

PERSONAL ECONOMICS FOR IDEALISTS

THE problem of what the Quakers call "right livelihood" is a formidable one for nearly everyone who wishes to establish some tangible connection between his social ideals and the economic facts of daily existence. Except for uniquely fortunate individuals whose special talents make it easy for them to acquire the necessities of life, and who are able, therefore, to devote the major portion of their time to projects of human betterment, the business of making a living seems usually to be an exhausting and time-consuming enterprise, with a minimum of personal satisfactions.

The problem, of course, is partly psychological. For a man or woman who regards the religion of making money with essential distrust, there is something peculiarly odious about smiling bravely and "making the best of it" in the commercial world. How can you play a game you don't really believe in? A person's work is a large part of his life. In the case of the brain-worker, the difficulty is aggravated by the fact that nearly all mental effort involves either major or minor creative activity, and it often seems an ignominious betrayal of one's ideals to use one's highest faculties—God-given or otherwise—in the furtherance of a system which has no higher object than the accumulation of wealth. To use one's brains for making money seems like a contribution to the ideology of private profits—which in the long run may be truly a fate worse than death.

We know of one or two intellectuals who deliberately became carpenters as a result of this line of reflection or something like it. So far as we know, they made excellent carpenters and are considerably happier—less divided in mind—than they were before. We know of some others who have returned to the land—either all the way back to the land, as full-time farmers, or only part-way, after the example set by Mr. Borsodi. Still others

in whom the acquisitive instinct strikes no response have been drawn into organizational work. They labor for a pittance on behalf of causes, and added to the personal problems they face with respect to their own needs and the needs of their families are the peculiarly unpleasant burdens of fund-raising for benevolent purposes, and the out-of-key complications that are almost always associated with organizational work in which the active workers are far in advance of the rank and file in thinking and concepts of effective action.

To some, it may be something of a novelty to learn that there are individuals who feel so strong a distaste toward the commonly available modes of making a living. Everyone, after all, has to work, or ought to, and what good purpose can be served by being hoity-toity over an obvious duty? To these, there is possibly justice in the reply that whatever a man's employment, it is certain that unless he has given considerable thought to the implications of how he spends his eight or more or less hours a day, he may be furthering objectives which are partly or entirely opposed to the principles he believes in, or thinks he believes in. To paraphrase a Socratic judgment, the unexamined livelihood may be fully as bad as the unexamined life.

We recall the story told of himself by an eminent engineer whose professional abilities led him most naturally to municipal employment. This man, who was young in his career at the time of this episode, realized that municipal governments are sometimes corrupt. For him, right livelihood meant foresight in respect to the possibility that he might some day be asked to participate in dishonest practices, under pressure from the city fathers. Confronted by this abstract possibility, he laid plans for a small business of his

own, so that he would be economically free, should he feel morally obliged to resign as city engineer. He was a man with a wife, two small children, and a mortgage, which made a steady income of substantial importance. It eventually happened that the small business was the means of preserving this man's integrity without harm to his family.

What we are concerned with, here, is the moral dubiety of an unquestioned peace with the status quo. To question the status quo, and one's particular relation to it, is not the same as a contemptuous dismissal of all the economic processes and services of modern society. Everyone has some sort of relation to these processes. One may be a passive cog, a wage-earner, in the industrial machine, or a highly productive manager and entrepreneur—a man such as Henry Kaiser. Again, one may be a sophisticated cynic who tolerates modern business activity to the extent of gaining from it the means necessary to create for himself a private ivory tower he gives hostages to the Philistines and lives, during his working hours, a life of well-bred pretense. Finally, one may declare his complete alienation from both the thinking and the processes of business enterprise, and live on the fringes of the economic world, either positively, by trying to devise some practical alternative for means of personal subsistence, or negatively, as a "transient" worker in whatever he may do, never becoming deeply involved in anything, and cherishing his rootless existence on the theory that the soil is unfit for permanent planting.

These situations, singly or in combination, are all possibilities for modern man. And psychologically speaking, they may be equally reprehensible, from the viewpoint of deliberate idealism, if no special thought has been given to them—no more than is necessary for the attainment of some personal end.

Another phase of this problem is the fact that a considerable part of the generalized moral condemnation of commercial pursuits has its

origin in the Marxist conception of social justice. This has meant, over the years, the tendency on the part of all those directly or indirectly affected by Marxism to regard any activity formally connected with private property and buying and selling for profit as a kind of irredeemable evil. The employer of labor, regardless of his personal character, motives, policies or objectives, is *ipso facto* an exploiter of the working classes. Few men who have ever held this point of view are able to rise by conventional means and for conventional reasons to good jobs in industry or trade without harboring an inner sense of having "sold out." This feeling is of necessity a corrupting influence in their lives. They may explain to themselves and others that they were forced to "compromise" out of personal economic necessity, but any man who becomes convinced that the circumstances of life *compel* moral compromise is bound to develop a philosophy of expediency and to believe more and more in the short-term "victory"—to win *this* strike, or *this* war, to avoid *this* personal or group disaster, becomes the all-important goal.

Marx, of course, was originally concerned with the immeasurable human misery caused by the Industrial Revolution. He was not so much a great economist as a fierce moralist disguised as the secular prophet of "scientific socialism." It is the moralistic ardor in the communist movement which gives it its strength—or *gave* that strength in the days when communism was something different from a cloak for Russian nationalism. A further source of energy for the Marxist movement was its appeal to bitterness and destructiveness in men who had suffered and were suffering increasingly from the impersonal processes of industrialism. The evidence that the energy was basically destructive lies in the fact that the present Communist State has neither liberated its people from economic oppression nor gives any significant promise of doing so in the future. In other words, changing the ownership of the industrial process from a handful of powerful individuals to the State, which is in the possession

of another group of powerful individuals, will work no significant change in the condition of man.

So, the question remains: Where does the evil lie? It seems evident that there is nothing intrinsically evil in the act of producing goods that are needed by other human beings; nor is there evil in distributing them for use. If, then, we may make a hypothesis, the evil lies in making goods for some other reason than that they are needed by human beings—to get rich, for example. But it will be asked, What about the rich man who uses his wealth for the benefit of others—like Mr. Carnegie, and others acting according to the precedent set by respectable American millionaires?

Here, we are obliged to say that the conventional precedent is not necessarily an evil. It is not evil, that is, because it is conventional, but because of the hypocrisy which is usually involved. We are not opposed to Mr. Gandhi's idea of the stewardship of wealth; we would as soon trust Mr. Carnegie with a lot of money as some governments we know of; but if we can let pass by the lesser-of-two-evils part of this argument, we want to say that the patterns of human behavior which have grown up in association with modern industrialism and modern trade are better evidence of the dominant motives in these fields than any amount of protestations of big-time benevolence and donations to universities and hospitals and research institutions.

Setting aside the categorical denunciation of "private enterprise," which is undoubtedly the "easiest way" of becoming a "liberal," the problem remains in the new terms of an evolutionary social morality. The question can be rephrased: Is it possible for a man to make a living—work for somebody else, be a small manufacturer or a retailer, or a salesman on the road—and at the same time maintain his self-respect as a socially conscious individual? It is, we think, possible, although it may be exceedingly difficult at times.

The businessman who takes this position has the obligation of weighing every decision of policy as a matter of personal morality, regardless of what the Chamber of Commerce seems to think is all right. He may find himself having to repudiate publicly some popular shibboleth of the religion of business. (In doing so, he will, incidentally, have much more effect as an educator of his fellow men, and fellow businessmen, than the best of socialist orators.) He will oppose or at least examine critically every form of stereotyped opinion that comes his way by the usual channels of business communication. He will draw certain lines of limitation to the activities of his business—and those lines will be, not studious compromises with the requirements of his church, if he has one, but based on reasoned decisions resulting from his own idea of where the moral emphasis of his life should be placed. They will be *his* lines, not somebody else's.

The objective, after all, is not to attain some particular equality in the distribution of goods—which is only the theory of socialized materialism—but to develop in ourselves and to encourage the development in others of independent moral decision. In any society of the future worth talking about and working toward, independent moral decision will be the dominant cultural habit—the universal goal and the highest abstract good. So, when it comes to making a living, here and now, the primary task is to build a pattern of endeavor which permits that kind of decision—a pattern which, if and as it is successful, increases the opportunity for that kind of decision.

The trouble with most or all the apologetics for "free enterprise" is that they don't say what they really mean. But that doesn't mean that free enterprise may not be a good thing. It means that the sort of free enterprise that develops in a hypocritical society is not a good thing. We need, then, to attack the hypocrisy, not the freedom. And to attack the hypocrisy means to expose the real nature of the acquisitiveness that dominates

most enterprise—is, indeed, a virtual instinct of the conventional businessman—in all its vulgar ugliness, irresponsibility and crass barbarism.

We have an excellent case in point in the economic conditions which confront an enterprise like the publication of MANAS. This magazine is the technical competitor of hundreds of weeklies which vie for the consumer's attention. Those weeklies are not thought of by their owners as instruments of public enlightenment, or even as dispensers of sound information. They are conceived of, and their pages sold to advertisers, as *markets*. It is a fact that no one—or almost no one—can address a large audience, say, a million or more, in the United States, except by becoming associated with businessmen who are taking goods to market, and getting a free ride on the businessman's means of reaching the public. The mails are almost suffocated with advertising literature, with which, again in a technical sense, a paper like MANAS must compete for a hearing. The price of MANAS is often thoughtlessly judged in comparison with publications which ride free on the merchandising bandwagon.

Again, the efficient merchandising of goods, under the ideology of industrialism, involves enormous publishing operations which reduce unit costs to a fraction of those which non-commercial publishers must meet. The acquisitive motive can demand, and get, fabulous sums of money to promote its enterprises. The publishers of the non-commercial magazine have no such resources. They work against the acquisitive grain of the entire culture. If they are resolved to give no hostages to the Philistines, they must expect to raise funds by some other means than the sale of a slim magazine which costs almost as much to distribute as it does to print.

This is not a devious appeal for subsidy, but simply an illustration, which happens to be intimately familiar to us, of the problems which attend the production and distribution for use of reading material which is an end in itself, and not a vehicle for the sale of goods.

But the publishers of such a periodical should neither ask nor obtain any special privileges from public institutions, because of the difficulties in which non-acquisitive enterprise is involved. Short of exemption from taxes which are applied directly to profits, such enterprise, in a free society, should make its way on the same terms as all other enterprises, whatever their motives, ideals, or lack of ideals. It would be as foolish to want to constrain the progress of what we think to be the good in human endeavor as it is to hope to abolish the bad by coercion or expropriation.

All the decencies in human life, all the genuine culture, the arts, the creative expression, the spontaneous sympathies of fellowship and cooperation, have grown without constraint. They are the product of free moral decision. We shall not have these things collectively, in a body, unless we have them, first, in the single instance, through the individual human act. We care nothing for political systems, unless they make the individual human act a sacred thing. We care nothing for theories of education, unless their end is an increasingly competent choosing individual. We care nothing for economic doctrines or schemes or criticisms, unless they start with the postulate of human freedom and never lose touch with that value from beginning to end. This postulate has the virtue of always having an organic relation to any given situation. Whatever the circumstances, there is always a direction in which lies greater freedom for moral decision. But that direction is contained in no formula. And while there are general propositions about freedom which may be repeated, each man has to see their meaning for himself.

Letter from ENGLAND

LONDON.—A parliamentary General Election will take place here in 1950, and political parties vie with one another in drafting appeals to the appetitive nature of the electors as a means to power. A few voices remark on the growing impotence of the individual, notwithstanding a free and unrestricted franchise, in face of the ever-increasing encroachments of political and economic organizations, whether these be governments or unions of employers and employed. Regimentation at all levels of the personal life has become, in varying degrees, a normal feature in democratic and totalitarian countries alike. The right to vote is looked upon as a mystic symbol of self-determination.

In England, however bad any existing council or government may be, we flatter ourselves that we can throw it out of power "at the next election," irrespective of any catastrophe that might ensue during its reign of office, or of our own implication (passive or positive) in the evils that it may unloose upon an unsuspecting country. Representative government, in fact, no less than the plebiscite common to totalitarian governments, has become a substitute for personal responsibility. A plebiscite confirms tyrants in office; a democratic election is transformed into a struggle for power by selfish interests. The great illusion that these things constitute "freedom" will die hard.

No one bothers to observe that each citizen must himself be a centre of spiritual action, and from him and his own daily individual life must radiate those higher spiritual forces which alone can regenerate his fellowmen. Yet in what other way can we hope to inculcate higher and nobler conceptions of public and private duties—duties which lie at the root of all spiritual and material improvement? If the moral standards of the world are insecure (and there is ample evidence to support this view), the exercise of the ballot will

not save it from the decline and fall that must inevitably follow.

These thoughts occur as we watch a United Nations organization failing to exert its moral authority; a neighbour (France) tossing up a succession of governments that are as ephemeral as the "principles" that lead to their birth; an England which has nationalized industries, but is still grappling for the conditions of economic justice, free from class bias, and for the participation of workers in the control of great public undertakings. Here, the Trades Union Congress has declared that "the claim to share in the control of industry rests primarily on the simple democratic right of workpeople to have a voice in the determination of their industrial destinies." But are there simple democratic rights that have any true source save in duties performed? And are there any destinies, industrial or political, but those that are sown by individual character?

The assumptions underlying both representative democracy and unrepresentative totalitarianism are being widely challenged—in indirect ways perhaps, but with increasing emphasis. A new inquiry is needed into the essential ideas on which our social organizations are founded, the conceptions of life inspiring them, and the forms assumed by these ideas. Meanwhile, we might do worse than remember Thucydides' description of the state of ancient Greece during the Peloponnesian war. In part, it is an apt portrayal of much of our vaunted civilization today:

The simplicity which is so large an element in a noble nature was laughed to scorn and disappeared. An attitude of perfidious antagonism everywhere prevailed; for there was no word binding enough, nor oath terrible enough to reconcile enemies. Each man was strong only in the conviction that nothing was secure; he must look to his own safety, and could not afford to trust others. Inferior intellects generally succeeded best. (III, 82, trans. Jowett).

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW

UNCLASSIFIABLE MAN

IF one were to attempt to use labels in describing the late Albert Jay Nock, he would probably end up, after some moments of frustration, by calling Mr. Nock a radical conservative and an equalitarian snob. For Mr. Nock was that rare sort of man that cannot be labelled at all. There are no full-length portraits of this occasionally crotchety but invariably stimulating and often delightful writer—unless, perhaps, his own *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man* can be counted as such. But whichever of Nock's books one picks up, the savor of an individuality rich in thought, culture and sagacity is present, giving assurance that here was a man who could not be duplicated or imitated by anyone.

The occasion for this reminder of Mr. Nock's virtues is a slender volume, *Journal of Forgotten Days: 1934-1935*, just issued by Henry Regnery (Hinsdale, Ill.). The book, while made up of casual daily commentary on big and little things—from the Ethiopian war to the making of "the best salad in the world"—is the fearless, and at times waspish, expression of personal opinion on a wide variety of subjects by a man equally at home in classical learning, history, and contemporary affairs. But he has something more to offer than an amiable and urbane account of his reflections from May, 1934 to October, 1935. Most of all, Mr. Nock is an original thinker in the field of political philosophy. Unlike some "liberals" with plenty of intelligence but little moral courage, he does not merely "concede" that there are definite values in what is sometimes called the "conservative" point of view; instead, he declares those values with shameless vigor. A September entry for 1934 observes: "I sometimes wonder—though knowing our public as I do, I should not—why so few people seem aware that the principle of absolutism was introduced into the Constitution by the income-tax amendment." This view is amplified, indirectly, in an earlier passage:

Probably not many realize how rapid centralization of government in America has fostered a kind of organized pauperism. The big industrial states contribute most of the Federal revenue, and the bureaucracy distributes it in the pauper states wherever it will do the most good in a political way. The same thing takes place within the states themselves. In fostering pauperism it also by necessary consequence fosters corruption; obviously it is impossible to have any but a corrupt government under these conditions, either in state or nation. All this is due to the iniquitous theory of taxation with which this country has been so thoroughly indoctrinated—that a man should be taxed according to his ability to pay, instead of according to the value of the privileges he obtains from the government.

So, besides being a Jeffersonian—he begins this book by saying, "A country that has no peasantry is essentially weak. . . . Hygiene and athletics do not produce a characterful. people"—Mr. Nock is also a Single Taxer, who wrote a book on the ideas of Henry George. He was once assistant editor of the *Nation*, and in the 1920's he edited one of the best, although short-lived, weeklies ever published—the *Freeman*, published in New York. While H. L. Mencken conducted the *American Mercury*, Nock contributed a department called "The State of the Nation." Among his works other than those already mentioned, we highly recommend *The Theory of Education in the United States*, his biographical *Jefferson*, and *Our Enemy, the State*.

There is no doubt about the fact that Nock was an aristocrat of the mind. His idea of education was that you bring together some teachers and scholars with important work to do, and then allow the students to approach them in a humble and eager spirit. If they want an education, they'll get it.

Mr. Nock is the best debunker of intellectual and political piety that we know of. In fact, he is most lucid when he is puncturing some fond delusion of reformers. Take the following entry, made late in 1934:

The Senate's investigation of the traffic in munitions has given publicity to a great deal of useful

knowledge, but I do not think it will affect the prospects of disarmament in the least. All the talk about disarmament is thoroughly dishonest, and has proved so, again and again. As long as you have nations, you will have armaments; and as long as you have nationalism, you will have nations; and you will have nationalism as long as the existing theory of the State predominates. Therefore any talk about disarmament, even if sincere, is superficial and puerile.

During the last few years of his life (he died three years ago), there was a sudden spurt of interest in Nock's writings, largely because he was one of the very few men in America who believed in both individualism *and* justice and knew how to state the case for both. The new audience developed for Nock's books during these years represented an awakening to the ominous realization that totalitarianism is a process which results wherever industrialism is combined with political apathy and centralized power, and is not just a pattern of tyranny established by wicked men who lust for world dominion. In 1946, the Caxton Printers, of Caldwell, Idaho, reprinted *Our Enemy, the State*—the book on which Nock was working in 1934 and 1935, when the journal now published by Regnery was kept. The *Journal of Forgotten Days* is pleasantly spiced with ideas that were going into the book on the State.

We hope that Mr. Nock's audience will grow, instead of becoming smaller, as the years go by. We should like to see his pessimistic estimate of himself as "a superfluous man" disproved by others who will learn from him and continue the sort of independent thinking he exemplified so well. Nock wrote without regard for any party line. He saw the seriousness of dealing in popular stereotypes, and the weakness of fearing them, and he set down his opinions with only the stamp of his own integrity for approval. Along this line, he wrote:

The bad thing about our having been so long swamped with propaganda is that no one can write about any public question now without being under suspicion of having an ax to grind; and it is therefore impossible to get a serious and disinterested

consideration for anything. Any one who mentions liberty for the next two years [Herbert Hoover had just published his *Challenge to Liberty*] will be supposed to be somehow beholden to the Republican Party, just as any one who mentioned it since 1917 was supposed to be a mouthpiece of the distillers and brewers.

Curiously, at one stage in his long career Mr. Nock was a clergyman, and while he disclaims any real competence in this field, his reflections on immortality, both in the *Journal* and in the *Memoirs*, will interest the non-theological reader. He was a college professor with a great love of books and learning, an admirer of Rabelais and a devotee of Artemus Ward.

It would be unfair to our readers, we suppose, to neglect to say that there is frequently an impatient and unfriendly edge in Mr. Nock's otherwise charming prose. It is as though an undercurrent of deep bitterness had blemished his life and seared his soul with a regrettable and often badly concealed contempt for the less competent of his fellow human beings. To have his approval would perhaps be pleasant, and yet, there were so few that he could approve that it would be a somewhat lonely state—with something of ungraciousness in it, too. Still, Albert Jay Nock had a generous mind, if not a generous heart; he was an unbuyable man and a fearless man, and he told the truth as well as he could—better than most.

COMMENTARY

REPORT TO SUBSCRIBERS

THE first year of MANAS has demonstrated that the general ideas behind this paper have sufficient value to gain and to hold the interest of a considerable number of people. The majority of MANAS readers are, of course, in the United States, but support coming from India, through the help of friends, has made India second only to the United States in number of subscriptions. MANAS readers found in other countries enable the editors to feel that the ideal of an international journal dealing with principled human thought and aspiration has already gained at least a symbolic realization.

There is no way of describing "typical" MANAS readers except by saying that they are all interested in what the paper represents. In other words, MANAS appeals to no special cultural or economic segment of the population. A frequent item in the mail is a letter from someone who wants the paper very much, but is unable to pay for it. Often, a special arrangement is possible for such readers, through the generosity of some other subscriber. MANAS is valued by some college professors and also by some people who never went further than the eighth grade.

Those who like MANAS well enough to subscribe to it, like it enthusiastically, and frequently write in their appreciation. Others have engaged to send in their comment more or less regularly. All this is of definite assistance to the editors in their conduct of the paper.

Consistent criticism is on two counts. Editorially, the point most often raised has to do with the idea of the soul. Readers with agnostic tendencies do not share with us the conviction that the idea of the soul is important to personal and public morality. Naturally, this question will have continued consideration in our columns. The second common criticism relates to the format of MANAS. Some readers dislike our style of continuing articles from one page to another. We

know of no way of remedying this defect—if it is a defect—short of changing the make-up of the paper entirely.

As to the future, while we are not now planning any new departures or changes, we have always in mind the desire to increase the usefulness of the paper, and will welcome all suggestions as to subjects for articles, subjects for a series like "Great Reformers" or for new departments.

We feel, today, as we felt a year ago, that the idea behind MANAS is a great idea. It is primarily the greatness of this idea which causes us to omit our names from the paper. We did not invent the MANAS idea, nor is it the property of any particular individual or set of personalities. It represents the heritage of independent thinking, across all human history, and if we can transmit something of the quality of that heritage, within our time, and to the future, we shall rest content.

Meanwhile, to our readers, friends and supporters goes our gratitude for helping us to transform, however imperfectly, a mutually held ideal into a contemporary fact.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

OUR discussion of the recent Supreme Court decision against released time for religious education in the schools continues to excite comment.

Three groups seem to be extremely concerned over our children's relation to religion. The first group includes those who may be called religious politicians, engaged in furthering the influence, prestige, and prosperity of their particular organizations, in a manner similar to that characteristic of lobbyists in Washington. The second group is composed of those who are neither self-seeking nor the official champions of a religious faction, but are simply men and women who feel that there is something nobler in human potentiality than technical achievement and the acquirement of wealth—those in whom religious ideas have managed to strike some deep answering chord. Both of these groups obviously wish to see children familiarized with the teachings of Christianity, although there seems to us to be a great moral difference between the two approaches.

The third group, somewhat incomprehensibly to members of the first and second, persists in a sort of independent faith that sectarian religion does more harm than it does good. Mrs. Vashti McCollum of Champaign, Illinois, was one of these, and other parents have tried, though less successfully than Mrs. McCollum, to further the view that American democracy is best served by forgetting the very existence of sectarian groups.

One of our correspondents, somewhat understandably, resents our flat assertion that all theologians should be kept out of school life, even out of baccalaureate sermons. He is particularly disturbed by a sentence which occurred in our last paragraph of Nov. 3: "Perhaps some day this high school will have a new kind of baccalaureate, in which only faculty members will participate, and with participation restricted to themes which bear

upon the extension of the principle of democracy." This suggestion is challenged in the following manner:

If no group of ministers could represent Christianity or Religion on the school program—how could a group of high school teachers represent democracy? If a community is to be so terribly broadminded, should not all the methods man has used to govern himself be presented? Which is ridiculous. Obviously, the community has an obligation to give its blessing to high school graduates in the terms it has found to be most rich and clear. It must take a stand. The classroom is for information, but there is more to teaching than just information.

Without the Christian basis, morals become little more than forensic material or personal creeds. A Christian view of man and God gives an ultimate basis—no other defense of moral conduct seems to be able to withstand the rigors of modern political and economic stress.

Of course, it is necessary for us to point out that we did not claim that high school teachers could accurately "represent democracy," although we did suggest that such men and women at baccalaureate gatherings could introduce themes which "bear upon the extension of the principle of democracy." What is the principle of democracy? As has been many times pointed out, democracy, in its ideal modern sense, does not mean simply "rule of the majority." It means recognition of the rights of any minority to existence, and a hearing unprejudiced by a showing of government favor to some other group—even if that minority be but a single person and one whose ideas and behavior offend our tastes. If we view a democracy in such a manner, and we contend that this is the most constructive manner in which it may be viewed, then it is certainly possible to develop many themes which "bear upon the extension of the principle of democracy." Children need to learn the potential danger of the Dies Committee, the Tenney Committee and the Loyalty Test. They need to understand that whenever a racial group possessing full citizenship is denied any of the rights of citizenship, we, at that moment, cease to have a complete democracy. If a Negro votes in

the South under threat of bodily harm, or if Japanese-American citizens are removed from their homes and properties because their ancestral land happens to be engaged in a war with the United States, we no longer can lay claim to unsullied democracy.

It seems to us, by the way, that one of the first things to be done about extending the principle of democracy is to adopt the position that the Christian faith may be in no sense unique as the basis for moral conduct in society. Our correspondent asserts that there is no adequate defense of moral conduct other than the "Christian view," and while we have no doubt that both he and many others find this the most natural basis for their own humanitarian concerns, it is still true that a majority of the people in the world are not Christians, and that many non-Christians feel they have an adequate basis for morality in other religious philosophies.

Until World War II, there seems to have been no historical instance in which a Buddhist priest endorsed any kind of warfare—and the instances, even in World War II, were inconsiderable in number, we believe. The Buddhists, apparently, had an adequate "basis for morality." This seems particularly significant, in view of the fact that non-violence appears to be the keynote of Christ's morality. Certainly, the Christian clergy have a much poorer historical record as far as preserving the purity of their teacher's ethical credo is concerned.

And then there is Gandhi, who embraced the Christian faith only in the sense that he embraced all others. Gandhi not only found for himself a sufficiently "ultimate" basis for moral conduct, but was able to inspire innumerable Hindus to become thoroughly moral men. And there is Nehru, who, so far as we know, is not in the habit of paying any attention whatsoever to theology. His political life has been one of consistent integrity, so remarkably so that even *Life* magazine belatedly labelled him as "one of the truly great statesmen of the world." Possibly the very best

sort of religious education our schools could undertake would be focussed upon the encouragement of sympathy for those of other races and religions whose moral conduct inspires by the example of spiritual greatness.

FRONTIERS Institutional Reform

PERIODICALLY, the United States is the scene of strenuous reform in some branch of public service. In 1945, for example, as the result of agitations begun by some employees in mental hospitals operated by the Veterans' Administration, a wave of adverse publicity regarding institutions for mental disease in general broke out in the newspaper and periodical press. A new, war-born organization, the National Mental Health Foundation, devoted to higher standards of treatment for the mentally ill, sponsored publication of a shocking volume, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*, by Frank L. Wright, Jr., exposing the common conditions in state hospitals for the insane. This book is based upon more than two thousand eyewitness reports. Meanwhile, magazine articles and other books revealing the suffering and degradation of the mentally ill in public institutions continue to be published, giving evidence that the impetus to reform is not yet exhausted, and that public interest has been aroused.

Always, at a time of such institutional exposés, the question arises: Who is responsible? The average citizen, who may be horrified by the revelations he reads, will hardly feel that *he* has anything to do with such abuses. It is always "they" who are responsible—either the "people in charge," or the legislatures that withhold needed appropriations, or the timeserving professionals or the "type of men" employed as hospital attendants. Given enough scandal and lurid headlines, some changes are generally accomplished, and the public obtains the impression that all is well. But after ten or twenty years, the whole process of reform has to be gone through, again.

Except for these periodic drives and clean-ups, it is usually assumed that conditions in mental hospitals, prisons and other public institutions have been getting better and better, year by year, as the result of the progress of science. In a

physical sense, this may be so, judging from accounts of the asylums and prisons of a century or more ago. Morally and psychologically, however, it may be questioned whether there has been any progress at all. We have at hand three articles dealing with the Federal prisons of the United States. They are written, not by sociologists or penologists, but by men who have served sentences themselves and are able to discuss the question from the viewpoint of an "insider." The first is by a Quaker, Paul Johnson, who is concerned with the chasm of "respectability" which separates "law-abiding" citizens from persons who have been sent to prison. Writing for the December Pacific Coast *Friends Bulletin*, Mr. Johnson reminds his readers that the

Friends [Quakers] invented the "penitentiary" in whose single, simple cells it was expected that the malefactor, alone with his conscience and his God, would meditate and improve himself. Now look for a moment at the present status of this idea in penal treatment. "Solitary" has become, in its 150 years of existence, a means of punishment and terror eventuating in a "strip cell," bare of any furniture, material for work or recreation, without even a handle on the completely automatic toilet. How many Friends have known about their "Frankenstein"—much less seen it ?

Modern penologists stress the idea of "rehabilitation" as the purpose of imprisonment. The actual experience to which society exposes a convicted man is quite different in effect:

From the time a man is indicted or arrested, he is subjected to a codified and organized disapproval, contempt and ostracism by society. This reaches him through usually ill-tempered, snarling attitudes of jailers and officials, inconvenienced by the necessity of doing the work for which they were employed, but held to account for only the literal carrying out of the rules. With the exception of an occasional official, warmer-hearted than most, a prisoner lives in an atmosphere of inhuman regulation and general contempt for personality. . . . Two general reactions can be noted: he may be broken by the experience, made so uncertain of himself as to become a permanently maimed personality; or he may be made a rebel, unable to comply with ordinary demands of

society, much less the compulsions and frustrations which society deals out to its unsuccessful and incompetent ones. The result is neither rehabilitation nor protection of society: Friends and others who think it is are fooling themselves. . . .

A report on the Federal prison at Danbury, Connecticut, was contributed in the form of a letter to the July-August (1948) number of *Alternative*, published in New York. The writer, David Dellinger, one of the editors of *Alternative*, describes personal experiences at Danbury:

. . . it is true that the Federal Prison system has reduced some of the physical abuses which have always characterized prison life. But the main result has been that psychological brutality has become an even greater menace than physical brutality. Thus, when a group of us went on strike against certain abuses, we were not beaten up. But each of us was put in solitary confinement. . . . Even our toothbrushes were taken away from us, and I used to ask the guard how they decided when a man's crime was great enough that his teeth should decay.

Finally we went on a hunger strike, to try to publicize this type of abuse and to try to push through some prison reform. At the time of this strike, my wife was nearing the end of a difficult pregnancy. The prison authorities knew this, and they also knew that she had been seriously ill in a previous pregnancy, which had ended in a miscarriage. For three weeks they kept all mail from me. Then the acting Warden came in to my cell and told me that my wife was dying. She had sent word that I must abandon the strike. Later the prison doctor came in and told me the same thing. It was not until many weeks later that I found out for sure that she had not been ill at all, and had been writing me encouraging letters all the while that they had claimed she had been beseeching me to abandon the strike. . . .

It is true that we had no bedbugs in our cells. It is true that most of us never had our heads bashed in. . . that the prison had a ball field, a gymnasium, a library, and a weekly movie. . . . But for those who are acquainted with the real situation, it's just as true now as it was 50 years ago, when Oscar Wilde wrote it, that "one is absolutely sickened, not by the crimes that the wicked had committed, but by the punishments that the good have inflicted." . . .

We have seen, during the past five or six years, scores of articles and studies of the prison

system, but none that deals with the problem so simply and effectively as a paragraph by William Hefner in the *Grapevine* for October, 1945. Mr. Hefner was for two years an inmate of the Federal Prison at Ashland, Kentucky. He writes:

I have noted many, many things wrong with the federal prison system. But there is one thing that stands out in my mind as being the primary evil. It is the evil inherent in an organization trying to follow a policy of nonviolence in its relations with inmates under its care, but which at the same time does not understand nor use nonviolent means which are compatible with the non-violent policy. As a result of this paradoxical situation, both administrators and officers of the prison find themselves resorting to half-truths, trickery, misrepresentation, outright lies, and in fact all possible forms of subterfuge in an effort to deal with the inmates without resorting to physical violence. An officer may not touch an inmate unless the inmate attacks the officer first. . . . There are incidents constantly occurring in prison which give both officers and inmates sufficient provocation to resort to the only way they know to give vent to their emotions, namely, physical violence, or at least verbal violence. Officers have been heard to remark to an inmate, "If I could, I would kill you"; or, "If I could, I would kick you." In place of a physical beating for infraction of the rules, the inmate is now given a star chamber trial and put in the "hole." The psychological violence involved in such trials, in the use of trickery and subterfuge, is not the method to implement the Bureau's policy of nonviolence. But neither the administration nor the officers are trained to use any other method. There are some officers who seem to have inherited the ability to use nonviolent methods, but they are few in number. . . .

Having quoted so much material, we have virtually no space left for comment. It seems necessary, however, to observe that this hypocrisy—a kind of occupational neurosis of administrators and guards—has its logical counterpart in the bland ignorance of the public of actual conditions in prisons, county jails (which are often filthy and vermin-infested, in contrast to the "sanitary" penitentiaries), and other public institutions such as mental hospitals. What sort of a society, then, do we live in? It is a society which consistently defrauds itself of moral integrity—

which somehow has learned to tolerate the delusion that a pleasant self-deception is more desirable than an ugly truth. This analysis, of course, calls into question the moral basis of Western culture. It demands something more than occasional "reforms" in response to journalistically-produced public indignation. But isn't it time to begin discovering what we really believe in, by studying our common social behavior, instead of declaring high symbols to be our faith? The prison system and our relation to it would be a good place to start.