

## GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

THE men and women of good will—the people who represent that portion of the human race which takes a serious interest in changes for the better—have had about twenty years to confirm their impression that the forced transformation of the political and economic system of a modern nation is not the right way to bring about human betterment. This general disillusionment with the conventional ideas of revolution began, we might say, with the reports from Russia of the Moscow Trials, involving liquidation by Stalin of the old Bolsheviki who had once been his colleagues in the Russian Revolution. It reached a conclusive finish with the de-Stalinization program inaugurated by Nikita Krushchev and the virtual dissolution of the Communist Party of the United States. These events, at any rate, form the mileposts between which many other factors contributed to the realization that a successful revolution is a far more complex affair than most revolutionists had anticipated. The realization, of course, came only to those who were genuinely concerned with the good of man, and not with the drive to power, but these are the people we are talking about—the people who want the kind of changes that will bring actual betterment to the common life. They are the people who, today, are very uncertain as to what ought to be done and very reluctant to ally themselves with any "program." Some of these people have quite honestly turned their eyes toward the long-neglected virtues of the "Conservative" outlook, taking up doctrines which they would once have regarded with unqualified suspicion.

For the most part, however, persons of good will are caught in a dilemma. They feel profound distrust of the institution of Capitalism, which they do not like any better than they did twenty years ago, yet it seems that they have no practical choice except to live in a Capitalist society and to

give their support to the traditional forms and guarantees of human freedom which still survive in Western Capitalist societies.

So, for many, the question comes down to this: What aspect or aspects of modern capitalism can a man of principle afford to tolerate or make peace with, since there is no humane and sensible means available for changing the system in a short time; since, indeed, we are far from sure about the hypothetical system that would be "better"?

This question, which has itself a suspicious ring, has for its provocation a letter from a reader who concludes: "Having moved into the area of teaching top executives in industry, I hope that you might write about the ethical or philosophical questions involved in these human and sometimes inhuman enterprises."

We should like to discuss this subject without reference to "systems," if that is possible, for the reason that systems are always burdened with ethical apologies and claims, and it is peculiarly difficult to disconnect any system from the moralizing claims made in its behalf.

The subject, then, is industrial enterprise. Practically everybody, today, has some kind of contact with industrial enterprise. Either you have this contact, or you don't eat. Even if you are associated in some kind of "cause" which is supported by philanthropy, nearly all the money used for this purpose came, originally, from industrial enterprise. In a society which uses money, somebody has to make the money in order to do things which cost money. Schools and colleges are supported by industrial enterprise. Hospitals and clinics, public or private, get their money from industrial enterprise.

These facts do not, of course, make industrial enterprise a fine thing. They simply show that,

good thing or bad thing, industrial enterprise keeps us all going.

Without prejudging industrial enterprise in terms of the criteria of some system or ideology, what can a person say about his inevitable relations with it?

One thing is very easy to say. A human being of sensibility finds himself continually reacting with disgust to certain of the operations of industrial enterprise. He may be profoundly offended, even feel dirtied, by his obligatory contacts with industrial enterprise. Why should this be?

The basically offensive thing about modern industrial enterprise is the false system of values it imposes on so much of human life. There is nothing *inherently* offensive in industrial enterprise. It is necessary for human beings to grow things, to make things, to process things, and to distribute them. These are necessary and not intrinsically offensive operations. Yet, somehow, these operations have become offensive. They are offensive, it seems to us, because they have been "glorified" and made to seem of the utmost importance. They are not of the utmost importance. They are simply the functions which have to be performed in order to support physical existence. They have no more dignity or importance, actually, than a cow's munching on grass, or a dog's gnawing on a bone.

It is the false front, and all that goes with it, of industrial enterprise, which makes it so largely disgusting.

There is an easy, but manifestly superficial, answer to this argument. The answer is that it is all very well to speak contemptuously of mighty industry, but you are dependent upon it, aren't you, for your daily bread?

One may admit that this is true without acknowledging that the bakery which prepares our daily bread is some kind of shrine. Common sense keeps us from genuflecting every time we walk past a little neighborhood bakery; it is the great

big—almost cosmic—bakeries that we are objecting to, in their character and reputation as shrines. They are just big bakeries, that's all.

It is revolting to get your daily bread all festooned with banners bearing patriotic and religious sentiments. It is nauseating to have to take your culture, your news, your music and your art all mixed up with bread-wrappers, *lest you forget* the importance of bread, and that wonderful, unbeatable bread which *you* can have because you live in America and because there are such great traditions of bread-making in America.

Then they tell you that marketing is a magnificent science developed by America's best brains and that all those wonderful wrappers without any bread in them that you see in the magazines (advertisements) are evidence of the extraordinary progress we have made in this country during the past century.

This is not an attack on industry. It is not an attack on good eating. It is not even an attack on capitalism. It is an attack on the delusion that making a lot of things and getting people to buy them is the secret of the good life.

We have a minor depression in this country, today. A few weeks ago, the President of the United States, expressing concern over the decline in employment and the slackening of business activity, appealed to the American people in a public statement. "Buy," he said to the people. "Buy anything."

He added, of course, the caution not to buy "carelessly," but that is not the operative part of the counsel. What the President's statement really means, as we read the record, could be put as follows: "We have a pretty stupid system, but we're stuck with it, so we have to do stupid things to make it work. It is stupid to buy just 'anything,' but we're too stupid to do anything else, so that's what we have to do. *Buy anything.*"

You don't have to be an economist to see how silly that is. It is probably better not to be an economist, in this case. You don't have to be a

specialist with a string of degrees to recognize that there is a lot of unromantic or spuriously romantic nonsense connected with the praise of modern industrial enterprise. You don't have to be a sharply acute humorist to look at the ads in the magazines and identify the grimace of self-importance on the faces of the men who symbolize the leaders of modern industry—the men who have just discovered that a pink typewriter makes the girls in the office happier than a dull old black one; that telephoning is quicker than letters and telegrams make a Big Impression on a Customer. Who the hell cares?

The youngsters who come out of school and get jobs in industry—they soon find out that they have to play the game if they want to get ahead. They have to talk about sales and expansion and all the rest of the Holy Things if they want to get better jobs. Either they talk themselves into believing this nonsense or they pretend to believe it. In the first case they are dupes, in the second, hypocrites. In both cases they weight the atmosphere of their lives with a superstition as benighted as anything any quack purveyor of religion ever thought of, and spread it around to infect the rest of the community. There is almost no escape, any more, from the thick smog of commercialism. You'd think that there was nothing more to human life than the petty slogans of the manufacturers and distributors of goods.

How are you going to change all this? Candidly, we don't know. This is a bigger problem than we know how to handle. It involves what human beings think is important in their lives, and changes, here, must be private, individual changes, if they are to be of any value. Great political reformers have been thoroughly aware of this problem and have assumed that if the system could be changed—if the profit motive could be removed from industrial enterprise—the people would become free to entertain other interests.

There is no doubt but that a changed environment would tend to have this effect, but it

is possible to doubt that anyone—any leader, group, or political party—has the wisdom to design the right environment for instituting such changes. For the *right* environment is a philosophical environment. Parents can make such an environment, and so can private individuals—teachers, lecturers, everyone who has wide contacts with his fellows—but a philosophical environment cannot be *institutionally* established. The idea is a contradiction in terms.

The obvious difficulty—but one which may not be quite so insurmountable as first appears—is that the mythology of "business" and its glorious role seems to be a self-perpetuating delusion. The big business man—the "top executive" referred to by our correspondent—is really a captive of the system in which he has risen. Sales are necessary for the maintenance of plant and staff, and to get sales it appears to be necessary to go after the mass market. Selling the mass market, again, requires, or seems to require, the application of mass merchandising techniques, so how can even well-intentioned businessmen avoid vulgarizing conformity?

There are two factors which may play a part in bringing about radical changes. First is the relationship between industry and the military. The close association between industrial enterprise and preparation for war has made business a part of the war system and has made the economic welfare of the country largely dependent upon continued spending for national defense. Now it seems evident that this arrangement must lead either to ruin or to self-imposed reform. Continuous preparation for war, in the past, has been an almost certain path to war itself. If we should have another war, the destruction will be so extensive as to reduce life after the war to a quite primitive level. The cycle of reconstruction would deal with absolute necessities of existence and the chastening effect of the blotting out of great populations would probably introduce an entirely different approach to life. We are hardly

able to discuss the problems which would then be paramount. The alternative is to free our economy from dependence upon military spending.

The other factor, already at work, is the gradual "souring" of our present scheme of producer-consumer relationships. A growing segment of the population is becoming actively aware of the effect of "merchandising techniques" on the quality of food products. Simple medical common sense, without any special "social" viewpoint or moral insight, is leading to severe criticisms of the food industries of our time. Conscientious mothers, in particular, lend willing ears to the judgments of campaigning doctors who have discovered through test and experiment that many of the mass-produced foods on the market today are seriously lacking in essential nutrients. Other foods have been so treated as to become actually poisonous. Some paragraphs in the *Nation* for April 12 in an article by David Cort describe the danger from pollution of food products:

. . . the 1951-52 Congressional investigation fully brought out that the current infatuation with chemicals often approaches homicidal insanity. Apart from pesticides, a very few examples, out of many, would include: That the flour industry for thirty years used nitrogen trichloride, called Agene, which causes hysteria in dogs. That the Food and Drug Administration managed to seize and destroy frozen peaches sprayed with thiourea, very poisonous. That the poison, parphenetyl, was used for fifty years as a sweetening agent. That lithium chloride killed some people before it was removed from the market. That mineral oil in food prevented human absorption of important vitamins. That monochloroacetic acid, used commonly as a food preservative, was as poisonous as strychnine or carbolic acid (some manufacturers mostly in the South, ignored this information for some time). That cheese wrappers made with dehydroacetic acid were equally poisonous. That "emulsifiers" are commonly used

to offset lowered egg and fat content in breads, cakes and mixes. That women were permanently blinded by an eyelash preparation using pyrogallic acid. And so on. And on.

While Mr. Cort seems to think that "most of these many problems are now under control," a little further research—or simply a reading of Leonard Wickenden's *Our Daily Poison* (Devin-Adair)—would show him that new abuses of this sort soon spring up to take the place of the ones which are brought under "control."

The thing to be concerned about, it seems to us, is not so much the specific instances of the poisoning of the public by food manufacturers and processors, but the *pattern* of activity which makes the Food and Drug Administration seem so vitally necessary as the watchdog of the nation's health. It is obvious that many of the makers of mass-produced foods do not really care about good nourishment and health. What they care about is sales and profits, and they will merchandise "health" only if compelled to by public demand, and then only in the areas where the public has learned to demand it.

It is the *ideal* of business that we are calling into question, and not the incidental by-products of commercial indifference to the general welfare. It is fine for alert doctors and nutritionists to call attention to the devitalized foods which are so beautifully packed and kept so sanitary by the most modern methods. We need their warnings in specific terms. But we need even more to look behind the symptoms to the basic ill which produces them. What is wrong with a great industry whose personnel require a congressional investigation to make them stop poisoning the public? The men who staff this industry are no worse than the men in other industries; they are respectable members of the community; they believe in American ideals; no doubt they subscribe to the importance of honesty and decency in human relations. The conventions of their lives, however, exert no compulsion upon them to manufacture really *good* food. Their

attention is fixed elsewhere. So with the others: our statesmen are not really concerned with making peace; the pattern of their activities gives only nominal attention to the ideal of peace. Their attention is not upon the actual evils of our time, but upon the hypothetical evils. It is the things which *might* happen that get all their attention, not the things which are *now* happening and are wrong.

The conventional respectability of our time accepts an incredible amount of hypocrisy and outright dishonesty—as though there were no other way to live. This has very little to do with politics. You can have this kind of artificiality under any political system, any economic system. You can have objectives which ignore the real values in human life under either capitalism or socialism.

Business—the business of getting food, clothing, and shelter—is burdened with an enormous superstructure of irrelevant doctrine, and it is this body of irrelevant doctrine which now controls the practical functions of supplying human needs, the physical needs which must be satisfied to keep us alive. We need to get rid of all that superstructure, with its spurious romance, its shoddy patriotism, its pretentious claims to constituting a "way of life." Eating and sleeping and keeping warm have nothing to do with a really human "way of life." The way we get our food, clothing and shelter are unimportant details, or would be, if we would only stop pretending that there is something "spiritual" about *our* way of getting them. Business has a bad case of delusions of grandeur. It is guilty of spreading about its delusions until they have become a pseudo-religion of bodily comforts and ostentatious possessiveness. What an incredible distortion of human existence!

There will be no change for the better, under our system or any other, so long as these delusions are fostered and allowed to continue. This is not a political question; it is a question of intelligent purpose, common sense, and good

taste. It is a question of learning to resist, avoid, boycott and ignore the commercial nonsense in our civilization, and, as far as possible, have "business relations" only with people who share this view. There are quite a few of them to be found. Business is not intrinsically an evil thing. It is only out of place and needs to be put where it belongs. If we had to teach a course for businessmen, we would start out by trying to give them a large and wholesome inferiority complex. What are they doing that a man with very little respect for business enterprise couldn't do a lot better? He would do it better, because he would not exaggerate its importance and corrupt thereby the fundamental values of our common life.

## *REVIEW*

### THE DANGEROUS VIRTUES

IT is to Jacques Halévy that we owe the Gallic wisdom: "Virtues are more dangerous than vices, for their excesses are not controlled by conscience." This might easily have been the text chosen to head the latest Pendle Hill Pamphlet (No. 95), *Inner Liberty*, by Peter Viereck, for Mr. Viereck writes an inquiry into the meaning of freedom which reveals deep suspicion of the conventional "virtues." His first paragraph sets the tone:

Between long intervals of dormancy, like seventeen-year locusts, artists and writers suddenly buzz into the market place in loud droves, proclaiming: "Look, everybody; we've stopped being Irresponsibles!" The apt Carlylian rejoinder to this is: "Egad, you'd better!"—inasmuch as ivory towers are no longer bombproof. Yet being "responsible" will dry up the creative imagination if it merely means the respectable kind of responsibility. Responsibility, yes (in view of the Soviet threat); but responsible to the universal laws of ethics and to the individual laws of integrity, not to the book sellers; not to the entertainment market known as "the public"; not to the all-too-solid tastes of the "solid, taxpaying citizen."

This initial comparison—this setting of the private against the public or the "respectable"—is too precious to be lost from hurried attention, so it will be well to follow it with a brief, confirming quotation from Joseph Campbell:

. . . so every one of us shares the supreme ordeal—carries the cross of the redeemer—not in the bright moments of his tribe's victories, but in the silences of his personal despair.

Mr. Viereck's reference to *The Irresponsibles* is doubtless a recollection of Archibald MacLeish's impressive rhetoric, published under this title in the *Nation* for May 18, 1940, in which the American poet indicts the intellectuals of that time for their indifference to what seemed to him the "burning issues" of the war in Europe. Mr. MacLeish charged the novelist with undermining American morale by spreading disillusionment and pacifism, and accused the scholars of cloistered removal from the world and its woes. Here is a paragraph of this whip-lashing condemnation:

The irresponsibility of the scholar is the irresponsibility of the scientist upon whose laboratory insulation he has patterned all his work. The scholar in letters has made himself as indifferent to values, as careless of significance, as bored with meanings as the chemist. He is a refugee from consequences, an exile from the responsibility of moral choice . . . It is not for nothing that the modern scholar invented the Ph.D. thesis as his principal contribution to literary form. The Ph.D. thesis is the perfect image of his world. It is work done for the sake of doing work—perfectly conscientious, perfectly laborious, perfectly irresponsible.

It is in this context, but with a significant change of emphasis, that Mr. Viereck examines the idea of the "responsibility" of the artist and the writer. He continues:

Like every other citizen, the artist must be willing to "lay down his life for his country" when freedom is at stake, as it is today. But let him refuse as savagely as possible to lay down—in the name of "responsibility"—his dream life for his country. That is why I feel as uncomfortable with the new "responsibility" of the *engagé* artist and the poet as with the old, bohemian irresponsibility pose. The uncomfortable feeling increases when "patriotic propaganda" is brought in, which surely an artist can normally leave to others, not because patriotism is unneeded but because he can serve it more permanently by deepening his insight and broadening his sensibility *within* his works of art. So doing, he serves the demands of moral responsibility also, just because he does not moralize or propagandize.

From this pamphlet there finally emerges a portrait, painted mostly with negatives—yet very appropriate and hardly dispensable negatives—of the properly Unadjusted Man. However, Mr. Viereck does not make a fetish of "Unadjustedness." As he puts it:

The unadjusted should not be confused with the maladjusted, the psychiatric; nor with the never-adjusted, the merely crochety; nor with the flaunted grandstand-nonconformity of bohemia's "misunderstood genius" act. The alternative to these mere caricatures of the Unadjusted Man is a viewpoint more selective in its nonadjusting, a viewpoint whose coin has two reciprocal sides: adjustment to the ages, nonadjustment to the age. This distinction—between lasting roots and ephemeral surfaces—the Unadjusted Man is committed to try to make, even though gropingly, fallibly. A position gets defined in part by its

enemies: his selective unadjustedness gets ridiculed by the overadjusted and the maladjusted alike. The overadjusted ridicule him as maladjusted (a Kafka-reading spoilsport at America's million-year picnic); the maladjusted ridicule him as overadjusted (a renegade from their imagined vestal purity of total alienation).

The easy conformity-baiting of adolescent radicalism refuses to adjust even to deep and valid norms. The Unadjusted Man rejects superficial norms not for rejection's sake but to serve valid ones; his attempt to distinguish between such rival value-claims is a dilemma of tragic soul-searching, not of easy conditioned answers.

The discovery which Mr. Viereck explores as a poet and essayist is the discovery declared by Ortega y Gasset as a philosopher, by David Riesman as a sociologist, and Erich Fromm as a psychotherapist. It is that the public interest—or what is ostensibly the public interest—is no longer the private interest; that it is, in fact, *against* the private interest. But what these men are also saying is that faithfulness to the private interest is *ultimately* in the public interest as well. This is a great but terrible realization. The revolutions of the eighteenth century had two objectives. They sought to end conditions of privileged injustice and to establish political equality (to which the socialist revolutions of the twentieth century tried to add economic equality); but they also sought to establish the right of individuals to cherish and pursue their own, their private interests. For a hundred and fifty years, the people of the United States have been proud of their private rights, their personal independence, their *inner* freedom.

But now it becomes manifest that this inner freedom, when allowed the scope which gives it significance, may actually be regarded as something of a scourge. Its very unpredictability is looked upon with suspicion. The various enterprises of human beings in the United States have so grown together—politics, government, military preparedness, industry and trade, and religion—that they have acquired a kind of *moral interdependence*. Religion is a bastion of the State; private property is essential to Freedom; government is the caretaker of Security, and security depends upon the military. They all go together. To deviate from one is to threaten all. So, if you happen to disagree with or detest the character of any one of

these enterprises, you become an unwanted man, even a dangerous man.

So Mr. Viereck is disturbed by writers who announce that they are now Responsible. Responsible to what? Whose approval are they seeking? What side are they on?

How do you get the people who run the State, who supervise industry, who assume responsibility for the "religious" quality of American life, to consider these questions? You see them going about, talking at meetings, hurrying from one important task to another, filled with the bustle and dignity of their callings. They are the Responsibles, holding America together, thinking largely about the Future and about Education and all that. How do you get them to listen to the idea that a man's inner life, his inner liberty, may be far more important than what they are doing? That all their victories and achievements will amount to exactly nothing and less than nothing, if respect for the inner life is lost in the process?

Few have written as clearly as Mr. Viereck on this point:

What characterizes the free spirit? The earth is a freer place to breathe in, every time you love without asking or calculating any return. It is freer every time you feel spontaneous sympathy for strangers. It is freer every time you make your drudgeries and routines still more inefficient by taking plenty of time out to experience the shock of beauty, whether in nature, poetry, music or the fine arts. Admittedly this becomes impractical in a short-run crisis. But in the long run, whatever enriches your inner sensibility with the unguessed surprises of beauty and love, is a moral act and even a political act. It is a liberating political gesture—precisely because not intended politically. Because of its spontaneous unpredictability, it is a gesture of free individualism against the predictable, unspontaneous blueprints of statism and totalitarianism.

Then there is the question of civil liberties. A year or two ago, a MANAS writer had the temerity to suggest that the fight for maintaining civil liberties is a rear-guard action—that while important and necessary, it is an action which cannot be won except through having something important to do with one's civil liberties. It is only the people with something unusual to say who care about free speech. Only men of conviction will support and use a free press. The right

of assembly is not important to those who have nothing to assemble for, and who will not listen if you should be lucky enough to get them together. Well, we said this, or something like this, and were severely reprov'd for saying it by an undoubted champion of civil liberties. We take a shy pleasure, therefore, in quoting Mr. Viereck on this subject:

Without inner psychological liberty, outer civil liberties are not enough. We can talk civil liberties, prosperity, democracy with the tongues of men and angels, but it is merely a case of "free from what?" and not "free for what?" if we use this freedom for no other purpose than to commit television or go lusting after supermarkets.

In the field of education—which, of all our institutions, should prove the most resistant to the soporifics of adjustment—Mr. Viereck finds the same deadening demand for conformity. "In contrast with earlier eras," he says, "ever more colleges want to know: is the applicant well-adjusted, a good mixer, chock-full of leadership qualities?" Here, Mr. Viereck has a story to tell:

To illustrate the difficulty college students face in the fight for spiritual privacy, let me share with you an unpublished anecdote which Robert Frost has told about his own problems of college days.

He was awaiting admittance, many many years ago, into a student fraternity and was told confidentially that only one factor was delaying his entry: the fact that he took long walks by himself. In other words, America's future poet was caught red-handed engaging in—loneliness. He was caught being an individual, with an inner life of his own, instead of the dead and public machine life of joining a crowd in a movie or around a radio. When they asked him what he did while walking alone in the woods, Robert Frost was not so foolish as to admit the truth that he was guilty of writing poetry there. Instead he saved the day and won his fraternity acceptance by replying: "Gnawing the bark off trees."

Frost was the man who, in Washington, a few months ago, was quoted as saying that he was about to start a campaign against "Togetherness." This seems a proper sentiment for a man of eighty-three years who has cherished the loneliness of the poet since his youth.

For a conclusion, we quote Mr. Viereck's balanced judgement on the "trend" to conformity in our society.

No new trend and no bad trend would be involved if social adjustment were means, not ends; that would still allow for ultimate spontaneity and personality. The depersonalization characterizing the present trend is the goal of adjustment as an end in itself. Thereupon the goal of adjustment, defensible and indeed indispensable as a social lubricant, becomes far more than that; it becomes the prime determiner of human relationships, recreations, aesthetic tastes, and moral opinions.

From being well-adjusted for its own sake, what a short step to becoming overadjusted: the public relations personality of public smile, private blank. In effect, an ecstasy of universal lobotomy. This kind of overadjustment does not mean merely the stampedes toward "normalcy" that have periodically characterized our less mechanized past; rather, the new trend means a bed-of-Procrustes, shaped by a continuous Gallup Poll, for whose pseudo-norms our genuine inner spontaneity is continually slaughtered.

From this trend a new American idol emerges: the Overadjusted Man. Against it a new liberator emerges, a bad mixer and scandalously devoid of "education for citizenship"; the Unadjusted Man. Unadjustedness seems the personal heroism left in a machine-era of which our great American novelist William Faulkner said: "We all had better grieve for all people beneath a culture which holds any machine superior to any man."

Today the humanist, the artist, the scholar can no longer be the prophet and seer, the unriddler of the outer universe; modern science has deprived him of that function. His new heroism, unriddling the inner universe, consists of this: to be stubbornly unadjusted toward the mechanized, depersonalized bustle outside. The Unadjusted Man is the final, irreducible pebble that sabotages the omnipotence of even the smoothest running machine.

We have borrowed far more of this modest pamphlet than the convention of reviewing permits; our excuse is its exceptional quality and the resulting temptation to go on and on. *Inner Liberty: The Stubborn Grit in the Machine*, may be purchased for 35 cents from Pendle Hill Pamphlets, Wallingford, Pennsylvania.



**COMMENTARY**  
**JUST AS YOU SAY, SIR!**

IN the *Nation* for April 26, the Spring Books number, two reviewers take note of the creeping conformity afflicting our time. Harold Clurman, mourning the passing of effective satire in the theater, a decline which began in the fifties, has this to say:

To create satire which goes beyond good-natured spoofing of follies and vices that are regarded as peccadilloes, you have to have a community with strong beliefs and convictions. Almost everyone today is uncertain of his beliefs and few are rash enough to harbor convictions. . . . Social criticism now seems to lack a base and the building of positive values appears to lack support in social realities. What new affirmations are made seem to turn inward, are always on a personal level, as if to say "please mind your own business and let me mind mine—and if we are going to take a public stand it must remain within the confines of ideologies and organizations of undisputed respectability." We are not so much frightened, now that McCarthyism has passed away, as transfixed, stuck, spiritually immobilized.

Kenneth Rexroth, San Francisco poet, traces the inroads of True Believing to the Texas grass roots:

The purveyors of the Social Lie today *must* believe it. . . . I'll never forget one day, bumming around Texas in the early twenties with a very sharp boy named Harold Mann. Just a couple of years before, he had been St. Louis district manager of Real Silk Hosiery, the famous house-to-house pitch of those days. We were busted, so he went to the local Real Silk office, perhaps it was in Pecos, and took out a kit to pick up some change. He came back early, with plenty of change, but with ashen cheeks and haunted eyes. Said he, "I have just witnessed one of the great climacterics of history, far more important than the World War. It used to be the manager told you 'The sucker comes to the door. You say this, she says that, you put your foot in the door. You say this, she says that, you bust out the kit. The sucker says this, you say that—and so on.' Now you go down at eight in the morning and spend an hour singing *Real Silk, Real Silk*, to the tune of *Marching Through Georgia*, and listen to the boss tell you what good stockings they are—all on your own time. Mark my

words, this will make a greater change in the human race than the invention of fire!"

Clurman and Rexroth are talking about the same thing—the substitution of an empty agreement for the spirit of revolt. You don't jeer at Success, these days. You go along, because there is a Dreadful Vacuum right behind you. Even the slightly schizoid sanity in the old-time pitchman's cynicism has given way to the Organization Man's thought-controlled line.

We quote these passages, not to spread gloom, but to indicate the slow approach of the *reductio ad absurdum* of our "business" culture. Human beings cannot possibly put up with this nonsense for very much longer.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves THE CHILD'S WORLD

OUR recent notice of Robert Paul Smith's article, "Leave Your Kids Alone!", did not allow sufficient space for full justice to this excellent discussion. It may be said that Mr. Smith may exaggerate to drive home his point, but this is like objecting to George Orwell's "exaggerations" in 1984. Curiously enough, both Mr. Orwell and Mr. Smith oppose the "Big Brother" psychology. Orwell's thought-controlling dictator requires that he be addressed in this way, while Mr. Smith is concerned with the cult of "Big Brother" as it relates to the world of children, in the endless managing and organizing of children's activities by adults who read too many books on "Child Psychology." Smith's tyrant, moreover, is no utopian image, but operates here and now:

Big Brother, in this case, is all the parents who cannot refrain from poking their snouts into a world where they have no business to be, into the whole wonderful world of a kid, which is wonderful precisely because there are no grownups in it. In come today's parents, tramping down the underbrush, cutting down the trees, driving away the game, making the place hideous with mimeographed sheets and names and regulations. They are into everything. They refuse to let anything alone if there is a kid connected with it. They have invented a whole new modern perversion: child-watching.

There are two main groups of child-watchers. The first which includes the PTAs and the child study leagues and the children's mental hygiene groups, watches but does not touch. These are the peepers through one-way glass, the keepers of notebooks, the givers of tests.

The second group watches *and* touches—and also coaches and uniforms and proliferates rulebooks. This group manages such things as the soccer leagues and the Little Leagues and the Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts and the Brownies and the Sea Scouts and the Explorer Scouts and, I'd bet, the Satellite Scouts. These are the getters down on all fours, the spies in the children's world.

All this child-watching and child-helping and child-pushing has made it tough for the kids to do anything without a complete set of instructions.

No doubt about it. There are literally dozens of organizations trying to take care of children's expenditures of energy during their earliest years. Mr. Smith's comment on the Scouts is not so much an attack on that organization, as it is an indictment of the "managerial" approach:

Perhaps the finest single example of an organization that is devoted to not leaving kids alone is the Scouts. It is not my intention to knock the Scouts as a whole. It is a well-meaning organization devoted to salutary works. I am sure that its officials are high-principled, admirable people. I merely wish to point out that the name of the organization is the *Boy Scouts*. It is for *boys*. And yet there is a small, wallet-size card printed by the Boy Scouts of America entitled "The Scout Parent's Opportunity." Among the exhortations on this card are these:

"Be a companion to your own son." "Weave Club Scouting into homelike pattern." "Use the program to draw the family closer." "Be with your son at all pack meetings." "Work closely with the Den Mother."

The day an organization, *any* organization, tells me how to be a companion to my son is the day I am going to take a good hard look at that organization, and if they mean it for real, I am going to prepare to mount the barricades. I find "The Scout Parent's Opportunity" a terrifying document.

In a recent Beacon Press compilation of poems, the editor, Jean McKee Thompson, indicates basic agreement with Mr. Smith, yet suggests that material may be provided for the child's independent use. The poets in the Thompson volume never make preachments, nor do they suggest "activities" for the young. But they do pose interesting questions about commonplace things. Mrs. Thompson explains:

Some of the poems in this book are about very commonplace things indeed. They deal with the everyday occurrences of family life—going to bed, getting up, playing with brothers and sisters. But it is because they are such everyday things that they are significant to children. It is just because a child must go to bed every night that it is important that he feel "The safest feeling in the world is to be lying warm

and curled." And the fact that he must so often do as his parents tell him makes him "Wish I was my mother and could mind MYSELF."

A little bug may be just a bug to others, but to a child, or a poet, it is a source of wonder: "I can't think how it feels to be so tiny!" And a robin is almost miraculous: "He can hear the tiny sound of a worm beneath the ground." And big things, like the sun, may be taken for granted by some, but a poet—or a child—thinks. "It's lots of fun to say good morning to the sun. Good morning, Sun!"

Perhaps the greatest source of wonder to a child is himself. "See, I can do it all myself!" He's like other people, yet unique: "Lots of other children all around me, but they aren't me." His growth fascinates him: "What's inside of me, making me grow?" And he has his own private world of play: "Of course I'm me, but after that nobody knows that I am a cat."

And how meaningful a child's wonder is if it is based on his own experiences—if after "It took at least a morning of working in the sun" to build a sandpile town, he thinks: "How long it must have taken before the World got done!" Many of his wonderings are questions that no one can answer: "How do little carrot seeds know the way to grow?"

One fact of importance noted by both Mr. Smith and Mrs. Thompson is that most of the books on child psychology are concerned with *types*—that is, the typical behavior that may be expected of a certain number of children in every group. But one comes to recognize the way an individual child's mind works only when time is spent with him alone, apart from a "group" or his brothers and sisters. In a form of analysis suggested by Karen Horney, we find the suggestion of three distinct segments or phases of the individuality. First of all, for children as well as adults, there is the "social self." Here we encounter the results of environmental associations, in the form of whatever adjustment has been made by the child, either to ingratiate himself in a social situation or to oppose its demands. Then, there is what might be termed the imaginary "self"—the projection by the child of the sort of person he would like to feel that he is, the image with which he desires to identify. This aspect of selfhood reveals the influence of

literature and various hero-images. Many children live an entirely secret life, based, not upon what they are actually able to accomplish or feel, but upon what they imagine themselves accomplishing or feeling. Many children who do not enjoy a genuine love relationship with a parent will *imagine* the feeling of love, but be best able to sustain the feeling when they are not reminded, by the presence of the parent, of the emotional shortcomings which actually exist. The third self is a sort of "inner" self, or as Dr. Horney named it, the "true" self. This self, even in the child, is that center of consciousness which is able to be honest in its evaluations of the other aspects of personality. True rapport between parent and child exists only when the child speaks and reacts from this "true" self-hood, and when the integrity of that self-hood is understood and appreciated by the parent.

When Mr. Smith recommends that parents and other "child-watching" adults leave youngsters to their own devices most of the time, this may be a sound recommendation, simply for the reason that children have to do much less pretending among their contemporaries than they do among the older generation. By requiring children to be "sensibly" organized in their activities, a certain bottling up of ingenuity and creativity may be effected. Mrs. Thompson's poems somehow convey to the child the thought that his own world of curious imaginings is, after all, quite wonderful and magical—nothing at all to be ashamed of or outgrown in a hurry. Too few parents, we fear, take the trouble to shut out the world of their own concerns sufficiently to enjoy being alone with a young child.

## *FRONTIERS*

### The International Buddhists

RECENT discussion, here, of the extraordinary growth of interest in Zen Buddhism (MANAS, March 26), has elicited further comments by a Buddhist scholar. Mr. Alex Wayman, of the University of California, a translator and compiler of Oriental works, observes with some pleasure the increasing appreciation of Buddhist thought. He writes:

Your review, "The Contemporary Buddha," cites some lengthy passages that are both cogent and well chosen. Perhaps some further observations may be helpful.

Zen Buddhism has two basic aspects: its own nature, and its historical context. The first is the well-known stress upon the central experience of Buddhism, *enlightenment*. The second is the complex of reasons for the growth of this school during the T'ang Dynasty of China. In those days of large monastic institutions, many monks became discouraged with attempting to practice the Buddhist path by way of memorizing innumerable treatises with thousands of technical terms. Again, they may have lacked the intellectual stamina. One should also know that in the course of translation from Sanskrit, many new difficulties and obscurities appeared in the texts. Sometimes there were political reasons for joining Zen (then called Chan).

Turning to current Western interest in Zen, a partial explanation is in C. G. Jung *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*: "The modern man abhors dogmatic postulates taken on faith and the religions based upon them. He holds them valid only in so far as their knowledge-content seems to accord with his own experience of the depths of psychic life. He wants to know—to experience for himself."

Assuming that the Zen sympathiser is a "modern man," there must be further reasons why he would concern himself with a system introduced from the Orient. Given those persons with such interest, there is a multiplicity of reasons for their approach. For example, some may sympathize with Buddhist ideas but cannot accept the dogmatic framework including such beliefs as rebirth. Zen Buddhism enables these persons to identify themselves with a "Buddhist" movement and simultaneously reject Buddhist dogma. There is the historical "accident"

that Dr. Suzuki has made this subject-matter readily available to the Western reader. Most Westerners do not possess the requisite philological training to read those languages in which the bulk of Buddhist texts are preserved. Indeed, a person may not know his own motives for joining a movement. It is superficial to ascribe some one or other motive to the Zen enthusiast. Furthermore, in a deep sense the original motive or motives do not matter. Once having adopted the new course of thought or action, the person is "taken up" by the new and should be judged accordingly. Is it a "hobby"? Is it for "salvation"? And so on.

The first aspect of Zen, its own nature, is succinctly expressed by the English idiom, "to lose oneself in work." This is an application of the ancient Buddhist teaching that when the petty self of man, his pride, bluff, jealousy, *ad nauseam*, are eliminated, then into the vacated space there moves a great self (*mahatman*), with unerring vision, with beauty and truth. The application of Zen to art, in fact the sense of beauty in Japan, derives from the *temporary loss of self* in artistic work.

Let no one be deceived: the *temporary* is not the *permanent*. The Zen artist is still not free from earthly taints. The Buddhist path aims to annihilate the petty self so that the great self may be in the Elect as an island of bliss in the ocean of sorrow, an oasis of spiritual food in the desert of material life.

The "Contemporary Buddha" is not just Zen Buddhism, although the latter is presently well represented. The entire Buddhist path, together with its ethic and outlook, is becoming increasingly known to the interested Western student.

There are, of course, several varieties of Buddhist emphasis, and what is most interesting to observe is that none of the Buddhist schools seems concerned with proving or even maintaining that the other schools are misguided. Hence it has always been natural for Buddhists to present a genuine international aspect—something accomplished in Christendom chiefly by intrigue and force of arms during the Middle Ages. Recent movements for "unification" of the various Buddhist schools do not involve either argument or compromise, since truth, for the Buddhists, is many faceted and welcomes diverse interpretation. In the month of May, for instance, most Buddhists celebrate the anniversary of the Buddha's birth, his

enlightenment, and his death, on the first full moon day of that month—occurring this year on May 3. But the Japanese Buddhist groups choose April 8, and others, if using the Western system of months, may designate either April or May without offending any who follow in the Buddha's tradition.

During recent international meetings of Buddhists, no one felt it necessary to campaign vigorously for agreement on such points as these. Rather, the effort is to discuss those basic teachings of the Buddha which indicate that truth "carries its confirmation within itself and stands in no need of external authorization," as George Grimm put it. In his *Doctrine of the Buddha*, Mr. Grimm has provided a simile for the sifting of Buddha's doctrine now taking place:

Men have been digging in the ruins of an ancient city. According to tradition there stood in the middle a great temple the ground-plan of which is still recognisable. The investigators now apply themselves to the identification of the huge blocks of stone lying around, as forming a part of the temple. Concerning almost every single stone a learned contention is spun out as to whether or not it belongs to the temple, so that no end to the disputing seems in sight. An architect for a long time listens in silence. Then he comes to a bold resolve: he will build up the temple again with the original stones. So he has workmen come; points out stone after stone; has each fitted into its proper place, until at last the whole temple without a gap anywhere, is reconstructed in all its splendour and in a pleasing harmony of all its parts, wherein every block fits in with every other. Is not the whole contention as to the genuineness of each separate stone thereby decided in the simplest and surest manner?

It is in this sense, especially, that we can agree with Edmond Taylor that Buddhism contains a transcendently important message. In his *Richer by Asia*, he wrote:

If Buddhism were what we imagine it to be, Buddhism could no more have survived in southern and eastern Asia than it did in India. If it were nothing but a religion of negation and withdrawal from reality, it would be of no use except to men too sick to use it. If the Buddhist doctrine of illusion were only a metaphysical abstraction like Bishop

Berkeley's, if Nirvana were merely the worship of nothingness, Buddhist doctrine would not have the millions of worshipers that it has.

Beneath all the rationalizations and confusions Buddhism, I feel sure, is a religion of important affirmation. Doubtless many Buddhists, themselves, do not know quite what they mean by illusion, but I think the Buddhist sages have known. I think that to these sages Maya has not meant the illusion of perception but the false conclusions which we base upon perception—the superstitions of immutability that we have about changing things, the illusion of possession we develop about things we use.

It is most interesting that India's emergence as a nation having something important to say to the rest of the world should have been accompanied by a revival of respect for Buddhism. Relegated for centuries by Brahmanical control to a minority sect, Buddhism is gaining new life in India. The Indian National Congress, since its inception in the last century, has been encouraging to Indian Buddhists. Gandhi accomplished much toward a recognition of Buddha's thought as offering the essential principles of a liberating philosophy, and Nehru has continued this work of education. A national day has been set apart in India for Buddhist conclaves and their tribute to "the Enlightened One."