

character" widely circulated in America, he began plans in 1954 for the creation of *Modern Age*. This journal would maintain, he wrote at the time, an appreciation of religious and ethical values, a respect for conservative social principles, and would be an "expression of the culture of the Middle West and the heart of the United States generally...." The first edition of the magazine appeared in 1957. Kirk was its editor until 1960 when he resigned as a result of what he termed "serious internecine disputes over policy and control" with other members of the journal's staff. After Kirk's departure, the journal continued to thrive and grow, maintaining its reputation as one of the most respected conservative journals of scholarship and opinion in America. Soon thereafter, Kirk founded and edited *The University Bookman*, a thin quarterly which primarily reviews college textbooks.

In 1964 Kirk married and became a convert to the Roman Catholic Church. Living with his wife, Annette, and their three children at his ancestral home, "Piety Hill," located in Mecosta, Michigan, Kirk maintains a household that is remindful of the style of life that would be expected of the English manor home of the last century. Large and Victorian in character, his house is designed for a family that enjoys the pleasure of company with many friends. His associates and friends have included a wide range of conservative thinkers and writers, such as Raymond English, the late Richard Weaver, Henry Regnery, Thomas Molnar, and numerous others who have made pilgrimages to Mecosta. Yet, despite the diversions of friends and family, Kirk is still capable of awesome literary productivity. While working on his latest books, *Eliot and the Follies of Our Time*, and a college text, *The Roots of American Order*, his seventeenth and eighteenth books, he concurrently writes his daily columns, and maintains a world-wide correspondence. His nocturnal habits permit him the leisure of working between the hours of midnight and eight in the morning, a period which virtually guarantees him the peace to write without interruption.

Nowadays, Kirk is considerably more optimistic about the success of his conservative principles in America than he was when he originally penned *The Conservatives' Rout*. History's recent turn of events have made the conservatives' lot appear a great deal more promising. As Kirk notes, the conservatives today have an opportunity to regain ground as they have "not seen since that day when modern radicalism issued its challenge to traditional society by decorating 'this hell-porch of a Hotel de Ville' with human heads on pikes." The nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and the election of Richard Nixon to the presidency in 1968 encouraged Kirk to observe recently in a newspaper column that American conservatives "are in the middle of their journey," and in "about 12 years from now, they may be at the height of their influence." Most observers of American politics turn to such political and popular personages as Barry Goldwater, William Buckley, or President Nixon when they

seek to describe the tenor and direction of current conservative thinking. However, the wells of intellectual conservative thought from which these men must draw have been immeasurably enriched by Kirk's elegant and lucid defense of conservative principles. By reviving the memory of an Anglo-American conservative moral and political tradition, Kirk has clapped onto what was once just a mere instinctual distaste for the policies and philosophy of New Deal liberalism a profound and abiding set of principles. His shelf full of books have once again inspired Burke's "moral imagination" to a nation which had nearly forgotten Burke while embracing notions of positivism, pragmatism, and sentimentalism into its politics.

There are no "gained causes" wrote T.S. Eliot once because there are no "lost causes." Each cause merely struggles to keep alive the enduring normative wisdom of the past. Therefore, even if some new radicalism were suddenly ushered in, sweeping aside all that now exists, we could still expect to find Kirk steadfastly defending Eliot's "permanent things" against the "follies of the time." The conservative is realistic and "expects until the end of all things the world will be a battleground, a place of testing; and in every generation the permanent things will be challenged afresh."

"Therefore, I am a conservative," Kirk concludes in one of his essays. "Quite possibly I am on the losing side; often I think so. Yet out of a curious perversity, I had rather lose with Socrates, let us say, than win with Lenin." □

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Cinema

The Sad State of the Movies

Wick Allison

The rumor has been confirmed by the *Washington Post*: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, which has been suffering lately from a case of advanced senility, may soon die altogether. The reporter phrased it gently in a publicity story about a soon-to-be-released film by saying that "M-G-M desperately needs a hit, a new lease on life." If the trade gossip is true, we should underline desperately. For those who feel compelled to shed a few tears at the passing of a modern institution, let's quickly review three of M-G-M's most touted recent releases:

Zabriskie Point: Antonioni's version of young America was so incredibly simplistic and pretentious that even the *New Yorker* was forced to pan it.

The Strawberry Statement: According to *Playboy*, "uninhibited sex plus anti-

establishment attitudes equal box-office bonanzas with the under-25 audience, or so reasoned the producers." The producers were wrong.

The Magic Garden of Stanley Sweetheart: This attempt to explain the life of a typical Columbia student evoked nothing but yawns.

After bankrolling films of this stature M-G-M's financial collapse might be regarded as a mercy killing (The latter two films were pet projects of M-G-M president James Aubrey, whose last job - interestingly enough - was as president of CBS). Of course M-G-M is not the only corporation providing the American people with such haute entertainment. In addition to the disasters listed above, movie-goers in recent months have been subjected to this extraordinary selection: *Getting Straight*, *The Revolutionary*, *Performance*, *Up in the Cellar*, *Ice*, and *R.P.M.* (Revolutions Per Minute - get it?).

In their mad dash to cash in on the New Left and its hip sympathizers the studios are only following the lead of two other major media. The large publishing houses have long been in the business of subsidizing the "Movement" with the publication of such books as Jerry Rubin's *Do It!*, Bobby Seale's *Seize the Time* and Abbie Hoffman's *Revolution For the Hell of It* (a title which tells it like it is). The magazines run a close second, as Professor Nathan Glazar recently pointed out:

Violence is extolled in *The New York Review* which began with only literary ambitions in 1962; Tom Hayden, who urges his audiences to kill policemen, is treated as a hero in *Esquire*; Eldridge Cleaver merits an adulatory *Playboy* interview.

At this point only television seems undecided, although personally I view such programs as *The Storefront Lawyers* with growing suspicion.

The more detached among us will grasp the irony of capitalists publicizing the virtues of those who seek the destruction of capitalism. It is an irony, and a flaw, to which we have become accustomed. The quest for profits is not hampered by such irrelevant factors as integrity. That idyllic vision of the free enterprise system which we inherited from our forefathers pales by comparison with this tainted real-life version. As a sad fact, capitalism brings with it as an unfortunate consequence a phenomenon known as the commercial mentality, a remarkable shortsightedness which is incapable of seeing beyond the projected profit margins on the ledger sheet. Thus our movie theatres have become nothing more than temples to the Almighty Dollar; if a revolution will sell tickets, modern priests such as James Aubrey are willing to embrace it with open arms.

Of course, another element is involved in his flood of turned-on movies: a pathological fear of being out of style. In one of his more perceptive moments (of which there are many) essayist Tom Wolfe found that white liberals have assumed a new identity which he termed "radical chic." The phrase is self-explanatory. People with this rare urban disease seem

to be drawn mysteriously to careers in the "creative" industries.

Which brings us to another point: actually what we are witnessing is the greatest propaganda campaign since the Second World War. Errol Flynn as the Norwegian freedom fighter has been replaced by Elliot Gould as the bomb-throwing campus idealist. In addition to multiplying the company profits and polishing their own "with-it" image, many of the younger decision-makers in the media business are attempting to win converts to the cause. (Dontcha see, mister, that any one of those hard-hat thugs could be a Joe? Dontcha see, lady, that Stanley Sweetheart freaked out on drugs because he needed real answers? Dontcha see?) Again, we thought we had become accustomed to this, especially after Mr. Agnew's attacks on the news media. However, I doubt that anyone can remember a propaganda campaign on such a grand level, pushing such mediocre ideas in such a ludicrous manner. And the end is not in sight.

Clutching Milton Friedman to our

breasts and refusing to counsel intervention even though the entire society seems hell bent on ideological suicide, we can only hope that next year's audit finds the motion-picture industry in a state of near bankruptcy. I can see it now: the major stockholders will be forced to kick out the James Aubreys and enlist a new crew of financial wizards who will have the practical insight to realize what the public wants (including we much-maligned under-25er's) and to provide it. I will be able to endure watching that venerable lion roaring on the silver screen only when they have changed the slogan from *ars gratis tumultus et sexus* back to *ars gratia artis*.

Until then, we can only scan the pages of the television listings, hoping to find an old classic as the afternoon movie. Once in a while one of our local stations shows a Sherlock Holmes flick with Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce in their original title roles. Next time it's on, you are welcome to come on over and enjoy the show. Bring some popcorn. □

structure of institutions, even with enlightened and intelligent men at the helm, is not enough.

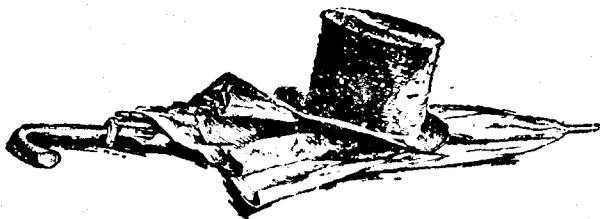
The most important dangers to American freedom are not to be expected from the outside, they come from ourselves. The most deadly symptom is "the increasing disregard for law which pervades the country; the growing disposition to substitute the wild and furious passions, in lieu of the sober judgment of Courts"; the upsurge of a "mobocratic spirit." Lincoln did not stress the incident closest to his audience's conscience, the lynching of the abolitionist editor, Elijah Lovejoy, some twelve weeks earlier in near-by Alton. Neither shall we enter into the dreary details of recent attempts to substitute force, fury and intimidation for orderly legal procedures. What seemed most dangerous about mob action to Lincoln was its cumulative effect. He divided the general population into two classes, first the vicious portion of the population, those for whom the only effective restraint is dread of punishment. These, the lawless in spirit, by seeing violations of the law go unpunished, "are encouraged to become lawless in practice." They make a "jubilee" of the suspension of the operations of government. The other class is that of the ordinary good citizen, who loves tranquility, is patriotic, and desires to abide by the laws. The spirit of the first class is constant, what is required to deal with them is vigilance and firm government. The effect of mob rule on the spirit of the second class is in the long run more serious. When they see their property destroyed, their families insulted, their persons injured, their lives endangered and no prospect of improvement, they become tired and disgusted with a government that offers them no protection. The "strongest bulwark of any Government, and particularly of those constituted like ours," is "the attachment of the People", specifically of the better citizens. When the affections of the better citizens are alienated from the government, when the government has friends "too few, and those few too weak, to make their friendship effectual...men of sufficient talent and ambition will not be wanting to seize the opportunity" and overturn that political edifice that is "the fondest hope of the lovers of freedom, throughout the world." With the entrance of this new class, the men of talent and ambition, a new dimension in Lincoln's discussion is opened. We approach that problem most pertinent to popular governments, the problem of democratic or demagogic despotism, the problem of Caesarism. We return to this subject shortly.

The institutional and legal founding of the political edifice of liberty, Lincoln's argument implies, was not sufficient. He evidently knew Federalist, number forty-nine, well. One of the subjects of that paper is political veneration: "...that veneration which time bestows on every thing, and without which perhaps the wisest and freest governments would not possess the requisite stability. If it be true that all governments rest on opinion, it is no less true that the strength of opinion in each

Cover Story

Abraham Lincoln -- the Relevance Lingers

Laurence Berns



It is almost irreverent to ask: Why celebrate Abraham Lincoln? Why celebrate the birthday of the only other man deemed, almost universally, fit to share equal honors in the temple of liberty with the great Washington, the Father of our country?

We study Lincoln, of course, partly to understand ourselves, to understand and therefore, in some degree, to control the spiritual forces which have shaped our civic lives as Americans. But what I hope to show is that we celebrate and study Lincoln also simply as students, hoping to learn something about man, about logos, about reason, about reason and passion, and reason and religion, (I do not say reason and revelation); hoping to learn something about a problem close to all of us, the problem of the relation between intellectual development and moral goodness—in the precise language of the schools, about the relation between intellectual and moral virtue.

"We, the American People," Lincoln's Perpetuation Speech begins, possess "the fairest portion of the earth as regards extent of territory, fertility of soil and salubrity of climate." This may be a condition, but not the chief cause, for our

finding ourselves under a government conducing more to the ends of civil and religious liberty than any other the world has known. Hamilton suggests what the cause is in the opening paragraph of *The Federalist*:

It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force.

The rational structure of our institutions relies upon the indecorous, but never failing, springs of human selfishness, in the words of *Federalist*, number fifty one, the "policy of supplying, by opposite and rival interests, the defect of better motives," so arranging things that ambition counteracts ambition, "that the private interest of every individual may be a sentinel over the public rights." Lincoln believed in and, by long and constant study, appreciated the wisdom of our system of checks and balances and separation of powers. But a rational