

C U R R E N T W I S D O M

Harper's

A Mr. William Rodgers speaks his mind, as dogs howl in the night, garbage cans tip over and roll clamorously and idiotically through empty alleyways; sirens are heard, fire breaks out in the attic, there is an explosion down below, and still Mr. William Rodgers speaks of Alger, about whom Mr. Allen Weinstein has written a book titled, simply, *Perjury*: One of the people honored and admired by those whom I have known for a generation bears a name that for years was a metaphor for malevolence and the sound of serpents. He has endured a prolonged injustice that was born in passions, sustained by fears, and aged by indifference. His name, Alger Hiss, still stirs deep forebodings in some... the non-heroes of our time have won: notably Richard Nixon, whose entire political career was taprooted to inflaming domestic fears of a nearly nonexistent American defection to Communism. Then, too, among the more odious victors was the celebrated superpatriot, and patron saint of law enforcement, J. Edgar Hoover, who died peacefully in his sleep in 1971 without ever having to answer for the humiliation, anxiety, violated rights, and deaths he and his agents inflicted on heaven knows how many citizens. It took Watergate, Spiro Agnew, corporate corruption on a worldwide scale, the Pentagon Papers, and the Vietnam war to open the taps of vindication. Then it required....

[March 1980]

The New York Times Book Review

Mr. Paul Cowan, author of *The Making of an Un-American*, reviews a flawed masterpiece, which, nonetheless, is essential reading for the earnest intellectualoid:

If there were a truth-in-packaging law for books, Edmund White's "States of Desire" would violate it. For he subtitles his book "Travels in Gay America" but rarely mentions lesbians, or settled homosexual couples....

[February 3, 1980]

The New York Post

Stirring news of Marlon Brando leaping to the cause of sorely oppressed amphibia:

Superstar Marlon Brando, who commands upwards of \$2 million per picture, has agreed to put in some free time on his latest flick if the producer adds a scene featuring Brando and a drowning frog.

Brando presented the offer to Steve Shagan, producer (and writer) of *The Formula* as he completed an 11-day shooting assignment on the set.

The corpulent actor, who's drawing \$2.7 million for the part, asked Shagan to create a scene in which Brando's character—a money-hungry tycoon—rescues the drowning frog from a swimming pool.

Brando, who feels the scene would convey a strong ecological message, will work two extra days, at no pay, if Shagan agrees to the new scene.

[January 22, 1980]

The New York Review of Books

Dr. Graham Hughes, professor of law, introduces readers to another one of those novel points of the Liberal Mysteries:

The charge that we coddle criminals and neglect victims is often heard as a cry from the hysterical right but it embodies a substantial, if distorted, truth. Criminals do get a lot more attention than their victims for many reasons. First, victims frighten us.

[March 6, 1980]

The New York Times

Dr. George Yaney, professor of history at the University of Maryland, dares to speak out on behalf of freedom, justice, and the Soviet way:

To the Editor:

Your coverage of recent events in Afghanistan rests entirely on the presumption that the U.S.S.R. is endangering world peace by violating Afghanistan's sovereignty. Conversely, your reporters and editorial writers assume world peace to be equivalent to the preservation of national sovereignty.

But surely national sovereignty is a dead idea. World peace demands international management, not national independence. If Soviet leaders have found an effective way to intervene in the squalid little sheikdoms and shahdoms along the Soviet Union's southern border, we should congratulate them, for it is our work they are doing. Is it not obvious by now that world management requires the effective use of power? And is it not equally obvious that the Soviet Union is the only country in the world possessing both the means and the will to exercise power?

No one can doubt that the U.S. possesses power. So do Japan, Germany and other modern democracies. But no statesman in these "free" nations has the stomach or imagination to exercise power in any cause broader than the defense of his country's own boundaries. Only Russia seems to comprehend that the world must be managed....

This is not to say that modern democracies have no function in the world. We are very good at rhetoric, and we should continue to supply the world with words and dreams. We are also good at running markets and factories. No one can match us in quality control and the interchangeability of parts.

When it comes to the exercise of power, however, we are well advised to wash our hands of the matter. Thus far, our contribution to world peace consists largely of inept dictators, demagogues and kings who use our money to equip armies they cannot control. We have labeled this state of affairs "freedom" and "national sovereignty," which, in our quaint effrontery, we equate with world peace.

Consider, by contrast, the area for which Russia has assumed responsibility. Life there is far from perfect, but peace they have. Hungarians are not killing Rumanians; Azerbaijani are not butchering Armenians; Moslems are not massacring infidels. Russians do their work

crudely, but they do their work. Who are we to condemn them?

Before our illustrious President undertakes to lecture the Russians on the finer points of Jefferson's shabby philosophy, let him ask who it was, after all, who saved Europe and the world from Napoleon and Hitler.

[January 23, 1980]

Mother Jones

More gaseous *pensées* from the estimable Doctor Drummond, M.D. What follows is not to be read near an open flame or in the presence of those suffering emphysema or vasomotor rhinitis:

The work of men is so filled with soiling and the smearing of blood that it presumes the eventual cleaning up and caretaking by women, even as it denigrates those "feminine" functions. It was rational and humane to evacuate pregnant women and young children from the Three Mile Island vicinity, but we shouldn't necessarily ascribe these qualities to the officials there—since it would have been rational and humane to evacuate everyone. No, I suspect that the men assigned to "fix it" were eager to banish the generative presence of humanity from the workplace where such a monstrosity could be created. Behind those solemn faces under their hard hats was a child-like glee at being able to play without any mummies around, for a while.

[February/March 1980]

Publishers Weekly

The courageous and eloquent bull of a nascent Flaubert up from the locker room:

PUBLISHERS/EDITORS. I have read nearly 1000 reviews of adult fiction during the past two years. All but one had as the underlying theme of the work: heterosexuality; the status quo as norm; and mainstream society representative of reality. In short, all adult fiction published in the past two years was written in the same old way about the same old stuff, with only slight variations on a theme. My agent has been circulating my novel on women & sports for the past few months with no takers. The work is witty, humorous, very Feminist, revealing of the life-style of women athletes, clearly not representative of one kind of status quo reality, and written with a zest that is typical of women athletes. Why this ad? To pose the question: Is the sole responsibility of publishers to sustain so-called norms and status quo behavior in literature and to not permit any other type of same on the market? From my observations that seems to be true. To date, no adult fiction on women & sports and their life-style appears on the market. Friends said I was crazy to place this ad. I said, maybe there is at least one publisher willing to take on a novel on women & sports, clearly not representative of the same old stuff, written in the same old way, and take the responsibility as well as offering the public something else to read. Requests for completed manuscript on women & sports may be had by telephoning (203) 226-4560.

[February 8, 1980]

Esquire

A report on the astounding treachery of America's infamous elites from Mr. Richard Reeves, legendary sociologist:

You see signs in the lives of young black males that America has reached a consensus on the unreachable and that narcotics are part of an unspoken policy of psychological genocide—an effective tactic when combined with colonialist tricks like finding and co-opting potentially dangerous young leadership, getting them to Harvard or the state assembly before they foment rebellion.

[November 1979]

The United States Senate

Senators S.I. Hayakawa and Alan Cranston send an urgent "Dear Colleague" letter containing much useful information for the lively bodies of our government's upper house:

Dear Colleague:

We wish to inform you of the VD NATIONAL HOTLINE, sponsored by the American Social Health Association. This HOTLINE is the only round-the-clock VD information and referral service providing toll-free epidemic intervention to callers from the 48 continental states. The American Social Health Association, located in California, is the only national voluntary health organization which deals strictly with venereal disease research, education, prevention, and control.

[February 1, 1980]

The Environmental Defense Letter

The redoubtable newsletter of the Environmental Defense Fund provides vigilant nature lovers with still more evidence that even when the EDF has no idea what it is doing it is doing good:

The snail darter's fate is still unclear. Though completing the [Tellico] dam will destroy the fish in the Little Tennessee River, its only natural habitat, populations transplanted to other nearby rivers still survive. If they become successfully established, the key to their survival may well have been EDF's own lawsuit against Tellico Dam in the early 1970's, before discovery of the snail darter or passage of the Endangered Species Act. Had EDF's suit not delayed construction originally, the snail darter might have become extinct before anyone knew it existed.

[November/December 1979]

The New York Times

A brief biographical note on one of the United States Congress's most revered statesmen, the Hon. Michael O. Myers:

Mr. Myers had one brush with the law after being elected to Congress the second time. He pleaded "no contest" to charges that he beat a waitress and a security guard at an Arlington, Va., motel. Mr. Myers had been at a party after swearing-in ceremonies and was wearing a gorilla mask at the time.

[February 7, 1980]

classified

HELP WANTED

Person wanted to work in the business end of *The American Spectator*. We are looking for an individual with a sense of humor, an appetite for politics, and an appreciation for the bottom line. This is a good opportunity to work with a growing organization. Send your resumé or write for an application: Ron Burr, *The American Spectator*, P.O. Box 1969, Bloomington, IN 47402.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(continued from page 36)

ion of those easily misled by such sophistry. Those who remain unconvinced are simply laughed at.

Adelman may be correct when intimating that the SALT II treaty may be the best thing ever to happen to American foreign policy. It has inevitably become the focal point for jingoist extremists who have seized the political initiative and now hold the treaty hostage. By delaying ratification, congressional hawks hope to extract commitments from the administration and the rest of Congress to reverse America's ominous military "decline" and renew the quest for global supremacy.

We may safely conclude that any attempt at arms control which is unsuccessful at restraining arms growth will ultimately be exploited by militarists who would move the country toward the brink of nuclear confrontation by capitalizing on the political straits of politicians for whom the symbolic aspects of a SALT treaty yield considerable utility.

Mark D. Travis
Denver, Colorado

Kenneth Adelman replies:

Where to begin? So much has happened since Mr. Travis composed his letter. For one thing, President Carter has used the "standard right-wing elixir for America's 'dangerous' military decline" to call (Dec. 12) for an average 4.5 percent real annual defense increase over the next five years and more than 5 percent real boost next year. He may go even higher after Afghanistan and before the complete budget is announced. For another, the President has joined us "jingoist extremists" who "now hold the treaty hostage." No SALT II for a while, he told the Senate and the nation. Not a peep of opposition has been heard on either the defense boosts or the shelving of SALT II. To me, we're in the fine position of having SALT's lessons without its provisions (legally, at least).

A note of confession on Mr. Travis' charge of my mentioning some "gurus" to be "simply laughed at." One so mentioned, William Sloane Coffin, headed to Iran for Christmas, after the article was published, saying he could not understand the American public's hurry in getting the hostages released and comparing President Carter's sanctions against Iran to President Johnson's bombings of North Vietnam. Such statements are no laughing matter. The Reverend should be held up to more than scorn. No wonder the "students" at the U.S. Embassy in Teheran have such disdain for the

U.S. after greeting the Rev. Coffin as the emissary from the Left and Rep. George Hansen from the Right.

A small clarification: The measures of strategic power need not be specified in this type of popular article but are readily available in the Secretary of Defense's past two *Posture Statements* (Charts 1A-1) which come to the conclusion I presented. Greater detail is contained in a 1978 study for the Defense Nuclear Agency, which found the Soviets ahead in 33 of the 41 measures of strategic power.

A larger clarification: The "fundamental assumptions underlying U.S. strategic doctrine" have been bound up in the MAD doctrine of "mutual assured destruction." This holds as the goal of strategic weapons to assure an unacceptable level of damage to the opponent in a retaliatory second strike. This is a fine doctrine except for one small factor: The Soviets have never bought it, as seen by their large and redundant air and civil defense systems and their relentless ICBM buildup. It would be guileless to expect the Soviet Union to be the first nation in history to achieve military superiority and not try to exploit it for political if not military purposes.

I surmise Mr. Carter has now come to that realization and I hope that Mr. Travis has as well.

The Spy Who Came In For a Scold

I hope you will permit me to disagree with Karl O'Lessker's lengthy review of the allegedly "brilliant" novels by John le Carré ("*Le Carré's People*," March 1980). Last summer I was kindly invited by some friends to spend a few days by the seashore. One day it poured with rain and so I retired to my room with the copy of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* that was lying around the house. Everyone seemed to be saying that it was wonderful. I should say that I was at that time immersed in welfare research, and had even brought with me some government welfare proceedings (just in case, so to speak). But I imagined, as I stretched out on my bed, that le Carré would make for welcome relief.

How wrong I was! Within an hour or so, I realized I didn't have much idea what was going on in Smileyland or why, or who was saying what to whom. After another hour I was totally in the dark, and eventually I threw down the book in disgust, turning to my welfare documents with renewed enthusiasm. I found the bureaucratic prose to be a model of lucidity compared with le Carré.

The British press has been somewhat less enthusiastic about le Carré

lately. "A dull dog is Smiley, waddling introspectively at your heels for 327 solemn pages," Richard Barkley wrote of *Smiley's People* in the *Sunday Express*. Richard Ingrams noted in the *Spectator*: "The poor fellow has completely lost his touch and can no longer write clearly."

The main trouble with le Carré's books, when all is said and done, is that they are so boring to read. All the action seems to take place off-stage, for one thing. Does this make it great literature? I have my doubts. The life of the spy may indeed be dull, as le Carré wants us to know, but art shouldn't mirror life all *that* faithfully.

Tom Bethell
Washington, D.C.

Perverse Toryism

I have come across what I consider to be a classic definition of "neoconservatism" which I thought that you might enjoy. Besides being poetic, it proves that "neoconservatism" is not new at all, but has been a historical companion/antidote to all progressive follies. Speaking of Jonathan Swift in "Politics vs. Literature," George Orwell writes:

Politically, Swift was one of those people who are driven into a sort of perverse Toryism by the follies of the progressive party of the moment.

F.L. Morton
Worcester, Massachusetts

Nuke the Novelist

The megaton of literary criticism over Norman Mailer in the pages of the February *American Spectator* leaves me wondering what remains. Seems that the writing of *The Executioner's Song* brought this forgotten target into range. If nothing else, Mailer may go down in the history of literature as the hack who was atomized by the greatest critical blast of the nuclear age.

Risto Marttinen
Falls Church, Virginia

Give Me Solar or Give Me Death

According to Joseph Shattan ("*The No-Nuke Wind Ensemble*," March 1980), people who oppose nuclear power don't like America—apparently because they'd prefer to see American citizens alive and healthy instead of riddled with bent chromosomes or cooked alive like meatloaf in a microwave oven. I for one believe it when the Right says it will defend America to the death: your death, and mine—ours.

Samuel Putz
Schenectady, New York

Why Not The Worst?

Tyrrell's Prose and High Moral Character Judged by Readers Across America

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.'s writing—in *The American Spectator*, *Harper's*, *Commentary*, the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and in *Public Nuisances*—always elicits admiring and courteous responses from the *crème de la crème* of American intellectualoids. Hundreds of letters have poured in throughout the year. Here is a sampling of some of the most thoughtful:

"I am appalled..." Bridgeport, Conn. "...a new low in journalism." Boulder, Colo. "I do not worry about the Emmett Tyrrells of the world. The gutters are crawling with them." Jenkintown, Penn. "...the lowest kind of **journalistic prostitution.**" Calgary, Alberta, Canada. "...**disgusting falsehoods** and venomous generalizations..." Buffalo, N.Y. "...**extremely infantile and vulgar.**" Kokomo, Ind.

"I am appalled..." Annandale, Va. "Mr. Tyrrell's article illustrates everything that we at the university so passionately reject." Edwardsville, Ill. "...**a piece of trash.**" Buffalo, N.Y. "...uses language in an **irresponsible and dangerous manner.**" Evanston, Ill. "The article is not only **outrageous.** It frightens me." Washington, D.C. "...**an exercise in bad taste.**" Toledo, Ohio. "...neither amusing nor intelligent." Washington, D.C. "...**flagrantly ignorant...**" Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

"I am appalled..." Bozeman, Mont. "Where does Mr. Tyrrell get his knowledge? From old movies?" Pontiac, Mich. "...**viciously biased...**" Lincoln, Neb. "...**juvenile stereotyping.**" Akron, Ohio. "...without purpose and an **insult to minimal intelligence.**" Venice, Cal. "I simply could not believe my eyes." Oxford, Penn. "...**ugly...**" Worcester, Mass.



Such thoughtful comments suggest that *The American Spectator* is unlikely to become required reading for the sensitive and idealistic of the Republic.

After all, *The American Spectator* obstinately defends and admires such quaint values as freedom, democracy, and excellence.

The American Spectator is unfashionably skeptical of such trendy piffles as women's liberation, reform politicians, Ralph Nader, hygiene of any kind, and singles bars.

And *The American Spectator's* editor revels in treating venerable world leaders with puckish irreverence. President Carter, for example, "remains adamant in going by the first name of a little

boy," and Mao Tse-tung was, in Tyrrell's eyes, "the pudgiest revolutionary of the century... a plump little butterball."

If you are an aspiring intellectualoid, *The American Spectator* is poison. Stick with *Rolling Stone* or *Ontology Today*. But if you hold to *complicated* views of the world that bustles beyond your nose, if you delight in forming your own opinions, and if you want to know what some of the best writers in America are saying to discomfit some of the most preposterous lightweights, read *The American Spectator*, the magazine that appalls.

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My name _____

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City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Gift for: _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Gift card to read from " _____ "

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