

Editorial I

Smartening Up the Chumps

Raise a stein! As the bell rings for 1973, the hardpressed members of the civilized minority have been granted a collective reprieve from the New Age, an age of milk and honey and high purpose whose dawn has been brassily heralded since the mid-1960s, yet an age whose dawn has failed to dawn.

Merriment and good cheer tickle the atmosphere in every refuge of civilized society. And the more sensible varieties of Republicans and Democrats are again breathing normally. But what of the pan-jandrums of the New Age? What of the epigones of seventeenth-century Puritanism? What of that element of American society that dreams of flying carpets, a franchise boom for Health, Education and Welfare, playgrounds for all mankind, and gaiety, always gaiety? What of the fey slobs who live in caves and feast on universities?

Well about them an eerie sough pervades. The screeds of apocalypse and sin have subsided to a mere rumble of incoherence. And what we hear is the sound of bafflement. It could be the great Clod Populist himself, muttering that Americans "were the real losers" when they shoved him over the edge. Possibly it is the new Darrow, Herr Kunstler, yowling about repressed brats, genocide, and worse. Or perhaps it is one of those gassed-up hags bemoaning the tyranny of her glands. It is hard to say, for the ringing eloquence of yesterday is no more.

The discourses of the radicals and of the Ritualistic Liberals have lost velocity and direction; desperation can sustain only so much so long, and then even the fanatics of Puritan Chic begin to doubt. If my observations of the American asylum are correct, doubt is beginning to sink into the yokels of Puritan Chic and though it would be premature to send them to the embalmers, it is safe to diagnose their present condition as one of very grave befuddlement, induced by doubt. The prognosis is uncertain. From their sick beds all we hear is a delirious chorus of declarations about WAR, GENOCIDE, IMPERIALISM, MORALITY, SEXISM, THE YOUNG, LIBERATION, and REFORM. They mander endlessly about such spicy stuff but, alas, no healthy American seems to give a piffle or a damn. And now at the end of their latest crusade for justice, even the most intrepid of the dreamers is beginning to yield to the vectors of doubt.

And well they should. Many of those who marched for peace and liberation and visions of sugar plums wore holes in their shoes, while their leaders rode in limousines and amassed ample fortunes at the expense of their gullible brothers and sisters. Stokely Carmichael would still be a small-time bunko man were it not for the show business he made of civil rights, and much the same can be said for celebrities like Jerry Rubin, David Dellinger, the Berrigan duo, and the author, Charles Reich, LL.D., J.D. But for every one of these prosperous charlatans, there lies rotting the corpse of one of

their bird-witted followers who committed his very life to their tommyrot, and thousands more are not much better off.

For some, that old familiar feeling of having been taken for a ride is starting to creep in, and for these oafs this past election period must have been especially glum. These are the sad wretches who have gone through their entire lives wearing clothes, faces, and ideas that never quite fit. They are the butt of every hot-foot, the object of every horselaugh, the perpetual butterfingers. Comedians portray them as poor souls and then howl at their botches. Good Samaritans offer them a hand but shake their heads at the ensuing burlesque. Even the Red Cross can do nothing for them. These congenital dupes put their trust in the Clod Populist and his movement for the New Age. Under his reign the fat would melt from the blowzy womenfolk. They would become professional baseball players, bankers, and brain surgeons. They would rise to high places in the new government, and men would admire them. But now the slow burn is setting in — once again they have been had.

Perhaps some of you feel that I exaggerate the excesses of the late 1960s, Puritan Chic, and the PR men of the New Age. As we bask in the Age of Nixon, it is possible that you have managed to suppress your memories of the promised glories. But I remember those gorgeous days in all their furious flatulence. Though the advocates of the New Age were dealing with serious matters, they always managed to approach them with flared nostrils and flailing arms. Rationality was the weapon of the Devil, a manifestation of insincerity and inertia. To be numbered amongst the just, one's utterances had to be lurid, abusive, or oleaginuous. The result was an odd illusory rhetoric whose fundamental element was exaggeration. It was a grand revival of the American tradition of the tall tale, with the astonishing difference that these people were actually in earnest. What is more, they sprayed guilt around as though it were disinfectant.

How well I recall Camelot's claim that seventeen million Americans lived in poverty. Then Old Beagle Ears waved his magic wand, doubled the power of the state, and by the middle of his fated reign, the number of poor had jumped to thirty-four million. Then there was that report made famous by the intelligentsia over at *The New Republic* and *The Nation* to the effect that thirty-seven million Americans were dying of starvation. Further investigation indicated that starvation was really another thespian misnomer for inadequate nutrition. The problem was really how to get a family of imbeciles off a diet of Coca-Cola and potato chips, and that is, given our vestigial scruples about individual freedom, a difficult demand to place on social policy.

Nevertheless, the corrosive effect of these earlier indictments of America began to take hold, and increasing numbers of Americans began to hate their country

and exalt in the exquisite vapors of guilt. Intoxicated further by each rhetorical enormity they concocted, they had leapt right out of this world by 1960 and they were ardently speaking the wildest nonsense. Politicians and pundits swallowed it whole, and the public discourse teemed with canards. For a whole season idiots went around the country claiming a great police conspiracy had taken the lives of thirty or so virtuous Black Panthers. Edward Epstein exposed the tale as a hoax but no one paid much attention, for there were soon even more thrilling allegations hurled against America. Moral enthusiasm became seasonal. The earnest talk turned to American imperialism, genocide, and mass repression. Student thugs, racist thugs, and religious thugs all had their day.

Then suddenly the Dark Ages. It became unsafe to burn libraries, disrupt

(continued on page 25)

Editorial II

Uncharitable Students

Students entering the Eliot House dining room at Harvard College pass by, before going through the cafeteria line, a table manned by a variety of students passing out a variety of literature. The mimeographed and xeroxed sheets and occasional printed pamphlets available for the edification of Harvard students are usually either boring (house athletic schedules), quaint (political broadsides), or offensive (questionnaires for personality development courses). But since they can serve to take the student's mind off what he is eating, most of us are happy to receive almost any handout.

When early in December I was handed a small pamphlet (one of those six-page pamphlets on one sheet of paper that unfolds) for the "Harvard-Radcliffe Combined Charities," it made my day (such are days, or at least my days, at Harvard in the winter): for this pamphlet was sufficiently long to occupy me for much of dinner, and sufficiently irritating to distract me from working for much of the rest of the evening (it doesn't take much).

The first page of the pamphlet began with the welcome information that "The Harvard-Radcliffe Combined Charities resumes this fall after a three-year hiatus." It continued, in a reasonable fashion: "Under the auspices of the Committee on Houses and Undergraduate Life (the CHUL — An official Harvard student body), the Charity Drive has re-directed its thrust from international and national charities to those more closely related to the Cambridge community." The pamphlet continued: "The coordinators of the Drive felt that it was difficult for one to discern between the mammoth national and international charities. Moreover, the donations of students should not go for light bulbs, fancy stationery, and

executive directors. People like to see their donations utilized in active causes." How did the CHUL choose which of many "active causes" Harvard students were to be encouraged to contribute to? "Members of the Harvard community have long felt that they have been abusing the urban area which surrounds the University. The Combined Charities Drive is one of the few ways that students at Harvard can give something back to the community." The CHUL chose to "solicit for those organizations which are too actively involved in their own cause to go out and raise funds themselves."

The CHUL selected five such busy community organizations, each of which was given a few paragraphs in the pamphlet to describe itself and make its plea for money (the students could either have their money evenly distributed among the five, or could specify a recipient). One of the five organizations selected was predictable: Harvard's own social help organization, the Phillips Brooks House, which is involved in a variety of programs such as teaching prisoners, helping poor people renovate their apartments, and the like. The other four organizations to receive money from the Combined Charities Drive were:

The Harvard-Radcliffe Association of African and Afro-American Students. "The Association's goal has been to promote mutual understanding and friendship among ourselves...The main theme of Afro this year is unity. Our main project to further this cause is a Coffee Shop-Grill."

Education for Action (E4A). "...a student-run organization which has been helping undergraduates involved in social change...We annually fund thirty to forty Harvard-Radcliffe undergraduates for an average of \$350 each." E4A serves as a clearinghouse at Harvard for literature on "alternatives to education, women's consciousness, prison work, counter-professions, consumer's rights, Appalachia, ecology, vocations for social change, communes." E4A's other main activity is "workshops": "This fall we have sponsored informal talks by the Law Commune and by a Radcliffe Institute Fellow on Franz Fanon, as well as a videotape of Dr. Joshua Horn on medical work in China."

United Farm Workers. Money is needed for "The farmworkers' efforts to gain self-determination."

Hard Times. This Cambridge organization's activities include organizing tenants into unions and producing a "community newspaper." Hard Times "will provide leadership around community issues. Through these issues we hope to develop a real working-class political consciousness in the Cambridge area."

Now it should be evident that none of these organizations (excepting the Phillips Brooks House) is a charity—and in fact, none describes itself as a charity. Afro and E4A are organizations of Harvard students who deal mainly (in E4A's case, only) with other Harvard students; calling a Coffee Shop-Grill or grants for Harvard students charitable purposes, and implying that giving money to Afro or E4A would be "giv(ing) something back to the community" is a bit far-

fetched. The UFW is a union, perhaps a somewhat special one, but certainly having little to do with the Cambridge urban community Harvard is "exploiting." Hard Times is a political organization. But of course all have, at least implicitly, mostly explicitly, the "proper" political position. This seems to have been a considerably more important criterion for selection for the Combined Charities than whether the organizations were in fact charities.

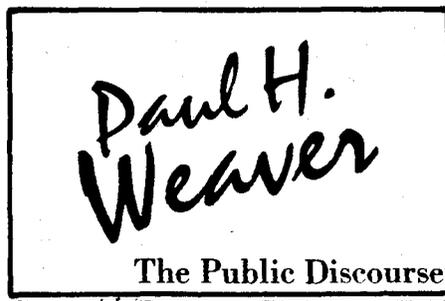
One does not know whether to laugh at, cry over, or be nauseated by all of this. The whole thing is too trivial and silly to be an outrage, and too transparent to spend much time discussing. But it is distressing. For if the better nature of many Harvard students were tapped, some genuine charities and needy people could benefit. There are many of us who will give if asked or prodded, but who are not likely to take the time to give on our own. An opportunity to coax a few dollars from hundreds of students for charity has been utterly wasted.

Yet the CHUL, who wasted this opportunity, has not been "captured" by any radical minority. As it happens at Harvard radicals boycott all official university committees. CHUL representatives (one from each of the thirteen Houses) are, as far as I can judge, relatively typical Harvard students (insofar as the types who run for a college com-

mittee that makes suggestions to the administration about such things as the correct male-female ratio in the houses are typical). In any case, they are well-meaning people, and far closer to being preppies than Commies. It was this rather ordinary and typical group of Harvard students who selected the Combined Charities.

For the past three years, in a period when Harvard students have never been more genuinely if abstractly "concerned" about and aroused by social problems, there has been no Combined Charities at Harvard. Now, when it returns, it comes back as a vehicle of facile ideological self-gratification. Perhaps many Harvard students spend too much time trying to change the world or talking about changing the world to bother with charities. They may feel they have already far surpassed their quota of righteous behavior, or at least righteous feeling. These students hurry past—sometimes mock—the small Salvation Army contingent in Harvard Square. The Salvation Army does not develop consciousness, create unity, or work for social change. It only helps people. I am willing to wager that its name was never mentioned at the CHUL meeting that chose this year's Harvard-Radcliffe Combined Charities.

William Kristol



CLOSING OUT THE 1960s

As chronological units, decades begin and end at exact points in time; but as historical periods — which is how we usually speak of them — their boundaries are uneven and indistinct. The moods and enthusiasms which define decades slowly drift in and then, after a time, drift out again on the tide of events. One can therefore never be quite certain just when one decade is over with and another has begun. This is especially so because the ideas and the personalities and the pre-occupations which are at the center of a decade never spring into existence *ex nihilo*. Usually they have been around for years and decades prior to their brief popular reign, and after their moment in the limelight they seldom become altogether extinct, but merely retreat to the fastness of this or that isolated nook of society, where they persist more or less indefinitely as remnants of the past—and also as prototypes for the future. This suggests another reason why decades are so mercurial and so hard to demarcate: they can recur. And in fact they do

recur, lending to our political and cultural history the cyclical character noted by Arthur Schlesinger, Sr. Thus, the 1950s had much in common with the 1920s, just as the 1960s bore a strong resemblance to, and in this sense were a replay of, the 1890s and 1910s.

I have just referred to the 1960s in the past tense, as if they were over and done with — but are they really? Or is what we have been witnessing these past few years only a brief lull after which the decade will come roaring back in all its stylish zeal and rancorous energy? The conventional wisdom would seem to be that the sixties are now quite extinct and can be expected to remain so. Partly this view derives from the trendmakers' current interest in divining the distinctive flavor and concerns of the 1970s — an enterprise which can proceed only on the assumption that the sixties have indeed come to an end. But there is more solid evidence as well. The urban riots that be-

(continued on page 21)

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