

Har Har, A Manifesto

The man: his eyes roving, his sweaty hand yearning for another transient flesh-pressing, his head full of what we quickly recognize as hallucinations. His dress is a confrontation between the garish and the vaguely Churchillian—there is something suggestive of a pallbearer at a homosexual funeral, yet a maniacal eagerness marks his every movement. He grins, "Call me Birch, not Senator."

The woman: her eyes roving, her face handsome enough, but her forehead suggestive of a knee, and her body lumbering beneath its caparison of contemporary elegance. Khaki is her color. She thinks in slogans, and what she thinks is not sunny. When she was a little girl she strangled the family cat.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you two gifted Americans: the first, an American Senator hotly pursuing destiny's call, the second a women's liberationist dutifully earning a handsome living for herself and a cute wire-haired terrier. These are only two of the many remarkable Americans who seek to enlighten and improve us. They are sober, assiduous, and abounding with advanced ideas. They tour the nation speaking on TV shows, on college campuses, and at prandial atrocities. They write monographs, grant interviews, and even write books. Some take to the barricades, such as they are these days. Some carry placards in front of the house where Jerry sleeps. These are the luminaries of the public discourse.

They are as moronic a mob of louts as has ever been at large in any civilized country since the dawn of Christendom, and certain intelligent persons still urge that the civilized minority grant them a respectful hearing and a serious rebuttal. It is appalling. Some notions parading around the Republic today are so preposterous and sniveling that to accord them careful analysis and courteous rejoinder is to accord them a dignity that is as undeserved as it is injurious to public morals.

Truth to tell, those who bawl for women's "liberation," homosexual "rights," black nationalism, populism, and the prohibition of tobacco in public places are charlatans whose very causes are often misnomers. The rights of women and homosexuals are practically indistinguishable from the rights of the average Americano, and when these haranguers ask for something more they are asking for privileges. If they cannot bear the burden of those privileges too bad for them. The sophistries they spin are unworthy of more than a horse-laugh. Disillusioned liberals might take them seriously, psychiatrists might take them seriously, but there is no compelling reason why the civilized minority should corrupt ratiocination by hearing them out and replying soberly.

Whoever heard of discussing immunology with a peripatetic snake-oil salesman? And why should I discuss sociology or Western History with some lunatic woman whose thesis is that rape has, since Adam, been the fundamental nexus between man and woman? Yet many otherwise sound minds lecture me on the impropriety of ridiculing that which is patently ridiculous. They withdraw to their book-lined lairs, kiss their pictures of Matthew Arnold, and essay learned and rigorous rejoinders to the fanatics of the moment. Such tracts are often engaging and occasionally even edifying, but I suspect their impact on the public discourse is rarely more forceful than the State of the Union message or the poetry of Rod McKuen. What the sober-minded always neglect is the doleful fact that the proponents of mischief and nonsense are under no obligation to respond to intelligent criticism. In fact if recent history is any guide, it is clear that they resent it and hide from it. I have never heard of a William Kunstler taking up the challenge of an Alexander Bickel nor do I expect I ever will. When the American media decide to give evenhanded treatment to some burning matter, say, black nationalism, they generally feature every fuliginous lunatic raving in the land and balance them off with a lamented kleagle or a kinky anthropologist, steeped in the lore of Nordic supremacy. In fact I would go so far as to say that most of those infamies of yesteryear still staggering around today are kept alive solely by the media, which forever seek them out to provide "balance" during discussions of today's infamies. Far from giving truth a chance to triumph over inequity, those impresarios of dialogue merely contribute to the perpetuation of delinquency. America's chief inducements to extremism and charlatantry are talk shows and the college lecture circuit. Where else could astrologers, aging radicals, and John Dean do so well?

I do not mean to denigrate serious scholarship nor do I intend to condemn an occasional serious polemic against some idiotic enthusiasm. But I do believe that a great deal of serious polemicism can be put down as wasted breath and—what is worse—delusion. Serious replies to the canards heaved up by the women of the fevered brow are no doubt useful and desirable, but they are generally useful only to those who already know what is what or to those presently in transit. When they lend dignity to an idiotic position or when they perpetuate the misconception that idiots and mischievous zealots are fetched by reason, serious replies themselves become mischievous, for they send armies of bright and civilized persons off into the archives and leave the levers of power to the cranks.

Today the vast majority of panaceas for reform and justice are, in a word, foolish. What is more they are the enthusiasms of profoundly committed fools. No amount of careful argumentation is going to disabuse these fools of them. Some analysis may clarify the issues and even offer a passing opportunity for enlightenment, but that is about it. Egalitarianism is a doctrine so bashed and battered by learned syllogisms that it is, intellectually speaking, a basket case. Yet today it rides high, and those who have pummeled it with their logic and learning are back in their libraries pondering how a world that has witnessed the likes of Einstein, Faulkner, and Charles Manson can still wobble at the thought that we are all easily and duly folded into cookie molds. They are stumped. They are prayerful. They wonder how next to battle this idiotic and baneful idea. My suggestion is that they roll up their sleeves, spit on their hands, and ridicule the rascals who afflict us.

Scholarship is important, serious analysis of contemporary problems is necessary, but when contemporary problems reek with foolishness and purposive foolishness at that, the only way to scotch the rascals is to pull off their vestments and expose their monkeyshines. What is more, in a world full of influenza, inflation, and Presidential primaries, it is about the only harmless amusement left.

Still the sober-minded resist, admonishing that, were they to give themselves over to lampooning the eminently lampoonable, the plain folk of the Republic would conclude that there exists no serious core of values for society to defend. A calumny against the plain folk, I reply, and a malversation against the record. It was not the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Commerce that accorded solemnity to the cause of the militant pederasts or to the sponsors of Alice Doesn't Day. This spoonery can be chalked up to the intelligentsia and the urban sophisticates. They are the people who pondered the absurdities of the last ten or so years; the feeble-minded amongst them capitulating to and countenancing obvious flapdoodle, while the sober-minded withdrew to the archives, and composed their tracts. The tracts have devastated every absurd claim, and today we can honestly say that women's liberation and homosexual liberation have ushered in not one intelligent or useful idea. And yet the ideas endure and menace our freedom through legal prodigies like affirmative action. It was not the plain folk who were corrupted or hoodwinked. They jeered and hooted at every asinine notion. When they heard of respected thinkers meditating on these asinine ideas they were astonished.

(continued on page 39)



Nick Thimmesch

The Abuse of Richard Nixon

Back in those miserable months of 1973 and 1974, many defenders of President Nixon thought he was being unfairly vilified by the press and by Congress. These apologists did not excuse Nixon's abuses of Presidential power, but they thought that his predecessors had likewise abused the power of their office, and that it was unfair to single out Nixon for condemnation. Nor did they try to justify the Watergate cover-up, but they thought it unfair that only Nixon's Administration was so closely scrutinized. Who knows whether previous Presidents would have also tried to obstruct justice, if they had been subject to such a blistering investigation?

This argument that Nixon's Administration was no different than his predecessors' became thinner and thinner as his case weakened and his misrepresentations swelled. By the time on August 9, 1974 when the helicopter took him away, tears and all, to exile in San Clemente, almost everyone was convinced of his singular perfidy—so that even now the pundits rave hysterically whenever his name is mentioned.

In the meantime, however, the Church committee investigation of intelligence activities has revealed a wealth of material about previous Administrations which may put Nixon's in some perspective. We learn, for example, that President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to snoop on hundreds of Americans who had sent FDR telegrams "all more or less in opposition to national defense" or that approved Charles Lindbergh's criticism of Roosevelt. A few years later, Hoover was sending "Personal and confidential" letters to President Truman which contained tidbits of political intelligence—reports of

Communist influence in a Senator's speech, advance word that a scandal was brewing which would be "very embarrassing to the Democratic administration," and confidential reports on which publications were going to break stories exposing organized crime and corrupt politicians. The Eisenhower Administration also willingly received confidential advisories from the FBI on the role of Communists in the civil rights movement and derogatory raw files on individuals charging the federal government with racial discrimination.

We learn that Presidents Kennedy and Johnson did not halt these questionable practices by the FBI, and actually were happy to make use of them. Kennedy had the FBI pursue steel company executives and newsmen alike during the steel crisis of 1962. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, despite repeated denials, had all manner of foes and suspects, including newsmen, wiretapped. He is also finally revealed to be responsible for the wiretapping and bugging of Martin Luther King, Jr. And no other President leaned on the FBI to investigate citizens suspected of being his "enemies" as Lyndon Johnson did. Members of Sen. Barry Goldwater's staff, a witness in the Bobby Baker case, government bureaucrats, people attending the 1964 Democratic convention, Mrs. Anna Chennault, Spiro Agnew, Vietnam war protesters—all fell under federal surveillance because of Johnson's feelings of fear and vengeance.

None of these Presidents ever faced the remotest possibility of impeachment. Most of them were secure with majorities of their own party in Congress, and they all presided in times when

Washington was not in the mood to disembowel itself—as was the case during Nixon's Administration. These Presidents were also smart enough not to install constant tape-recording systems in the Oval Office, nor, above all, to squander their political power ineptly. If Richard Nixon is guilty of anything at all, it is that he threw away the overwhelming support given him by the American people in 1972.

Now that we know some more about previous Administrations, however, wouldn't it be interesting to measure them by the charges drawn up by the House Judiciary Committee against President Nixon? The charges in Article I about obstruction of justice, and in Article III about contempt of Congress, refer mainly to the Watergate break-in and cover-up, and are therefore unique to the Nixon Administration. But what about the charges in Article II dealing with the abuse of Presidential power?

Consider Section 1, for example, wherein it was charged that Nixon personally and through his subordinates endeavored "to obtain from the Internal Revenue Service in violation of the constitutional rights of citizens confidential information contained in income tax returns..." and to cause tax audits and investigations "in a discriminatory manner."

It was charged that: 1) H.R. (Bob) Haldeman, invoking the President's authority, arranged to get from the IRS the report of its investigation of Gov. George Wallace and his brother, Gerald. Adverse material from that report was leaked to columnist Jack Anderson. 2) John Ehrlichman secured from the IRS the tax returns of Lawrence O'Brien, Democratic