Views, Reviews and

PERSUASION

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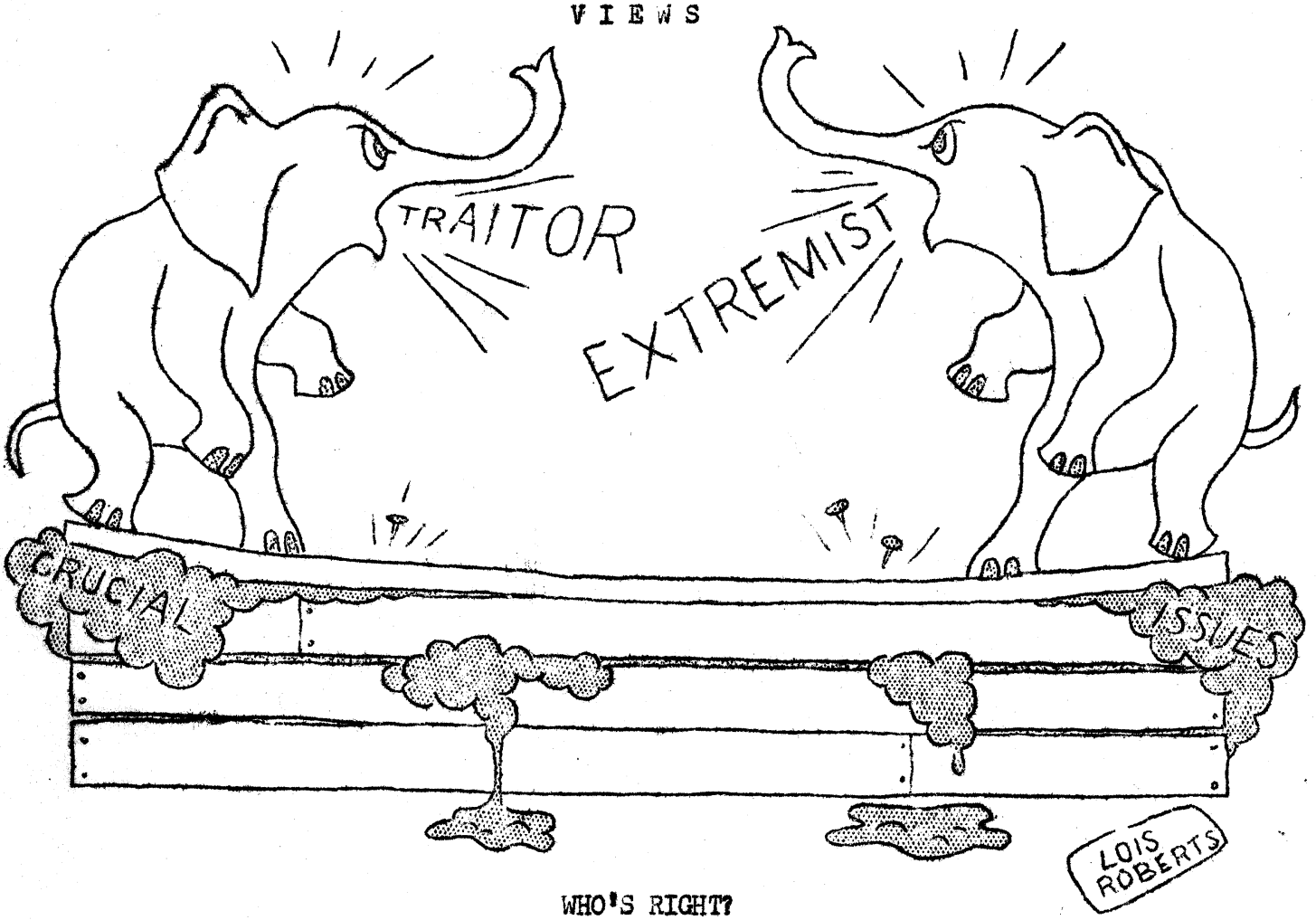
VIEWS



WHO'S RIGHT?

If there is one principle more than any other that we would like to see stressed in American politics today, it is the principle that most men are rational and make their decisions according to the evidence presented to them.

Why rationality in politics, rather than limited government, or fiscal responsibility, or any specific opinion on political questions? Because it is more basic. After all, this is the fundamental assumption on which the importance of the vote in representative government must rest--in order to succeed at the business of staying alive, a man must learn to use his mind and have some experience at making choices and decisions based on facts. How else could he harvest a crop, or mend a fence, or run a lathe or drive an automobile? Naturally, not <u>every</u> man is rational--there are indeed cranks and madmen--but the presumption we can safely draw is that most of them are.

Our very jury system puts the size of the sample we must have at an astonishingly low figure, when you come to think of it--it says that when as few as twelve men deliberate and agree on something, we can assume that they have thought about it. Not that they are necessarily right, mind you. We still have a complex apparatus of appeals to guard against the ever-present human possibility of error--but the fact remains that, even with the appeals procedure, if this fundamental assumption of man's rationality were totally unwarranted, the jury system could not work. How could we scoop up a handful of people at random and expect justice to be done by them unless it were really true that all people are capable of understanding the concept of justice, and that most of them do understand it?

But when it comes to trying to scoop up a handful of voters, it's often a different story. It is claimed that Republicans lost the last election because the political principles for which Mr. Goldwater stood did not appeal to the electorate. How does anyone know? He did not make clear either what those principles were, or how they applied to the specific problems any president must face. Rather than treat the American people as a jury, which has to be presented with facts and evidence and plausible theories before any emotional appeal can be made, Mr. Goldwater relied on a single word to sum up his case before he had presented it. The word was "Conservative," and it couldn't do the job. No word could, but this particular one has come to connote a belief, not an intellectual position.

Many groups in this country call themselves Conservatives. What they have in common is a broad area of agreement on certain political ends. These generally include less government intervention into the economy, a diminution in Federal power and a retreat from the policy of deficit spending. But what these groups do not have in common is an agreement on either political programs or political approach. Possibly they could never agree on political approach, because they do not in general share the conviction that men do in fact live by reason.

Two outstanding mistakes are made by many of those calling themselves Conservatives. Each of these mistakes is in its own way a denial of the importance of reason. These are 1) the attempt to claim that our political system must be based on religious belief, and 2) the attempt to blame all public policies or decisions with which they disagree on a Communist conspiracy.

In Gore Vidal's play, The Best Man, the ex-President of the United States says, "In my day God was a sauce you had to sprinkle on everything." Americans have become so used to off-hand pious references in political speeches and discussions that they often overlook the growing attempt of some conservative spokesmen to claim that religion is the most important characteristic of our society--more fundamental than the right to vote, or the right of free speech, or the ownership of private property. The claim is that the prime difference between our system of government and that of the Soviet Union is that the Soviet Union is atheistic and we are not. Let me demonstrate with an example.

Clarence Manion, a lawyer and former Professor of Constitutional Law who was for eleven years Dean of the College of Law at the University of Notre Dame, is a man who speaks on behalf of conservatives, and, presumably weighs his words when considering the Constitution. In a book called The Conservative American, he states the following: "Without God, none of our legal and political institutions makes sense." He then expands on this theme: "As Madison stated in the Federalist, our entire political experiment swings upon our capacity to govern ourselves according to the moral law. . . . The only people who can afford the great luxury of a civil government strictly limited by law are those people who recognize and are willing to live by their natural, God-imposed obligations and responsibilities under the Ten Commandments."

In the context, Dean Manion seems to mean this to imply that a citizen has responsibilities as well as rights in society, an idea by no means new. But, whatever he intends, what he says is that people who are immoral according to Judeo-Christian standards have no rights to be protected by limitations on what government can do to them.

Would he then justify a curfew, because the people on whom it was imposed were "immoral"? Would he consider that whatever the government decided to do to the adulterer, to the perjurer, or to the member of some tribal religious sect was subject to no proper limitation, because these people had broken one or more of the Ten Commandments?

There are two questionable points here, which are related but not identical. One is the concept of the government as the enforcer of a moral code. The second is the question of the appropriateness of introducing questions of faith into a secular argument. On the first point, it should be noted that the concept of limited government requires that the government be only concerned with questions of force or fraud. A limited government can only act in certain areas--those areas where it must act to protect the rights of its citizens. Unless he uses force on another, a citizen has a right to be immoral--and this is so no matter what the moral code of those who control the government. According to some exponents of the Judeo-Christian code, for instance, the worst sin of all is pride. But there have been no suggestions that it be made illegal. Similarly, we might agree that it is immoral to be a drunkard, or a drug addict--but does this mean that we should have laws prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages or drugs? An affirmative position cannot be reconciled with a strict adherence to the concept of limited government, under which a man has a right to be wrong.

The introduction of the Ten Commandments as a basis for our form of government cannot be supported. The Ten Commandments include prohibitions against certain violations of the rights of others--but they also include moral questions which are none of the government's business. To say nothing of the fact that, historically, many of our institutions are derived from antecedents which were formulated before the Ten

Commandments were known. Are we really going to allow the defense to rest with the contention that the development of Greek democracy and Roman law required the Ten Commandments?

We cannot afford to rest any part of the case for capitalism on the shaky ground of faith. Ours is a secular government, and it must be justified (or not) on secular terms. By introducing God into the argument, Dean Manion has said that to those who do not accept his faith there can be no defense for our institutions. Although he makes many eloquent points in defense of limited government and a free market, he has rested them all on a question of belief. His ultimate view of political argument is that it requires a non-rational base, and he thus undermines his position as an advocate.

I contend that the fact of man's rationality is what makes our legal and political institutions "make sense," and that the question of religion is and must be irrelevant when discussing or defending political institutions. I further contend that a civil government strictly limited by law is not a luxury at all; it is a moral and practical necessity. And that the way in which people earn it is not by believing in God or learning the Ten Commandments, but simply by considering politics as something which is in fact part of their lives, and by giving at least as much thought to the choice of a political leader as they do to the choice of a laundry or a grocer. In a republic, politics is everybody's business. But even the man who gives it no thought has rights which the government must not violate.

If we base our approach to politics on anything but the fact of reason, we are apt to find ourselves in trouble. When a method of thinking which is considered mentally ill when its targets are one's family and neighbors becomes dignified as a political theory merely by being applied to people who are not personal acquaintances, something is wrong. It is certainly easier to explain complex political happenings by assuming that all the politicians with whom one disagrees are communist spies, just as it is easier to explain one's own inadequacies in life by assuming that "They are all conspiring against me." But the personal satisfaction that such an explanation may bring doesn't make it true.

One of the most dangerous consequences of this kind of thinking is the damage it does to the very side it purports to support. Because there is in fact a Communist conspiracy and there was in fact a coup d'état in Czechoslovakia. When one makes a wholesale allegation against a large group of "Communists, fellow travellers and liberals" (thus protecting oneself against libel suits while indicating that any particular individual in the list may well be a spy) it is not beyond the realm of possibility that there may indeed be a bona fide, full-grown Communist somewhere in that list.

And what you have done, in your misplaced zeal, is to clear him. Whenever one makes an unsupported allegation, what one is doing is implying that it cannot be

supported. This is why documentation, evidence and proof is so important, and why invective is such a boomerang upon those who use it. Forever after, that Communist who happened to fall into your net is safer than he was. For if a question arises about him in the future, people only need say, "What, he a Communist? Why that's that old smear that Joe Schmo tried to prove years ago, and couldn't."

Another disastrous consequence of the conspiracy theory is that it necessarily assumes bad faith on the part of one's opposition, thus sparing one the effort of disproving their arguments. If all those who uphold the welfare state are either dupes or traitors, there is obviously no point in speaking to sixty per cent of the electorate who voted for President Johnson--they are beyond the pale.

But if we hold that most men must arrive at their conclusions by using reason, then we must also hold that when they arrive at a conclusion with which we don't agree, they have their reasons.

Both sides in the current political conflict within the Republican party (it is rarely a debate) are guilty of avoiding argument. It is equally invalid to call your opponents extremists or traitors. But upon those who propose a change in the political scene falls the responsibility of explaining the consequences of that change in detail. It is not enough to pretend that it is the other fellow who wants to do the changing, by saying you want to "conserve" tradition. The advocates of fiscal responsibility, of a re-evaluation of the proper function of government, of a drastic curtailing of government power and government intervention into the economy, are asking for radical changes. Changes in power structure, changes in law, changes in prevalent political and economic philosophy. And they are asking for these changes at the end of half a century of detailed arguments on the part of the supporters of the welfare state.

If dedicated advocates of capitalism and political freedom wish to sound the alarm, they are going to have to answer all of those arguments, and many new ones. They will have to turn the spotlight on the inadequacies and inequities of present governmental policies. They will have to be prepared to answer the claim that, inadequate as present government programs may be, any alternative to them would spell ruin to the entire country. They will have to show how the same problems could be better solved by an unshackled economy. They will have to formulate specific programs and general theoretical positions, and explain them again and again. But primarily, they will have to value a reasoned approach to politics above any specific political goal they may have in mind. The man who has reached a wrong conclusion by a right method can potentially be convinced of his mistake, but the man who has stumbled upon a right conclusion without thinking cannot.

--Joan Kennedy Taylor

P E R S U A S I O N

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QUIS CUSTODIET CUSTODIENS?

On Tuesday, January 26, in an article entitled "When Urban Renewal Goes Wrong," New York Herald Tribune staff writers Barry Gottehrer and Marshall Peck told the story of a small businessman, Bill Brady, who had been assured that New York City's urban renewal program would not include in its plans a building he was going to buy. He therefore bought the building and moved his retail tire business into it. Mr. Brady has now discovered that the boundaries of a nearby urban renewal project, which had been set five years before, have changed, and his building is scheduled to be demolished. Mr. Brady paid $250,000 for the property. The city is offering him compensation of $150,000.

But the most instructive information in the Tribune story is the reaction of "one city official connected with the program." After pointing out that the boundaries for the project have changed many times, because "That's the way planning has to work," he went on to comment, "Hell, there are no guarantees about anything in this life. We can't guarantee that your building won't be burned down by an arsonist either."

Once it was considered that an honest man should be able to live his life through without coming in contact with the government. Today, a government official is willing to admit that an honest citizen may have as much to fear from the government as he has from the actions of a criminal.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS

The organization known as Americans for Democratic Action has received widespread publicity as an ultra-liberal group. Indeed, it was interesting to note that during the last Presidential campaign they circulated some of Mr. Goldwater's more principled and outspoken statements in his books and speeches without comment, as if it were self-evident that our foreign and domestic policies were beyond attack.

One of these policies at present is, of course, cultural exchange, so ADA has now announced ADA Tours, "for a unique summer in 1965." The tours are only open to ADA members and their immediate families, who have a choice of the April World Trip, the July World Trip, the Mediterranean Trip, 2 South American Trips (A and B), the Eastern European Trip and the Russian Trip.

"For a most imaginative itinerary which puts no strain on your budget, go ADA, the deluxe way," says the brochure. The Comprehensive Tour of Russia takes 29 days and includes (besides first class hotels and all meals) "briefings and visits to socialized institutions; a collective farm, pioneer youth camp, workers rest home, etc." There is also "Comprehensive sightseeing of mysterious Russia's his-

toric cities." This rather incredible description ends "Wing your way to West Berlin, cross into East Berlin. Many exciting adventures await you before your final day of leisure in London."

Exciting adventures in East Berlin? It hardly seems possible that this is not an elaborate spoof, were it not for the fact that a spoof of such a nature would be in such atrocious taste. By ignoring all that one has heard and read about the nature of conditions in the Soviet Union, it might be barely possible to be herded around that country by "an Intourist courier" and see showplaces, colorful costumes, and no distressing sights. But how would it be possible to ignore the countless newsreels, TV specials, newspaper pictures and even radio accounts of men, women, and children attempting to escape from East Berlin, and many being shot in the process?

You would think that even if ADA members didn't care for human beings, they would at least remember the dogs that have been shot at the Berlin Wall.

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VITAL STATISTICS

In Volume 3, No. 2 of a magazine called The Individualist, which is published by the Intercollegiate Society of Individualists, Inc., of Philadelphia, we found some facts and figures about socialized medicine in England which are worth pondering.

These figures were reported in an article called "A Lesson From Britain" by John A. Marlin, who is described as a 1962 graduate of Harvard in his final year at Trinity College, Oxford. Mr. Marlin's article is annotated, and he has gathered his information from British medical journals, pamphlets, and doctors, including at least one report, "The Field of Work and the Family Doctor" issued under the auspices of the Minister of Health.

Here then are some of Mr. Marlin's figures on the 15 years since 1948, when the National Health Service came into operation:

--Inflation increased general prices three times over between 1938 and 1960. During the same period, medical running expenses went up nearly five times.

--Three well-known British hospitals: Guy's, Charing Cross and Royal Portsmouth, had less beds in 1960 than they did in 1938.

--Hospital administrative costs have multiplied from 11 to 18 times over.

--Half of the total number of doctors in Britain are general practitioners. Nearly a third of these have more than 3,000 patients on their "panel." Half of them have more than 2,500.

--Today there are fewer hospital beds in Britain per thousand inhabitants than there were in 1935.

--Between 1929 and 1938 the number of hospital beds increased by 33%. Between 1950 and 1960 the number of hospital beds increased by less than 5%.

--For "minor" operations, some people wait as long as 18 months.

--About one quarter of the graduates of

British medical schools emigrate.

--During 1960, more doctors trained in the British Isles emigrated to the U.S. than during the entire period 1930-1939.

--The total number of students at British universities has doubled since the war. The number studying medicine has been decreasing since the N.H.S.--from 14,200 in 1950 to 12,700 in 1958.

--Before World War II, the British public spent an estimated 180 million pounds per year on all medical services. In 1960 the N.H.S. cost them 820 million pounds.

--No rebates are given in any form for those who wish private insurance rather than the N.H.S. Before the N.H.S. started, a hundred thousand people carried such private insurance. This number increased to one million by 1960.

--40% of British general practitioners have some private patients. This, states Mr. Marlin, "has been responsible for the maintenance of some of the best traditions of the medical profession in the country."

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***Ed. Note: In our January 1965 issue (Volume II, No. 1) the author of The Federal Bulldozer (p. 10) was misspelled. It was written by Professor Martin Anderson.