

## AMERICAN TRAGEDY

WHILE the suspension of J. Robert Oppenheimer from the Atomic Energy Commission has created an ironic situation (the man who very possibly had the most to do with winning the war in the Pacific is now regarded as a bad "security risk"), more than irony is involved. This action by the Government compels reflection on the wider implications of what has happened to the eminent physicist. According to *Time*, Oppenheimer never made any secret of his previous associations with persons of communist sympathies. Most of the charges against him, *Time* reports, "have been reviewed by the AEC, the White House and the Departments of State, Justice and Defense over a period of twelve years." Apparently, what precipitated his suspension was the fact that he opposed the development of the Hydrogen Bomb. While in his reply to the Atomic Energy Commission, Dr. Oppenheimer did not reveal that his objections to the H-Bomb were moral in origin, it is said that he agreed with former AEC chairman Lilienthal that another attempt should be made to negotiate a world agreement for the control of atomic weapons before proceeding with the manufacture of even more deadly explosives. Actually, the charges against him contained in the AEC letter stated: "It was reported that . . . you strongly opposed the development of the hydrogen bomb (1) on moral grounds; (2) by claiming that it was not feasible; (3) by claiming that there were insufficient facilities and scientific personnel to carry on the development, and (4) that it was not politically desirable."

Whatever the mechanism which precipitated the suspension of the atomic scientist—concerning which there are differences of opinion—it seems very clear, first, that ever since the blasting of Japanese cities by the A-Bomb, Oppenheimer has been disturbed by the destructive power he had helped to make available to governments, and, second, that the present investigation results from his expression of doubts concerning the use of such weapons or the far more lethal H-Bomb. These are the facts which led to a revival of the charges against him, causing the Atomic Energy Commission to dispense with his services, at least temporarily.

Certain other matters need to be considered. Primary among them is the fact that the radical movement of Western history, which culminated in, and was betrayed by, modern communism, was for more than a century the magnet which attracted men with humanitarian motives. The revolutionaries who inherited the gains in political freedom won by the French Revolution, and who were determined to carry the struggle for justice into the economic realm, created a movement which promised to do more than just "talk" about the oppressions of the modern industrial system. The story of the origins of this movement is a thrilling one, and while, in our belated wisdom, we may not like or approve the methods chosen by the nineteenth-century revolutionaries, it is impossible to read the history of their activities without feeling that here were men devoted to high and ennobling purposes.

We have said before, and we say again, that to understand the terrible dilemma which has grown out of communism, it is necessary to grasp and appreciate the motives which animated the founders of the radical movement. It is for this reason that we so frequently refer to books such as Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station* as embodying in brief compass the perspectives which lead to understanding how the radicals felt and why they said and did what they did. In a sense, the radicals shared with the rest of Western civilization the conceptions of human happiness and human good which, directly or indirectly, came out of the threefold influences of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Industrial Revolution—the belief that material prosperity is the thing to strive for, that scientific progress contains the keys to the Good Life. There was no essential difference between radicals and capitalists on these points. The difference lay in opinions as to how material prosperity ought to be shared, and whom, in principle, the proceeds of scientific progress should benefit.

We are not here debating the relative merits of Capitalism and Socialism. This, we think, is a fruitless argument and beside the point for this discussion. What we are trying to get at is the fact that the radical movement was the natural destination of all men who

accepted the general values of the capitalist economic order yet found unbearable the poverty, suffering, and exploitation suffered by a large proportion of the population in industrialized countries. There are many books detailing the conditions in English factories, mills, and mines during the early part of the nineteenth century—conditions to which both Marx and Engels gave much attention. For a picture of class war on the American scene, Louis Adamic's *Dynamite* and Irving Stone's *A Stranger in the House* (a popular life of Eugene Debs) are unprejudiced accounts.

Only within the past twenty years has it been possible for the judgment of history to be passed on the radical movement in its communist phase. Not until Soviet Russia began to show unmistakable signs of having developed into a tyranny as autocratic as the Czar's, ruled by ruthless party leaders who regarded the terrorist techniques of underground political activity as legitimate methods of government, could the radically inclined observer be expected to realize that something had gone wrong with the Revolution. Meanwhile, all the humanitarian slogans had been preempted by the Communists. During the post-depression 'thirties, communists led great strikes in the United States. (The psychology of these struggles is well conveyed by John Steinbeck's *In Dubious Battle*.) Communists were at least ostensibly active in behalf of the underprivileged in every part of the world, winning sympathizers among those who felt that "something must be done." A tremendous momentum for the communist movement was gained by these means. Then came the war with the Nazis, in which, as an "Ally," Russia attained a brief interlude of political respectability in the West by carrying on a valiant struggle against Hitler Germany. Only the anti-Stalin radicals in Western countries continued to point out the meaning of the Moscow Trials, refusing to join the chorus of those who were discovering extraordinary virtues in the Soviet Totalitarian State. And the anti-Stalin radicals became as unpopular as conscientious objectors during the war—because of their uncompromising criticism of the Soviets.

The American Tragedy is this, that today, a man who was once attracted by the ideals of the revolutionary movement—ideals which have been honored by all thoughtful and ethically inclined men for centuries—and who is sufficiently serious about this interest to give some attention to the people who

profess those ideals, may be automatically suspect as a potential traitor to his country, regardless of what he may have done since. Further, if he admits to the feeling that the use of atomic weapons may possibly have been wrong—after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Oppenheimer said, "I wish I knew whether we have done the worst or the best thing that men have ever accomplished"—he is judged to be one who may possibly be harboring secret sympathies for the communist cause.

None of the investigators or those who provoke investigations in respect to loyalty ever admit publicly that an interest in communism in the past may quite possibly be evidence that the individual in question is a man of natural social inclinations and concern for human betterment. This is not to suggest that a past which includes communist or radical interests is a badge of honor, but that at least curiosity about communism and the representations made for it was once as natural in a man of humanitarian inclinations as attending a church for a time "to see what they say and what it may be worth"—would be for a man who wants to choose the best religious faith he can find.

The problem is complicated, of course, by the rejection by the communists of conventional Western morality. A convinced communist cares little or nothing for traditional Western notions of integrity, either in politics or in other relationships. The prime objective of the communists is the attainment of political power, and any means to power is justified on the ground that the power, once reached, will enable those who possess it to remake the social system for the good of all. Hence, a man accused of being a communist is in the unenviable position of behaving like a communist if he denies that he is one. This is a serious situation for those who are accused, but even more serious for the society which believes that it is threatened by communist conspiracy. There is no way out of this dilemma, it seems to us, short of considering the communists and their views as representing some kind of failure by Western society itself, instead of simply hunting them as though they were germs of infectious disease. It is only by comprehending the causes which have led so many men, originally idealistic in many cases, to abandon their natural love of truth-telling and become conspirators versed in methods of deceit and political expediency, that the problems of communism can be solved.

Not only the eminent in public service, like Dr. Oppenheimer, are endangered by the hunt for communists and communist sympathizers. Within a week or two we met a young American Negro who had just been suspended from his government job because, for a short time after he got out of the Navy, he was a member of the Communist Party. He explained that he saw service in China during the war, and that he joined the Party under the influence of the hunger and tragedy he found in the streets of Chinese cities—little children sleeping huddled in doorways, beggars everywhere, hunger the common fate of nearly everyone. For this man, the joining of the Communist Party was a generous, trusting impulse. We may say he was foolish, naive, but we must add that, in his experience, no other group penetrated to his consciousness with even a pretense of wanting to right such wrongs throughout the world. He remained in the Party only a few months, then withdrew disillusioned. But now he is being punished for that generous impulse by suspension from work and quite possibly the loss of his job. An additional note of interest is that this man turned over to the agency which investigated him a number of years ago much of the information which is now being used against him. He held back nothing, being convinced that he had made a mistake. He was twice cleared by a loyalty board and permitted to advance himself in the work that he was doing, yet now, six or seven years later, he has been suspended on exactly the same charges as brought against him previously. He is a man with four children, has just bought a new home, and has little experience in anything except the type of government work for which he trained himself. What is he, and the hundreds, perhaps thousands, like him to do?

Hungry, sickly, and dying children in China led this young Negro to a brief interlude in the Communist Party. Oppenheimer has explained that in 1936, he felt "a continuing, smoldering fury about the treatment of the Jews in Germany . . . I had relatives there. . . ." Further:

"I saw what The Depression was doing to my students. Often they could get no jobs. . . I began to sense the larger sorrows of the Great Depression. I began to understand how deeply political and economic events could affect men's lives."

Eventually, as was the case with many other thoughtful men, Oppenheimer began to feel that some

of the "declared objectives" of the Communist Party were desirable, but he never "accepted Communist dogma or theory; in fact," he said, "it never made sense to me."

Thus Oppenheimer's offense is not in supporting the Communist ideology or program for a revolutionary seizure of power, but in being attracted by the humanitarian element in the claims of the communists; and now, in wondering whether, after all, an H-Bomb is an appropriate weapon for the people of one nation to use against the people of another.

Such stupidity will not make communists out of the men who are mistreated; these men are far too intelligent for that. But policies which place a high premium on unimaginative conformity, which bar from public service all men whose eagerness for social action led them, at one time in their lives, to investigate the potentialities for good of the radical movement—such policies can easily eliminate from government service all those who have the slightest inclination to practice for the good of others and the good of the world the democratic freedoms Americans are supposed to possess.

Do we really want a government composed of men to whom it would never occur to question the use of an atom bomb or an H-bomb on moral grounds? Do we want officials and workers who never succumb to a generous impulse, who never wonder about the hunger and poverty in the world, and what may be done about it? Questions of this sort may be finally decided in the next few years.

## *Letter from* **ENGLAND**

LONDON.—There are just now in London two visitors from abroad who, while sharing broadly like aims, differ radically both in the quality of their activities and the impact made by them upon the public. The first to focus public attention upon himself was Dr. Billy Graham, whose honorary doctorate of an institution styled Bob Jones University has a somewhat comic sound in English ears. The Press has been very kind to Dr. Graham whose meetings in the north London Harrangay Arena have been excellently stage-managed and attended by many thousands of Londoners.

So much, for the moment, of this upstanding young American evangelist. The other figure arrived a day or two ago. He, also, has a religious background, being a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, the Abbé Henri Groues, now known throughout the English-speaking world as the Abbé Pierre. He arrived with neither ballyhoo nor highly-organized *réclame*. The tremendous divergence of method and aim of these two men of religion has considerable interest to those who feel that the modern world can do with an infusion of religious—or should one write, "spiritual"?—leadership.

The Abbé Pierre, a sort of modern St. Vincent de Paul, has achieved in France what the vast religious organization to which he belongs has completely failed to do: he has awakened the French conscience to the degradation and neglect of a considerable section of that country's submerged inhabitants. About the man and his methods—and he has, indeed, the gentle smile of a true saint—there is something tremendously impressive, for his appeal is directly to the heart, and in the name of the first of all virtues, Charity. Alone, through the instrumentality of the radio and the pulpit, he has raised for the homeless nearly half a million pounds. The son of wealthy parents, the Abbé has embraced poverty to live on the same level as those for whom he labours. His religion takes the practical form of finding food, shelter and comfort for the homeless and down and out. There is no emotionalism about it. Even so, he has evoked emotion, caused fat purses to open, and the French ministry concerned with housing to become active as never before. In London the Abbé Pierre speaks on the subject of world government. He will hold no revivalist meetings, nor will he have press conferences to clarify the financial set-up of his organization.

In contrast, we have the evangelist Billy Graham, and it is not without profit to contrast these two exponents of Christianity. While it is true that Billy Graham will make personal contact with far larger numbers of people than the Abbé Pierre, and will, too, be heard of by larger numbers, making a bigger stir in the popular press, one may ask whether in the final analysis his "circus" will result in any permanent results, for either good or evil. There is something febrile about the spectacle of a rather too well-dressed young man, with a film-star-style wife, who seldom in utterance gets away from the preoccupation with sin and personal salvation. The truth is that here his appeal has been to the simple-minded and humble type of folk for whom the Bible is a book written by an anthropomorphic God from "cover to cover." England has more than six hundred religious sects, many offshoots of the Wesley movement, some with American affiliations. It is such folk as these that flock to hear the young American. In six months, one may venture to prophesy, the effect of his mission will mean just nothing. But with the Abbé Pierre it is certain that it will be otherwise, for here is a purity of spirit and a holiness that are not to be denied.

Finally, one cannot help wondering how it comes about that the great religious establishments achieve so little, while single, consecrated individuals achieve so much. Is it that institutionalism kills the spirit? In England, where the State Church is little more than a moribund social institution, barred in its priesthood to all but "gentlemen," the parson cuts but little ice, in city, town or countryside. In the months and years ahead it will be well worth while to follow the careers of these two so strangely contrasted men of religion—the slick, debonair Billy Graham, in his fine clothes and flashy ties, his entourage of boosters and his pretty wife, and the sombre figure of the French priest in his soutane and great peasant boots and unrolled umbrella. I know which figure stands for your correspondent closest to the ideal of a Good Man. And that may be said without any intention of casting a slur upon the American revivalist. Evangelists who proclaim their belief in the legend of Eden disarm their critics, to whom they may have even something of the charm of a child.

ENGLISH CORRESPONDENT

## *REVIEW* NOTED IN PASSING

THE JUGGLER OF OUR LADY, line-drawing rendering of a medieval legend, "a sort of Christmas story" by R. O. Blechman: The point of this delightful and amusing sequence of sketches (at least to us) is that a great deal of art can be created with practically no drawing talent at all. All Blechman needed, apparently, was an idea, a whimsical mood—and a profound sympathy for "Cantalbert," who juggled and juggled and juggled in a hopeless effort to interest and delight a bored populace. No one tried harder than Cantalbert to make good—and no one failed more consistently. But he *was* a good juggler, even if no one was interested, and his hour finally came. (The story also has itself a religious miracle about here, and we may say that we find Blechman's miracles fairly easy to take.)

Both the text and the drawings of this little volume are extra good for one's children to see. Not only can both young and adult appreciate it together—but a child might, by seeing how much can be done with absurdly simple technique, develop some creative initiative.

*Depends What You Mean by Love*—three novelettes by Nicholas Monsarrat: If anyone can make Anglophiles out of 100 per cent Americans, Monsarrat is the writer for the job. As in *The Cruel Sea*, we find vibrant, realistic portrayal of the best qualities encouraged by British traditions. It is not, these days, in good taste to imagine—especially in writing—that there can possibly be such a thing as an "English national character," but in our opinion a case can still be made for the antiquated theory. Along with his oft-criticized arrogance, the Britisher is also world-renowned for poise, and for the kind of pride we call integrity. These qualities shone with considerable lustre during the various "battles for Britain" of World War II, and the occasion for these remarks is the thought that few other nations would have met the challenge with the same degree of

consistency and morale, the same nonchalant "I am afloat until you sink me" attitude.

Monsarrat discusses three kinds of love—distinctions which cause some interesting philosophical overtones to emerge. The Signet editor has this to say:

These are short novels about three men who had a chance to die for love—and took it. But love meant one thing to the skipper of a doughty little ship, another thing to the officer and his brave young wife and something else again to the Big City cast-off who became a hero. In each of these three superb short novels, written with rare sensitivity and unerring perception, Nicholas Monsarrat, author of *The Cruel Sea*, tells of men and women and the war that teaches them love's different aspects.

For dyed-in-the-wool, anti-war men like ourselves it is beneficial—even necessary—to ponder the extent to which a war situation may bring out some of the nobler qualities in people. There can be little doubt of this, however tragic it is that peacetime society cannot supply the same challenges, and however important it is for us to learn to do without wars for the very reason that, in the long run, wars make all peacetime societies worse.

In the second of the three stories, *Leave Cancelled*, two lovers reflect upon the tremendous changes the war years will have made in everyone's lives. There are some people, Monsarrat says, who do their best and are at their best in war, and who in some mysterious way are brought by war "to full flower." As one of the lovers remembers their conversation:

—"To full flower," you repeated. "Darling, that's true of some men, isn't it? Not just the natural adventurers, but lots of ordinary people too. Particularly the ones that had rotten jobs, or no jobs at all, in peace-time."

I nodded. "That's the hell of it. Millions of young men—kids, most of them—are getting their first taste of real living in this war: before it happened they were either in a job they loathed, or else propping up a street corner in some dirty derelict mining town in South Wales. It's pretty poor advertisement for the twentieth century, but its true;

and how they'll feel when it's all over, and they have to go back to the old life, I don't really know."

"That's going to be true for everyone."

"To a certain extent. It depends what you were doing before the war. These kids—war has given them, for the first time, a bit of colour and movement and lots of new friends. The change has been a god-send to them."

Then there is the other side of the coin, presenting the danger of a militarily inclined society when war is over—perhaps an inevitability. Fortunately, Monsarrat's prediction has not come true for Great Britain itself, perhaps because of British "poise," among political and social leaders, but the following advice is good to keep in mind, even if McCarthy is currently fighting part of the army instead of being elected President by it. Monsarrat has a character say: "The change back [from a war-society] will be extraordinarily tricky. It might be very dangerous, if all there is to offer them is a duplicate of their pre-war misery. That kind of discontent is the perfect breeding-ground for Fascism. . . . Oh, it'll have another name. But it will be the same dreary brand of politics—regimentation, toe the line or lose your job, join the party or else, stick your head out and we'll split it open for you, no individuals need apply."

MANAS readers may remember having read in these pages, or in the original essay, certain passages from William James' *A Moral Equivalent of War*. James took note of the sort of facts mentioned by Monsarrat and proposed forms of national service involving similar discipline, danger, and opportunity for all-out physical and psychic effort. While we may look askance, these days, at too much "national planning," James' essay should nevertheless be read from time to time, and especially by those with pacifist sentiments.

Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny* has finally made its way into a soft-cover, newsstand edition—though priced at the revolutionary sum of 95 cents. We would have welcomed this

deluxe edition for Jones' *From Here to Eternity*, but, despite the *Caine's* Pulitzer prize, this book seems to us literally to "go nowhere." Wouk does reveal, as many have claimed, an impressive talent for writing, but this only makes us wonder if the author really liked his own flag-waving ending.

## *COMMENTARY*

### **QUERY ABOUT ALONZO**

A SUBSCRIBER writes to ask if the article—or "story"—appearing in MANAS for Feb. 24, "The Green in Death Valley," was based upon an actual experiment, or was merely a "fantasy." He would like to know, further, whether the writer is one who has had any extensive personal contact with the general population of our prisons.

First of all, the "Alonzo" stories—there have been two, so far, in MANAS for May 13, 1953, and in the issue mentioned above are wholly fictitious. Second, the contributor who wrote them has not had any extensive contact with prison populations.

We should like to suggest, however, that if a man like Alonzo were possible, the response he gained from the convicts placed in his charge is also a possibility. And while we are able to see the point of this reader's query—a reader who has himself had some personal experience with prisons and prisoners—it seems fair to point out that if any "rehabilitation" of men who have broken the law is to take place, it will not, as John Bartlow Martin observes (see *Frontiers*), take place in prison. "Prison is a place to keep people locked up. It can never be more. . . ."

Perhaps the change in the spirit of these men described in our story is as fanciful as the transformation worked in Death Valley. We can not be sure about such things. But we invite the attention of skeptics to read the account of the men in the Mexican prison in Baja California (see "Children . . . and Ourselves," MANAS, April 14). There, at any rate, something like what Alonzo attempted has already been achieved—no guards, self-government, and for the prisoners, almost as much freedom as the people of the near-by community. Punishment—no; but protection of society—yes. This Mexican prison is practically a contribution to society!

For other testimony on the amazing potentialities of men in prison, we draw on a recent press report from Phoenix, Arizona; where the 400 inmates of the State Prison have offered to make up the difference between what the State of Arizona is willing to pay as the Warden's salary and what the Warden has asked. (*Los Angeles Times*, April 15.) Warden Ted Mullen's salary is presently \$4800 a year. He appealed for an increase to \$7200—not an unreasonable request—but the Arizona State Legislature failed to comply. Then, when Mullen declared his intention of quitting, the convicts got together and proposed that they contribute the \$2400 that was lacking! They, at least, think Mullen is worth the money and want to keep him as Warden of Arizona State Prison.

So, despite the drearily discouraging realities of most prison experience, we cherish the conviction that exceptional things may happen when exceptional circumstances are provided. Alonzo is an imaginary pioneer in this direction, and, therefore, a somewhat exceptional man.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

WE have two responses to "Fratricide Among Educators." The first, by means of an apparently unimportant side entrance (punctuation), brings up for discussion the "arts of expression":

Concerning "Fratricide Among Educators"  
(MANAS, April 21)

Of *course* there is "little relationship between proficiency in punctuation and the thrill which the philosophically inclined gain from self-discovery." But when anyone, even one "philosophically inclined," wishes the additional thrill of telling *others* of his discovery, then there is a definite relationship: the relationship between content and form; between writer and reader.

Indeed, punctuation at its best *is* the symbol of relationship—is to writing what mathematical symbols are to computation. Punctuation marks tell a reader whether to add, subtract, divide, multiply—or invert; and not to be told these things gives a reader the same feeling of frustration that a math student feels in arriving at an incorrect answer because of wrong manipulation of the "parts" involved. It forces the reader to assume a trial-and-error approach: each sentence becomes a *new* problem, instead of merely another application of tried and tested principles.

Oh well, you have your hobbyhorse, and I have mine. Yet despite my insistence on riding *my* hobbyhorse, I'm the first to admit that it doesn't even begin to compare with yours!

While far from agreeing that the way a thing is said is more important than the idea itself, there is no doubt but that the man who respects an idea can best show that respect by choosing an appropriate form—including clarifying punctuation—for its communication. One need not be a stylist, nor even especially style-conscious, to appreciate that there is an æsthetic element involved in the adequate transmission of every idea. If our æsthetic sense is inadequate, so, inevitably, will the transit of our idea be less fortunate than it might be. It is at this point that familiarity with great literature becomes important, and if, as we are forced to suspect, our busy educator-psychologists rather typically

neglect the great literature of the past, we must give the "traditionalists" another credit in the argument.

But here, again, the best of teachers can do little with children of parents who are television-watchers instead of readers. Good taste in reading and clarity in writing have to be encouraged outside the classroom as well as within, and especially by everyday example and conversation.

Our second response, which follows, is a criticism of Albert Lynd's *Quackery in the Public Schools*, by one with a special right to deprecate Mr. Lynd's negativism in respect to "educationists," since she presently serves in one of those many over-crowded school districts in which administrators and teachers do the most and best they can with limited personnel and inadequate buildings:

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Editor, "Children. . . and Ourselves": It has taken me a long time to read *Quackery in the Public Schools*, by Albert Lynd, because it was necessary to take time out frequently to regain an objective point of view. This was not easy. I have worked in the schools for a long time, and am one of Those People—an "Educationist." I took many undergraduate education courses, had practice teaching at the University Elementary School, U.C.L.A., and since then have added courses in Educational Administration, and Supervision. Yes, I took the courses for "credit." Yes, some of them were of little value; but many others were of great value. Of course there have been a good many English, Botany, German, History, and other courses which were useless, too. . . .

Because Mr. Lynd reverts so many times, in so many ways, to the same contentions—that professors of education are up to no good—and from the fact that his vocabulary contains words and phrases bordering on invective, we feel that

Mr. Lynd just doesn't like professors of education. There may be many reasons for this, and some good ones. However this strikes an unfortunate keynote for a book purporting to help parents find out what is wrong with our schools.

Incidentally, the professors of education are perhaps surprised to find their influence upon education as great as Mr. Lynd says it is. Most of us who work with teachers find the old adage about leading a horse to water is quite true. The amount of philosophy, method, and technique that is carried by the average teacher from the university classroom to her own class room in a public school is so very little that sometimes administrators are inclined to wonder if teachers had any education courses at all. Teachers are individuals. They have their own very personal, individual philosophies, which they may never express in words, but which they do express in action, in relation to children. "Education courses" to the contrary notwithstanding, all teachers are not necessarily practicing the theories of the "Educationists."

Dewey's Pragmatism and Kilpatrick's educational version of it are only a fraction of the kinds of educational philosophies expressed and applied by professors, teachers, educators in general. Dewey opened a door, and led many into a wider world of understanding about learning, and what it means; but every sincere educator indulges in considerable original and creative thinking—teachers do, too—and perceives the learning process according to his own lights.

Quack, according to the dictionary, means a boastful pretender. Whatever else educationists may be, they really cannot be accused of being pretenders. They may be mistaken, shortsighted, too idealistic, impractical, and such, but with only some extremely rare exceptions, they are the most sincere group of people we are liable to find anywhere. Educators do not always agree with one another, no more than scientists agree. We find men in each of the scientific fields who admit that they do not have all the answers. As a

science, Education has a much more difficult role to play in terms of human thinking, because it is a science concerned with intangibles, and depends as much upon philosophy as it does objective facts, for its foundation. It is no wonder, then, that educators do not agree. But this is healthy, and a sign of continued growth in understanding children. Educators criticize one another. They also willingly consider the criticism and suggestions of lay groups and individuals. But Mr. Lynd is not giving constructive criticism. He implies in generalities: (1) All schools have Progressive Education, (2) Progressive Education is bad, (3) Parents (all of them) do not like Progressive Education, (4) Professors of education teach Progressive Education, (5) Professors of education (Educationists) are making a racket out of Progressive Education. Mr. Lynd offers a few isolated instances of poor grammar and language usage, of poor practice. His investigations involved at the most a little more than one hundred people on a single interurban train. He based his conclusions on their personal opinions. Is this scientific? It is easy to have an opinion about anything. It is easy to become irate in avowing that opinion. Many people do that about our schools. Educationists, Educators, Administrators, Supervisors, Teachers, and Professors all of them wish that the critics would really get to know the schools whereof they speak. Here are some quotations from Lynd:

*Page 245*—"But most parents whom I know are under the impression that they are sending children to school to learn reading, writing, arithmetic, algebra, literature, history, French, and other ingredients of traditional education."

*Page 247*—"It is the assumption of most parents known to me that they are sending children to school to learn this despised 'subject matter' primarily, not as a by-product of a program which depends upon the 'purposes and wishes' of children."

*Page 248*—"Nobody but a simpleton, whatever his opinions might be about any theory

of education, would consider 'textbook facts' as important objectives in themselves. Everybody, of every educational persuasion, is agreed that 'character building' and 'how to think' and the rest of those virtuous aims are of first importance in any educational scheme, though many believe that facts which may be learned from textbooks are valuable aids to those ends."

That's what the man said, Parents; that's what he said.

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We take issue with a few of the foregoing statements, not to defend Mr. Lynd, but because the defense of logic always seems to be in the best interests of education—and a good protection against "factionalism." First of all, Lynd's title, *Quackery in the Public Schools*, is meant to suggest that much of new education propaganda is both pretentious and factional—too many slogans. Pretentiousness, by the way, may be unwittingly encouraged by those who are not themselves mere "boastful pretenders."

Lynd's argument is not so much against people as against what he regards as undisciplined thinking, and even the sleighride on which he attempts to take Professor Kilpatrick is principally designed to blow away Prof. K's sometimes confused and often excessive verbosity. Next, Mr. Lynd neither says that "all schools have Progressive Education" nor "that Progressive Education is bad." He *does* express a preference for traditional methods of learning in the classroom, and claims that parents who share his preference should give coherent expression to their views, rather than leave choice of curriculum content exclusively up to the teachers' colleges.

Regarding the last paragraphs quoted from Mr. Lynd, it does not seem permissible to assume that the "subject matter" sponsored by traditional education is the equivalent of "textbook facts." Mr. Lynd clearly believes that a grasp of the *principles* of mathematics and language is a necessary ingredient of instruction, and that

traditional subject-matter includes disciplined instruction in those principles. "Textbook facts" are not the crux of the matter, which is rather intellectual discipline itself. It is true that Lynd did not develop this point with any great clarity, as was noted by Spencer Brown in his recent *Commentary* article, "Hot War Over the Schools," but neither are we entitled to over-simplify Lynd's thesis because he failed to give it adequate development.

All in all, Lynd's great weakness seems to us to be in his errors of omission, rather than in sins of commission. Teachers and other "educationists" could learn a great deal from *Quackery in the Public Schools*, yet we agree with critics who point out that parents and citizens at large are apt to become incensed factionalists after reading the book. Those of us who disagree with the one-sided Lynd version need to avoid the same trap in arguments with him!

## *FRONTIER* "The Enemy of Society"

WHEN Robert Mitchum, film star, was serving a jail sentence at one of California's "honor farms" for being convicted of having marijuana in his possession, some reporters asked him how he "liked" it. Mitchum replied laconically, "It's an experience every tax-payer should have."

We have just finished reading John Bartlow Martin's article, "Prison: The Enemy of Society," in the April *Harper's*, and we think Mitchum is right—it is an experience every citizen should have. For unless more American citizens come to recognize the folly and futility of present methods of dealing with offenders against the law, it seems likely that very little will be done to abolish the prison system as it now exists. And in our observation, the best way to become aware of what is wrong with the prison system is to work in a prison or be a prisoner.

The greatest difficulty to be overcome, perhaps, is the calm indifference of the great majority of people toward those who "get into trouble." It is assumed that some dark blot exists in the character of those who are accused or convicted of a crime. We accept the stereotype which "society," that impersonal entity, gives to the man or woman who runs afoul of the law. This is not to suggest that there are no people who because of their apparently incurable or uncontrollable tendencies to violence ought to be maintained in custody for protection of the community. There are such people, and until we can find a better way of dealing with them, we probably should use our prisons for this purpose; but admitting, meanwhile, that it is a poor solution at best. We need to admit, also, that we don't know very much about why people break laws or become criminals. It seems likely, from what the sociologists think, that "of all the many factors involved, the one of greatest importance is the subtle emotional relationship among members of the family—the relationship that shapes the personality of the child." Here, then, is a question of parental and community responsibility and, more largely, *cultural* responsibility, in which we all have a share.

We probably should say to ourselves, first of all, that we have no business in attempting to *punish* such people, for the reason that we really don't know how

much, if at all, they are to blame. This is important, since the habit of regarding people in prison as "guilty" or "bad" enables us to ignore their situation, to say to ourselves, "Well, prisons may not be very nice places, but after all, look at the sort of people who go to them!"

Martin cannot be accused of being sentimental about prisoners. He doesn't attempt to explain or excuse them, but he writes about prisons as a social problem. His recommendations involve little more than common sense, beginning with the idea that prisons should be used only for offenders who constitute a genuine threat to society while they are at large. He points out:

Now if we are only going to use prisons for dangerous persons, obviously a great many people now incarcerated in them can be let out—half of them, say. Some of these could be safely paroled—more than are now being paroled—provided politicians kept their hands off parole and legislatures provided money to hire enough parole officers so their case loads would not be unmanageable, as they are now. Many convicts could be paroled to the armed forces. Studies made by Joseph D. Lohman, former chairman of the Illinois parole board, indicate that the armed forces, need not, as they do, virtually exclude felons from service. Those convicts who can not be safely paroled but yet do not need maximum security should be put out on farms or in prison camps similar to Civilian Conservation Corps camps. Getting half the inmates out of our prisons would automatically solve the prison's problem of overcrowding and thus would reduce the ruinous pressures of prison immeasurably.

Is it really important to reduce the prison population? If you read Mr. Martin's article you will agree that it is. At the time of the riot at Jackson Prison in Michigan, more than a hundred prisoners could not find space in cells and had to sleep in cots along the halls. "San Quentin has two men in nearly every cell." All human beings, even convicts, have a right to a little living room, a little privacy. Society may have the right to "punish" a man, although we doubt it; and society may be privileged to attempt to reform him; but society has no right to degrade a human being while claiming either to punish or reform him. Even punishment, to be effective, must have its dignity. Conditions which strip men of their dignity as human beings are vicious conditions and the

community which imposes them is a vicious community, even when it does so in ignorance or indifference.

But simply from a practical point of view, we ought to change our prison system or abolish it altogether. As Martin says:

Rehabilitation in prison today is a pie-in-the-sky idea. We have arrived at the point in penological history where we appear to believe that if we provide the physical equipment, one day rehabilitation will descend upon the inmate, like manna. And it is not only the wardens and penologists who believe this; it is the inmates as well. Nothing could be more pathetic than the sight of a mangled kid from the slums hopefully, almost prayerfully, toiling in the garment factory, clinging to the dream that one day he will awake rehabilitated. . . . Prison is a place to keep people locked up. It can never be more. . . .

In any prison there is a hard core of professional criminals. The best definition of the professional criminal is this: he is the man who says of himself, "I am a criminal." . . . Such men are proficient at criminal trades as other men are proficient at medicine or tool-making. Further, they establish the code of criminal society. In prison they are the men who give instruction to neophytes. These professional criminals are the real custodians of prison culture, and, as Richard McCleery has said, they "exercise more control over the attitudes of the group than a dozen rehabilitation programs." . . . .

We have improved food and buildings and other appurtenances considerably since 1859 when the inmate was considered "just an animal in a pen" but we are not improving prisoners any more than we were then. And now we have reached the lowest point of all, bedazzled by the myth of rehabilitation, we are manufacturing habitual criminals in our prisons—and then turning 95 per cent of them loose.

Isn't it about time to try some new method of dealing with wrongdoers? Prison is not just the enemy of the prisoners. It is the enemy of society.

If prisons did some good, there might be an argument in their behalf. But they do no good. They represent only confessions of our common ignorance, our inability to meet the problems of our time. Mr. Martin's hard-hitting analysis accepts this situation—what else can he do?—and says:

Some day we may be able to devise programs to rehabilitate criminals. That day will come when we

know what has made them criminal in the first place. We don't know now. And when we find out, the place to put our knowledge to work will not be in a prison.

But the project of interesting the public in prisons and prisoners is the most difficult of all to carry out. In many ways, it is like the project of interesting the public in genuine peace. You cannot be "realistic" about the means to peace without seeming to endanger, if only by discussion, a "national interest." And you cannot talk about better ways to deal with crime without proposing to spend some of the tax-payers' money. Further, a conscientious warden may know that if he could employ his charges in some field of manufacturing, he might be able to create a feeling of enthusiasm for good work well done that would do more to help the men in prison than anything else but he also knows that private industry will never allow "institutional" competition, so the warden does not even propose such a program.

It will cost society something to abolish the prison system, or to work in that direction. What needs to be realized is that it will cost society much more, in the long run, not to abolish it. That is why a few months in jail or prison is an experience every tax-payer should have. Prison reform or abolition requires activity and agitation by people who really care about what happens to men in prison, and what happens to society as a result.