of this clique *might* be able to write into the oath of public office, for all civil service jobs, a religious qualification, were it not for the specific rejection of such a qualification by the State Constitution itself. Or a powerful political party—as, for example, the Communist Party in Russia—might decide to include some political test for office. Were it not for this clause, such a Party could insist upon loyalty to some particular *interpretation* of the Constitution, as distinguished from its commonly accepted meaning.

There are communities in the United States where a tacit rule of this sort already prevails. Only teachers who believe in Bible-reading, or belong to some sect of denominational Christians can obtain teaching jobs in the schools of such towns. A clause such as the one in the state Constitution at least prevents such practices from becoming legal and official.

But Communism, it will be argued, is a treacherous and conscienceless force which would destroy the free institutions of our country. If this be so—and it is certainly not impossible that it is so—then why have we not, by act of law, made the existence of the Communist Party illegal in the United States?

The answer to this question is a simple one—we do not know how to *prove* in a court of law that the Communist Party contemplates the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force and violence. Nearly everyone—more or less justly—

suspects that the Communist Party would do just that, given the requisite power and opportunity, but our courts, recognizing that suspicions are not a sufficient basis for legal action, are unable to outlaw the Communist Party so long as Party spokesmen deny that it has any such intent.

Certainly, there could be no objection to requiring a candid statement from an applicant for employment by the State of California regarding his Communist affiliations, if such membership was an established crime against the Government. At the present time, however, it is not so established. Loyalty oaths which single out the Communist Party, therefore, attempt to do by economic pressure what we have found ourselves unable to do, thus far, by law. Such oaths, therefore, create the pattern for the misuse of administrative power in the future. If we allow this pattern to remain, there might be even *legal* precedent for the Democrats barring the Republicans from office, or vice versa. The door is opened wide to numerous forms of autocratic tyranny.

The oath required of teachers in the public schools of California, incidentally, does not mention the Communist Party, but refers only to organizations which threaten the government with force and violence. Obviously, such an oath presents an entirely different decision. It asks for assurance, under oath, that the applicant is not involved with any group having designs of this sort. This can easily be regarded as a proper and reasonable request, or could be so regarded, were it not for the fact that such questions are already adequately covered by the oath prescribed by the State Constitution, in which the applicant swears to support the Constitution of the State and of the nation. Obviously, when he swears to support the Constitution, he swears not to attack it by force and violence.

The University oath, however, is no mere repetition of the State Constitution oath. The University oath, or rather, the essential clause in the letter which applicants for teaching contracts are requested to sign, contains a disavowal of membership in the Communist Party, at a time when membership in the Communist Party has not been

established as an offense against the law of the land. This oath, therefore, virtually permits an administrative body like the California Regents to set up a criminal code of its own and to establish punishments—in this case the refusal of a job with the state. Perhaps it *ought* to be illegal to be a Communist. But if so, then let us make it illegal, and not betray our political principles because we think it *ought* to be illegal, but isn't.

On August 25, the Board of Regents of the University of California voted twelve to ten to discharge the thirty-one professors who had refused to write the letter mentioned above. During the discussion which preceded this vote, Regent Heller inquired, for the record, if any of the teachers about to be dismissed had been charged with Communism, or if there was any evidence of disloyalty against them. Neither evidence nor charges were produced. At this point, Governor Warren asked:

"Do I understand that we are firing these people merely because they are recalcitrant?"

"It is not a question of Communism," replied Regent Arthur J. McFadden, "but one of discipline."

So, the issue is not Communism, or "loyalty," but a matter of "discipline." The professors had better do what the Regents tell them to do, or else. . .

When we support the University of California loyalty oath, that is what we are supporting, and arguing for. It is not a fight against Communism, but a fight against a clear provision of the Constitution of the State of California, and against the allegiance of teachers to a basic principle of democratic self-government.

"Unless we hang together, we must surely hang separately," our correspondent quotes. Well, we have had some twenty-five or thirty "hangings," thus far.