

## BOTTLED AND OTHER IMMUNITIES

NICCOLO TUCCI'S biting critique of modern culture in the *Paris Review*, amounting to a left-handed defense of drinking—"the problem is no longer how much alcohol, but how much soberness we stand,"—and—

The error of most cures: they readjust the drunk to a world that the doctor himself would not dare to discuss, let alone criticize. He forgets that the patient's refusal to live soberly is the last sign of health—

goes to the heart of many complex psychological problems. The man untempted by hard liquor, yet immune, also, to the revulsions which make some others throw away their lives in an alcoholic haze, has really no occasion for self-righteousness. The liquor is bad, but what about the blindness of the man who thinks the world is just dandy and the prospects promising? The drunk can maybe stop drinking, but seeing through the phyness of the exterior face of "civilization" may be far more difficult. Again, as Tucci says:

It is silly to say: "Don't drink, the world is beautiful, life is worth living." The world is horrible and life is not worth living.

It is possible, of course, for a man to say to himself that life is worth living, even if the world is horrible, but to do this he needs a maturity that is not too widely distributed. He needs, that is, to go through a kind of Tolstoyan regeneration—to see and recognize the worst for what it is, and still be willing to keep on striving for the best.

Our point, at the moment, is the extreme difficulty, if not the impossibility, of moral judgments in matters of this sort. The same sort of problem arose in Raoul de Roussy de Sales' wartime analysis of the fall of France to the Nazis. The French were defeated, he said, because they had no enthusiasm for war. They hated war. They could not believe in it. Other things, perhaps, were wrong with them, but his point, that they had become too

civilized for the all-out effort in destruction which the war called for, certainly had much truth in it.

So what do you say about the French—that they were "decadent" because they were poor at war?

The question is much wider than this. In a modern war, victory will belong to the most deliberately barbarous people; or, at least, the winning nation must be capable of the incredible barbarism of condemning to death large sections of civilian population—as for example, the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

These are bitter thoughts, but how can you avoid them?

In such situations, the problem is complicated by the compulsions of "national interest," which seem to demand the barbarism from which all civilized men recoil. You could say that men who are unable to fight in a modern war without coarsening themselves, and numbing their moral sense with some narcotic device, are like the men who turn to the solace of alcohol to shut out the falsities and ugliness they see all around them. Both become a kind of failure, yet it is a failure that eager warriors or men insensitive to the vulgarity of the times have not had even the opportunity to make. They are living their lives at another level.

This is not an apologetic for drinking, but an attempt to understand the vulnerabilities found in men of obvious capacity and even of vision. It is a view which at least helps to explain the brilliant insights which are sometimes found in the writings of men who have been through an ordeal of extreme psychological disturbance, from some form of alcoholism or mental illness. The pain of the experience stripped them to naked nerves of perception, casting aside all irrelevancies. What then came through was the light of a man who sees things in true proportion. He has no stake, any more, in pretense. He may have reached momentarily beyond

both fear and hope, becoming able to speak as a true Promethean.

The world has many men who have been shaken in this way, yet who see more clearly than their fellows. They suffer the sickness of their times with an acuteness outside the experience of the majority. They have everything but strength; and yet, it might be said that "when the spirit is upon them," they have all the strength the occasion calls for.

In a broader sense, this is the plight of the intellectual. From men of agile mind and sensitive moral perception, a terrible price is often exacted by an age such as ours. Such men have not yet found an inward balance to sustain them when the high winds blow, and they have long since been unable to subscribe to the simpler faiths that give support to the multitude. Neuroticism, alcoholism, suicide, conversion in old age to a powerful religious orthodoxy—these too often make up the personal history of the intellectual in the twentieth century. He is like a weathervane, responding to the lightest of breezes in the psychological climate, or changing color like litmus paper with the nuances of the emotional currents of his time. He sees beyond his involvements, is capable of flashing idealisms, yet lacks a foundation for long-term commitment.

It is a question, for many, of finding something to be heroic about, but all the old patterns have been destroyed. Yet it must be admitted that it is the intellectuals, more than anyone else intellectuals, artists, writers, poets—who see the dreadful futility in life as it is commonly lived these days. Fortunately, they can't be organized. Their insights are anarchic by nature and definition. And as Lewis Mumford pointed out some years ago, the artist who has found a good "adjustment" in our society is usually some kind of "hermit" who has discovered a private spring and never wanders far from its waters.

Some kind of "break-through" is in order. Here, in these pages, the suggestion is often made that unequivocal rejection of war by individuals who can honestly see nothing but evil coming from another war is one of the keys to the break-through. We suggest this for the reason that, while the killing and the destruction are measurably bad, far worse is the

block to any really original thinking in plans and projects which include war as a rational possibility. Preparation for war sucks like a vampire at the vitality of our culture. It perverts our engineering genius to nightmarishly casual attitudes toward genocide, and makes the threat of an ultimate interruption of their lives hang over the youth of the nation like a sword of Damocles. War can turn our cities into ghost-towns of ceaseless anxiety and our young men into expectant killers for years before it happens. What sort of life is this? How can you think about an awakening to a better life in such an atmosphere?

It isn't really *that* bad? Well, no. Nothing is ever as bad as a single generalization makes it seem, but do these conditions appear overdrawn only because of our preoccupation with pleasanter matters? There are various immunities to the corruptions of war and other disintegrating forces, but immunities are of different sorts. There is the immunity of the ball game and the immunity of an ambitious career. There is the immunity of the bottle and the immunity of emotional religion. An entire class of immunities exists among people who are so busily engaged in constructive activities that they have no time or feelings to spare for fear or anxiety about war. Not many have this kind of immunity.

But we are not talking just about war. The issue concerns the kind of thinking we are able to do, the kind of imagining we are capable of, and the deadly count-down which planning for war imposes on our minds. There are doubtless other ways of getting at the things that are wrong with us. War happens to be the most obvious denominator of the problem.

## *REVIEW*

### MORALISMS—GOOD GRADE

MARYA MANNES *More in Anger* proves that it is possible for a writer of good fiction to turn to uncontrived self-expression on almost any subject and still be read and appreciated. These essays are not great literature, nor even remarkable criticism, but they do qualify as literature, and they constitute honest expression. Harry Golden, reviewing this book for the Nov. 15 *Saturday Review*, says that "there is a brilliance and a hard core" in the author's prose. *More in Anger* constitutes a series of essays on the shoddiness of current American *mores*, and draws its natural spark from Miss Mannes' apparent capacity to live a life geared to less frothy appearance than the sort of life she finds so annoying.

Ten years or so ago, Marya Mannes wrote a novel called *Message from a Stranger*. We liked it, and, our local library thinks the book reached a wider audience than its publishers expected. It was written from the standpoint of a person who had died, but who continued mental existence in a world somewhat resembling Plato's land of the hereafter. From this metaphysical locale, the heroine occupies herself chiefly with figuring out what part of the life last lived was really worth living. Some of the questionable involvements turned out, it seemed, to have been not so bad as might have been imagined. In *More in Anger*, Miss Mannes reveals a similar basic optimism, a faith in life and in people, attitudes which could easily be missed by readers who are mostly impressed by her excoriations of the present.

Mr. Golden's judgment seems appropriate:

What is important is that, though Miss Mannes is critical, she is not cranky. And while these essays range from war and peace to censorship and art and partisan politics, "More in Anger" is still an emotional whole, made so because the book is lightly veined with humor and fortified with common sense. The author's tone is conversational but always precise. She has an inherent sense of drama and an

abiding respect for words and sentences arranged in rhythmic order.

The first chapter of *More in Anger* contains the following paragraphs which illustrate Miss Mannes' style as well as her talent for upbraiding:

Certain words are too troublesome for us now: sacrifice, nobility, courage. Only suckers give up something they want for something others need. Only suckers act purely from moral conviction. Only suckers stick their necks out for what they believe, when what they believe makes others uncomfortable. This is the cynicism of Play It Safe. And it is about as far from the origins of American strength as anything could be. It is, moreover, the matrix of a host of fears which have fastened on us Americans like leeches, sucking out our independence and weakening our will. The effort of living up to ourselves is too great; even our leaders no longer expect it of us or, for that matter, of themselves. Did I say "leader"? This too is a rejected word, for to lead means to direct and to exact, and no man dare do either. He might be unpopular. What authority we are given now is a trinity: the grin, the generality, and God (the word). These are supposed to guide us to our destiny which has always been assumed to be glorious. No man of power has yet had the courage to tell us that it might be quite the reverse.

There are two major orientations in criticism of American *mores*—the psychiatric or psychoanalytical, and the Christian. Miss Mannes' book is at times an interesting, free-wheeling blend of the two. But her leaning, we think, is toward the sort of non-theological moralizing presently pursued by articulate Protestants. As the churches have become more "liberal"—a meaning hard to define save in terms of a failing interest in the theological assumptions of days gone by—Christianity has had less and less to say about personal morality. Criticisms of American customs, for example, have been largely social in bearing—what people *en masse* are thought to be missing in virtue. It is assumed that most people know basically what is wrong with them; what one must do is seek inspiration for arousal of the "moral" nature. The psychologist figures differently. The trouble, he says, is ignorance and confusion. People don't "know better." Well, Miss Mannes thinks they do, along with the God-

professing Christian, but she invades some of the territory of conventional religion, suggesting that we have really outgrown various religious customs; further, that we need only arouse our will power in order to achieve more enlightened standards. Illustrative of Miss Mannes' ambivalence in regard to Christianity are some remarks from the closing pages of *More in Anger*:

To paraphrase the song from *Porgy and Bess* about women, "religion is a sometime thing" in America now, and the gap between faith and informal behavior has never been wider in any society. As a people we claim a Christian morality while we condone, in business and in life, the grossest dishonesties. No man is a Christian who cheats his fellows, perverts the truth, or speaks of a "clean bomb"; yet he will be the first to make public his faith in God.

This marriage of form and substance, then, is what I have not found in today's church. I have found, moreover, religious forms which deeply offend my own perceptions of life and death. Funerals are for me pagan and abhorrent, for in their emphasis on physical dissolution, they perform a burial of the spirit. The blackness, the casket, the pallbearers, the weeping faces of the bereaved or of vicarious grievers—what have these to do with man's triumphant procedure? And what greater indecency than exposing a treated corpse to public view? Aside from the state funerals of the great, which are historical pageants that give shape to public mourning, I remember only one funeral that seemed to me right. This took place many years ago on a Spanish island in the Bay of Biscay, and it consisted only of this: a girl in bright clothes holding aloft a small casket of ashes and followed by a band. The procession was a gay and celebrative dance, as if death had conferred a favor on life. And those who grieved in their hearts were not in view.

But there is little sense of joy or celebration in our churches, and far too little beauty. Either they have a bleakness which is closer to paucity than purity, or a quality of gimcrackery provided by bad religious art and artifacts, than which no art can be worse.

What one is apt to miss in the course of Miss Mannes' venomless diatribes is a suggestion as to what might lead *out* from this peculiarly American quagmire of superficialities. The subtle religious

sense, and the equally subtle aesthetic sense, which the author implies are prerequisites for a fulfilled human life, could therefore be simply assumed as "given" to some and not to others. However, Miss Mannes perhaps intends her "anger" to represent a personal conviction that everyone has capacity to do better.

In any case, much of her book makes amusing reading. We close with a witty passage on another peculiarly American immaturity:

The Rheingold Girls smile too much, people in television commercials smile too much, families in magazine ads smile too much, and government leaders smile too much. The American flag is one large grin. Everyone wants to be liked.

This obsessive need to be liked, rather than respected, has become the soft core of our state and our state of mind; as common to the White House as it is to a Coca Cola ad. In a society of selling you cannot afford to offend the customers. You must try, therefore, to please all.

So this friendliness, this American quality to be cherished, has now been packaged into a product trademarked with a smile and claiming three ingredients: prosperity, piety, and quality. An American who can make money, invoke God, and be no better than his neighbor, has nothing to fear but truth itself. It is better to be liked than brave and free.

There are times, of course, when gravity is not only permissible but required. The stern face may be worn when God is mentioned and the stock market falls; when dignity is assaulted, honesty is impugned, and other nations chastised. Otherwise our teeth, which owe their whiteness and regularity to American dentistry, are to be bared whenever possible as a sign of the good nature for which we are justly famous.

Yet it is doubtful whether Washington or Jefferson or Lincoln ever had to prove their humanity in this manner, and it is difficult to visualize their faces split by a chronic grin. Our greatest president had a profoundly sad face: even his smile must have wrenched the beholder's heart.

## *COMMENTARY* **HONORING THE DEAD**

THE "venomless diatribe" against funerals by Marya Mannes (see Review) is so temperate and reasonable a discouragement to this practice that one is led to wonder why more people have not adopted her view, simply from reflection.

One explanation, doubtless, is the feeling that an innovation in custom in regard to so great a mystery as death—in which, as well, profound feelings of love and sorrow are involved—might betoken a lack of respect for the one who has left the scene. Indeed, too casual a revolution in funeral customs would probably mean just this.

An uncasual change would be different. Miss Mannes speaks of the emphasis of funerals on "physical dissolution." To give them another emphasis would not be easy, since it should arise from deep conviction, and the most obvious aspect of death is the physical dissolution. Yet the death of the body has in other cultures been taken as a sign of the release of the spirit. This, surely, is the meaning of the Spanish rite on the island in the Bay of Biscay.

But modern man can hardly borrow from an archaic custom of this sort. To do so would be far too mechanical an adaptation of feelings which are not our own by natural right. Further, modern modes of symbolic representation are more restrained and to be authentic must result from an evolution of thinking which we have pursued for ourselves.

To let death come and go without any sort of observance or ceremony, on the other hand, could easily amount to a kind of psychic mutilation. Death is not a thing which we understand very well. Fear, and for the young, horror, are rather the responses of most human beings to death. The practical psychological role of the funeral is to create an element of the familiar, the traditional and customary, at a time when our lives are invaded by an event over which we have no control, and which is seen as an intrusion of

irrational forces that are ordinarily kept at a distance from our lives. For the most part, death finds people unprepared. Not only those who die, but those who remain as well. The funeral, from this point of view, is an emergency measure. It is an activity which helps to dull the pain of uncertainty, the frightened wonder about what, if anything, happens after death.

But a funeral could, if reflectively conceived, be an occasion for attention to the meaning of human life. Death is either an end of life or a part of it. Terminus or transition form is that they represent indifference to this question, rather than attention to it. The subject is or ought to be one for philosophers, yet the modern philosopher would probably be much upset by any such responsibility. But why? The philosopher is supposed to be concerned with meanings, and what is more ultimate in human experience than the meaning of death? It seems not unjust to say that philosophers who have ignored the problem of death have wandered far afield from their natural tasks. It is also the role of the philosopher to help other human beings to meet events which bring anguish and tragedy.

Modern philosophy has been laggard in this regard. It has left such human crises to the ministrations of religion. There is neither reason nor excuse for this neglect.

It is true that philosophy, as it has developed in the West, is alienated from essential human problems. Here, as in other matters, philosophy has maintained a "hands-off" policy, perhaps because traditional religion has shown no inclination to admit that its beliefs about death could be altered or amplified by philosophical investigation. Yet our inherited religion has not thrown much light upon the mystery of death. In an age of precision and extreme rationalization in all practical matters, we are left with teachings about death which have at best an allegorical significance, and have come down to us in a vocabulary that has undergone no change since the Middle Ages.

It should not be inappropriate to suggest that if we are to honor the dead, there ought to be an effort to understand death. Funerals ought not to be little more than anodynes supplied by tradition, and even if it is impossible to make any sudden changes in customary observances, there is an obvious need to set going currents of thought which will in time modify and replace the rites which are now meant to honor the dead.

In keeping with the spirit of the times, our thoughts about death should have the temper of such directness as we are able to provide. The first thing that should have cognizance, perhaps, is the common intuition of immortality. This is the secret feeling of many, perhaps most, human beings. Is there any reason to hide this feeling at the time of death? For generations we have allowed the break between science and religion to determine our behavior by a kind of default. We have allowed traditional religion to fill in its own way the gap between scientific knowledge and the regions of experience on which science has nothing to say. We have left unschooled by serious thought the emotions which have play in those regions.

The restraints of materialism no longer exert the influence they imposed a generation ago. Along with our disenchantment with the idea of a scientific Utopia, we have gained a certain freedom of mind. Such openings in cultural attitudes are not so common that we can afford to neglect the opportunities for change that they present.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### FEDERAL CONTROL OF EDUCATION?

LAST week we presented—largely by courtesy of a thesis developed by Milton Mayer in the *progressive*—the argument that "democracy" means nothing if it is not primarily conceived as an educational enterprise. Further, that in an educational enterprise the primary need is for teachers who are qualified to teach by virtue of their wisdom. Wisdom means knowledge of principles which communicate human values beyond those of immediate egocentric concern, and men of such wisdom, as leaders who are teachers, or *vice versa*, are the indispensable guides of an educational democracy. It seems to us that the present Supreme Court, in its relation to issues involving rabid "anti-Communism" and segregation, serves as a proper example of how the gradual education of the ignorant may be obtained by instruction from "wise and honorable men."

An article in the *New Republic* for March 2 provides excellent corroboration for this view. Reporting on progress in the South in comprehension of the need for integration, Helen Fuller affirms that a number of former fence-straddlers among Southern community leaders have finally taken a constructive stand—and, as proof of this, are beginning to be proud of their contribution to the transition. Particularly is this true in Nashville, of which Miss Fuller writes:

You don't meet many people in Nashville who fail to remind the visitor that this is the "Athens of the South," and they show you a model of the Parthenon, left over from the 1898 Centennial celebration of the state's admission to the Union, to prove it. More tangible evidence is the comparative ease with which Nashville has begun desegregation of her public schools. And now that the fury of September, 1957 is fading from memory, there is a good deal of pride that this is so.

Thirty-four Negro first- and second- graders are now attending five Nashville schools which were all-

white two years ago. Eleven of them entered the first grade last year in spite of riots led by John Kasper and his followers outside several of the schools and dynamiting of one (the Hattie Cotton School in East Nashville). Twice as many Negro parents were willing for their children to pioneer in mixed classes this year, and at least three times as many are expected to apply for transfer to the white schools next term.

Opponents of desegregation would, if they knew about it, be sure to point out that the intellectual aristocracy of Athens employed a large "underprivileged" segment of the population—as slaves. But it was also in Athens that the concept of slavery was first questioned, by Plato and others. In any case, since the issues became sufficiently clear—once the Supreme Court discussions made them impossible to ignore Nashville has done very well:

Negro and white colleges in Nashville maintain an exchange library service; Negroes attend graduate courses at Vanderbilt, Peabody, Scarritt, Maryville and the University of Tennessee School of Social Work; white students go to Fisk University and Meharry Medical College. Parochial schools are desegregated. Both races can belong to the local League of Women Voters, AAUW, Academy of Medicine, American Nurses Association and National Association of Social Workers. Whites have served with Negroes on the boards of local colleges and settlements for a generation. And Nashville is one of the few Southern cities with housing and eating facilities for interracial meetings—various campuses have had them for 10 years or more.

The city has lifted race barriers on the municipal golf courses and at the public library and the railroad station without incident. And more recently, before pending suits could come to trial, the transit system was quietly integrated. Ads for Pepsodent and Wildroot were simply pasted over the signs on the insides of buses which had read "colored this end" and "white this end."

But "up to the time the school decision came, only women and do-gooders had thought much about integration," one of the leading do-gooders says. "When it grew clear that we couldn't avoid the issue any longer without jeopardizing the schools, however, some of the really substantial men in the community became concerned." The Nashville Community Relations Conference had conducted a campaign to

get these men into action: "We sat around a table one day and parcelled out the names of 200 of our leading men, 15 apiece. Then we called on them and explained why they should help get the school board to make plans for carrying out the orders of the Court."

Thus Nashville community leaders who are now proud of their part in achieving desegregation are able to enjoy that healthy pride *because* of what the Supreme Court did. The next point is that the first occupational group to take a stand for desegregation was the teachers of the public schools. A *New Republic* editorial for Oct. 20, 1958 comments on a vote taken by the association of school teachers in Norfolk, Virginia:

Why has it occurred to so few that teachers themselves might have much to say about whether Negro and white children shall have equal educational opportunities? There can be no education, public or private, integrated or segregated, without their consent. And yet it came as something of a delightful surprise to learn that in defiance of the decision of the Governor of Virginia to close down all public schools in that state rather than submit to the law of the land, the association of Norfolk school teachers, by a vote of 487 to 89, called for the reopening of six secondary schools in Norfolk and asked the public to join in "efforts to maintain our free public system of education."

Even prior to the main desegregation controversies there was an increasing tendency to explore the possible benefits of Federal control of education. Mr. Robert M. Hutchins, for example, seems to be inclining toward this viewpoint, perhaps because his labors as head of the Fund for the Republic have convinced him that the federal outlook, best typified by the Supreme Court, is most likely to apply the principles of democracy in administration of the public schools. Now, in the *Nation* for Feb. 28, Mr. Myron Lieberman, who teaches at a graduate school of education, contributes what the *Nation's* editors call "a frontal attack" on the limitations of local control. Mr. Lieberman contends that four "myths" in particular "cripple our schools":

1. The myth that local control of education, with perhaps a few concessions made to state control,

is one of the important institutional safeguards of educational freedom and of our free society.

2. The myth that public education was not made a federal responsibility in the Constitution because the founding fathers feared the potentialities for dictatorship in a federal school system.

3. The myth that local control of education is a boon to educational research and experimentation.

4. The myth that state governments and local school districts have the financial resources to support an adequate educational system.

Mr. Lieberman predicts that Federal control of educational policies, and adequate support of the Federal schools is an inevitability for the future. He writes:

The most important educational trend in the 1960's is likely to be the decline of local control of education. Such a development is long overdue. Public education in the United States has been strangled for more than a century by the myth that local control is a good thing. National survival now requires educational policies and programs which are not subject to local vote; conversely, local communities must be relegated to ceremonial rather than policy-making roles in public education. This means that in the long run we shall be forced also to abolish state control of education, since from a national standpoint state control is only an attenuated version of local control.

Mr. Lieberman points out that local tyrannies can have the same effect as a tyranny imposed by a totalitarian state:

Looking at our system as a whole, and noting the existence of public schools teaching diverse doctrines, one might infer that our schools are free. We do not readily recognize the totalitarianism implicit in local control simply because not all schools protect the same dogmas. Nonetheless, a diversity of schools based upon intellectual protectionism for different dogmas does not constitute a "democratic school system"—not, at least, if "democratic" refers to the education actually provided rather than to the legal structure which facilitates a variety of one-sided educational programs.

Finally—and the desegregation issue points this up most dramatically—there is a need for a definition of both democratic and educational principles from sources not involved in local



prejudices. While one cannot guarantee the "qualitative referent" in education by either subsidy, Federal control or both, Federally administered education would at least have the *means* to implement policies based upon principles, and could further transitions prepared for by instruction and debate, etc. Mr. Lieberman states this part of the argument:

People tend to regard public education as a legal concept and to neglect it as an educational concept; that is why they are seldom aware of its non-public aspects. The ideal of public education means more than having some governmental unit—local, state or federal—provide the funds. Public education has a referent in the quality of education as well as in its financial basis. The qualitative referent is an education in which the search for truth is carried on regardless of what empires topple, interests collapse or heads roll.

It seems to us that this large and practical issue—whether or not one is going to favor legislation which moves in the direction of Federal control—is worthy of extensive discussion. Opinions and arguments, pro and con, are hereby invited by this Department.

## *FRONTIERS*

### Politics and Social Change

WE have a communication from a new reader which could have appeared as a "Letter from Florida," but since it involves matters of MANAS editorial policy as well as conditions in that state, it is printed here, with some comment added. We are glad that this reader took the trouble to write. Ten or fifteen years ago, a man with his orientation probably would not have bothered to send a letter to a paper with the orientation of MANAS. He says:

I like MANAS very much. I think it is needed and doing a good job in its field. I understand and appreciate what it is trying to do. However, occasionally, I think it preaches a little too much, in a holier-than-thou, let's-you-and-him-fight, manner. It is OK to pontificate in an Ivory Tower but you should also practice what you preach.

I am referring to the article in the March 11, MANAS, "The Responsibility of Peoples," and your suggestion that social reform be shifted to responsible individuals. As long as you stick to abstract theory and philosophy, the powers-that-be mentioned by your correspondent who objected to your statements ( "What Are We Arguing About?" ) are going to leave you alone in your Ivory Tower. But how long are you going to last if you as a responsible individual start to spell out in detail the troubles, worries or problems of people who live lives of quiet desperation, either by fear or seduction? There is no secret about the conditions or circumstances. Also, it is no secret that the conditions can be changed in our nation up to a point or degree, only by political organization and political pressure groups and action. But how do you sound the call? How do you inform the people? How do you get publicity? How do you inform one victim that there are other victims; and that in a union of victims there is strength?

In California, can you get the Los Angeles *Times*, the San Francisco *Examiner* or the Oakland *Tribune* to print a letter to the editor, in full as written, criticizing "soak the poor and protect the rich" sales taxes on daily necessities; the treatment of migrant farm workers; or the police state *gestapo* tactics of the local or state law enforcement agencies including the state regulatory commissions or divisions?

In Florida we have the same problems and we become very weary and fed-up with Ivory Tower philosophy and the theories of liberals and their pretty words such as freedom that every one uses but which never mean the same thing twice.

Let us be specific as responsible individuals. I am enclosing some clippings from the Miami *Herald* for March 16. They happen to concern the migrant farm workers in Dade County of South Florida and the Florida State Prison in Raiford in North Florida. The Florida State Prison has been a national disgrace to humanity for twenty years or more. Nothing has been done about it. Just as nothing really effective has been done about the state prisons and the penal system in other states that is more than snail-like progress. The problem of our Florida migrant farm workers we had last year in the same way. These newspaper stories always appear at the end of the season after the farm workers have left. It is part of our national problem of two million families of migrant farm workers. It could be solved very simply by guaranteeing them a minimum adequate monthly wage or salary on a contract basis supervised by the federal government. The educational problem of the children of migrant farm workers could be solved by having state school trailers follow the children. As for our state prisons, nationally, we should be as indignant about them as we were about Hitler's concentration camps.

Florida has a "right-to-work" or "right-to-wreck-labor-unions" law which keeps the workers' standard of living low by means of long hours and low pay. Only eighteen states have that law; California doesn't have it, but we can't all move to California. It is impossible to get any criticism of the Florida right-to-work law published free in any Florida newspaper by any means. Florida has a "skin-the-poor-and-fatten-the-rich" sales tax on daily necessities which reduces the mass purchasing power of workers and their standard of living. Ninety percent of the annual Florida state revenue is from sales taxes. The Florida state constitution forbids a state income tax. Perhaps once a year a Florida newspaper editor will print a short letter criticizing the sales taxes in general terms. Nationally speaking, once every four or five years we may get a speech such as the one by Senator Paul Douglas recently on TV in a debate with Senator Bennett, the reactionary Republican from Utah, in which for a second or two Senator Douglas criticised sales taxes as being regressive instead of progressive as the income taxes he advocated. Most of the time nationally, polite terms, such as excise taxes, are used

for sales taxes. Who the hell knows what excise taxes are?

Florida has no social welfare or services program of any adequate size. There are no free clinics for children or adults except the barest minimum for whites. But the United Funds are big and financially healthy and filled with fat-cat career social service workers. All the agencies are represented, Red Cross, Travelers' Aid, and Salvation Army. All the churches have charity agencies. But a single man or woman, or a family, white or colored, can expect nothing but a couple of meal tickets and a bus ticket out of town if they become ill, hungry or homeless. It isn't a question of a lack of money. Million-dollar churches keep going up like mad in all the large cities of Florida, both Protestant and Catholic.

If you feel that these are local problems that must be solved in Florida and that you can't apply MANAS to them, how about the national problem of unemployment? There are four or five million unemployed in our nation. As a responsible individual who is "free" to resist, what do you have to say about them that isn't couched in safe, neutral, glittering generalities? OK! So it is an international economic problem and you are no Nikolai Lenin! But what about the arbitrary decree by American big business that competent and qualified man or woman workers who reach the age of forty-five years are automatically unemployable if they don't have the security of a labor union, trade or profession? Salesmen, for example, even the ones licensed by a paternalistic police state such as California?

How about the national problem of universal military conscription in peace time? We have just been handed four more years of that problem, if you haven't had time to think about it up until now. Part of that little problem is our obsolete and useless mass land army of World War II infantry men that is such a tax burden. Our nation could use a few Ivory Tower edicts from those who haven't been brainwashed on that subject.

We have other urgent specific national problems that are never discussed critically in our commercial newspapers, locally or nationally, but the above are sufficient to give you an idea. I hope my free subscription will last long enough for me to see you try to fill this vacuum. Although I warn you not to be naive enough to believe that MANAS will remain in business very long after you do so. Remember what happened to Edward R. Murrow!

ALEX WILLIAMS

Miami, Florida

MANAS is not a political journal. The field of politics and legislative reform is well covered in this country by such magazines as the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *Progressive*, and, on the West Coast, *Frontier*. There is no need for inadequately staffed and inexperienced attempts to duplicate what these magazines do very well. We do not need more such papers half so much as we need to support the ones we have, helping them to gain wider circulation for the responsible social thinking that they almost invariably contain.

MANAS takes the view that social and liberal politics (this is not a blanket endorsement of programs originating in this quarter, but a recognition of humanitarian sympathies and ethical intent) depends for its success upon a general awareness of the far-reaching moral responsibilities of the citizen. The problem of the reformer is not so much the quality of his program at it is the indifference of the political constituency. Any serious foray into the politics of a given region soon makes plain that there are always those who see what is wrong and know what ought to be done. Our correspondent's letter is a good illustration of the fact that the major injustices of a region can be clearly summarized by an intelligent observer who has given a little study to prevailing conditions. Spot checks in other parts of the United States would doubtless reveal similar or parallel conditions everywhere.

California has had a migrant problem, too. Years ago, when one of the largest farms in the San Joaquin Valley was struck by its 1100 workers, an editor of MANAS journeyed to the town (practically a "company town") near this farm in the hope of gaining first-hand knowledge of the issues. Those were the days of the struggle of the Farm Labor Union (now the National Agricultural Workers Union) to get a foothold in the Valley—the locale of John Steinbeck's best "social" novel, *In Dubious Battle*—and when the Central Valley Authority (in charge of an enormous federal irrigation project sponsored by the Department of the Interior) was attempting to

apply the 160-acre limitation to all farms that were to receive the benefits of federally delivered water. The farm workers lost that strike and are still working for seventy-five cents to a dollar an hour. Just recently, the California legislature excluded farm laborers from the benefits of a minimum wage law.

No attempt, however, is made by MANAS to give "coverage" to such matters. Our effort is rather to provide occasional illustrations of the sort of problems which are always with us, and which, at root, require a more serious regard of people for the welfare of one another, if they are ever to be solved. For this regard to develop, it seems to us, the values of our acquisitive civilization must undergo radical change. This is the project on which MANAS has set to work. We may not do very well with it, but this is what we are *trying* to do, and we welcome suggestions on how to do it better.

Our program involves continual re-examination of the religio-philosophical assumptions on which men base their behavior—when they attempt to act rationally—and the drawing into the picture of elements of ancient and modern thought which may contribute to the clarification of ideas on these matters. We try to make our own editorial position reflect attitudes which have been represented to the world by men like Socrates, Thomas Paine, and Leo Tolstoy. We don't know of any other paper that has taken on a job of this sort, and since it seems important, we devote all our energies to it.

As for our "survival," we are in a position somewhat different from Mr. Murrow. Mr. Murrow is (or was) gainfully employed in the radio and television industry. The publishers of MANAS do not have to give up because MANAS loses money. They knew from the start that this would happen and planned the enterprise with some safeguards to keep it going.

Then there are occasional gifts from people who value what MANAS is doing and who want to help keep it going. Such "sponsors" are very

different from the ones who support the television industry. The supporters of MANAS support the principle of complete freedom in editorial expression. This is not the function of mass communications. When people like Mr. Murrow decide to work only in the field of listener-sponsored radio, there will be more of a parallel between them and a paper like MANAS.