



## REFLECTIONS

by George Charles Roche III

Dr. George Roche, founder of the Center for Constructive Alternatives and of its journal, IMPRIMIS, is eleventh president of Hillsdale College. The CCA, located on Hillsdale's campus, seeks to emphasize, in an academic setting, the philosophical, moral, and spiritual values which underlie a free society.

### The Right Hand and the Left Hand

American Liberalism's body of dogma has long contained a determined faith in the capacity of the Federal Government to intervene affirmatively in the affairs of its citizens. Another article of the Liberal faith, held with equal determination, has been the belief that Federal money does not produce Federal control, particularly in educational matters.

These two articles of faith have always seemed to be in direct contradiction, at least to some of us who do not share the Liberal mystique. Either the government intervenes in the affairs of men or it does not. Surely we cannot have it both ways in the real world.

Now the real world is beginning to cause a few problems for certified American Liberals in good standing. Many of the same educators who have long advocated government intervention in the personal and institutional affairs of our society are beginning to find that they themselves are fair game for the intervention process. The right hand is finally discovering what the left hand has been up to all along.

Acting under the terms of a seven-year-old executive order originally signed by Lyndon Johnson, the United States Government is now insisting that every Federal contractor with fifty or more employees in a contract in excess of \$50,000 must be required to submit an "affirmative action plan," describing how it will change its hiring procedures to increase the number of women and minority group members it employs. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare is now applying this executive order to the college and university campuses. Suddenly the cries of outrage are springing up all over the country.

Princeton University was recently threatened by HEW to the effect that its \$20 million annual subsidy from the Federal Treasury would not be continued unless significant progress were demonstrated in bringing more women and minority group members to its faculty. Columbia University had \$13.8 million in Federal funds suspended until recently. Harvard, Cornell, and the University of Michigan are all having similar experiences.

A special Office of Civil Rights has been set up to enforce the "affirmative action plan" on two thousand campuses across the country. The new director of the Office, Mr. J. Stanley Pottinger, is worried because he has only seventy-seven contract compliance officers. As Mr. Pottinger phrases it in the finest bureaucratic tradition, it is an "administrative nightmare trying to monitor affirmative action plans at two thousand institutions with so few people." No doubt Mr. Pottinger will soon be provided with a larger staff to investigate every campus in the country. There is also little doubt that some other government agency will soon be investigating the "affirmative action plan" for Pottinger's Office of Civil Rights. Among his seventy-seven contract compliance officers, he has a staff of fifty-eight men and nineteen women. Clearly there is something here which demands Federal attention.

A number of those educators who so merrily climbed on the Federal funding bandwagon in past years are now having second thoughts. The matter of compliance with Federal rulings in this area is becoming increasingly complicated. For example, in the latest Columbia plan to deal with the new minority

imprimis (im-pri' mīs) adv. in the first place Middle English, from Latin *in primis*, among the first (things). . .

IMPRIMIS is the journal from The Center for Constructive Alternatives. As an exposition of ideas and first principles, it offers alternative solutions to the problems of our time.

group and women hiring guidelines, whenever an appointment is made which does not contribute to fulfillment of a previously stated goal, it becomes the responsibility of Columbia Vice-President William deBary to demonstrate to HEW that a "good faith effort" was made to find a woman or a minority-group member to fill the position in question. As the dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism complained, "We cannot, in essence, hire, promote, or give a raise to anyone without clearing it over there. Are they really trying to tell us we cannot promote our own assistant professors without setting up a nation-wide search?"

One of the effects of the new hiring pressures may well be a lowering of quality in the teachers hired. Professor Sydney Hook, outgoing president of the University Centers for Rational Alternatives, is of the opinion that the primary effect of the new pressures will be the hiring of unqualified applicants to fill faculty hiring quotas. Perhaps Columbia Vice-President deBary was speaking for a generation of freshly educated educators when he recently described the "very subtle forms of influence that can develop when you are in a position of financial dependency on the government."

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### Sesame Street

Not long ago a most charming and gracious lady, lively of mind and heart, brought an instructive story to my attention. The lady in question has small children of her own and is quite properly concerned with their education and the values which will form their later lives. An avid reader herself, she was pleased to discover that Sesame Street — the popular "educational" television program for children — was presenting fables which both entertained the children and pointed a moral. At least she was happy about this until she began to listen carefully to the Sesame Street version of some of these fables. Thereby hangs a most interesting tale concerning how we educate our youngsters today.

The old Russian folk tale, "My Mother is the Most Beautiful Woman in the World," is a charming tale about a little girl who lived long ago in a busy and happy rural family. The tale describes at length the warm and wonderful relationship which the child had with her gentle and hard-working mother. One day the little girl wandered away from the field where her family was taking in the harvest. She fell asleep and awoke only at dark. Confused by the darkness, she drifted further and further away from her own home and village and was found during the night by strangers from a neighboring village.

When the strangers attempted to question the little girl about her home and family, all the little girl could say by way of description was that her mother was "the most beautiful woman in the world." Women were brought in from far and near in an effort to discover the child's mother. Every beauty from miles around came to see the youngster. But each time the little girl would say with a sob, "No, no! I told you, my mother is the most beautiful woman in the world."

When the villagers had nearly given up hope of finding the little girl's mother, a heavy, sunburned, plain, nearly toothless woman pushed her way through the crowd. With a cry of delight the little girl rushed to her mother, burying her head in the ample maternal bosom. She raised her head to address all the strange villagers, announcing with great pride, "This is my mother! I told you my mother is the most beautiful woman in the world!"

On the way home, the little girl told her mother that she had been teased by some of the other children, who laughed at her for describing her mother as the most beautiful woman in the world. The other children had told her that there were beautiful queens and princesses and rich ladies, great and powerful people like the Czarina, who were surely more beautiful than her poor peasant mother. "Mamochka," the little girl continued, "I know that some of those women have more beads than you. Some have bigger and wider skirts. Maybe some of them can sing and dance better than you can. But, Mamochka, to me, you are the most beautiful woman in the world."

The story ends as the plain hard-working mother smiles happily at her child and replies, "Some people see with their eyes alone. Others see with their hearts too. I am grateful and lucky that you see with your heart, as well as with your eyes."

So ends a beautiful story pointing a beautiful moral. A child reading such a story would quickly understand the vital importance of seeing with one's heart. Such a child would also perceive that there is more to be experienced in this world than the obvious, merely material things which surround us.

Unfortunately, the Sesame Street writers felt the necessity of editing this particular fable. The lost girl becomes a lost boy, and the final conversation between mother and daughter is removed from the story entirely, to be replaced by a narrator who tells the children:

"There is a lesson to be learned here. To me she is not beautiful, but to this young lad here, his mother is the most beautiful woman in the world. What is not beautiful to some, may be very beautiful to others."

In short, by the time Sesame Street has concluded its version of the story, the lasting values of mother love and inner beauty are replaced with a relativistic commercial, announcing to the children that one person's opinion is just as good as another's, presumably because no measurable values exist by which opinion can be measured.

Such is the "educational" message which comes from the tube these days. A similar relativistic treatment has been given other fables, as, for example, the familiar story of the country mouse and the city mouse. In the Sesame Street version, all that is left of the original tale is a commercial in favor of everyone "doing their own thing."

The thoughtful and well-read mother who first brought these distortions to my attention is more charitable than I. She writes:

"I think the Sesame Street writers make

such alterations, not so much to promote their philosophical position (of which they may or may not be aware), but to prevent formation of prejudice in small children, and to give minority children a sense of pride in themselves and in their differences. The intent is, in itself, admirable, but, in fact, their approach plunges the pre-school child into a chaos of possibility, a sea of never-ending shades of gray where all blacks and whites are obliterated. Everything is 'good' if only seen from the proper viewpoint, and absolutes are prejudicial."

I share this mother's view of how prejudicial such moral flabbiness is likely to be, though I am less assured that our modern "educators" are so unaware of the damage they do.

### Parental Responsibility

Since the landmark decision of *Brown vs. Topeka* in the mid-fifties, we have been placing more and more of our educational affairs in the hands of "sociological jurisprudence." Though Earl Warren himself has departed the bench, together with some of the other votaries of "sociological jurisprudence," the effect of the Warren Court is still very much with us.

Congress is currently in an uproar over the latest manifestation of Supreme Court sociology: the busing issue. Such a deep nerve has been touched in the American people that many politicians (who normally have few if any reservations on the question of controlling people's lives by government intervention) are now beginning to have their doubts.

The mills of the gods grind slowly, and never more slowly than when intelligent action is required of a political body. But while the solons debate the pros and cons of busing other people's children, the parents themselves have no time to wait.

A morning's paper contains a front page story of a Pontiac, Michigan, father now on trial for "child neglect," because he refused to allow his 13-year-old daughter to be bused across town. The trial of Mr. Carl Merchant is the test case in Pontiac's controversial court-ordered school busing. Following Federal Judge Damon Keith's massive school busing order to achieve "racial balance" in Pontiac schools, the harassed officials of the Pontiac School District have found their projected enrollment of 24,000 falling to less than 22,000 in the current school year. Apparently a number of parents feel as Carl Merchant must feel. Surely it should surprise no one to discover that parents who build their plans around youngsters should resent and resist a judicial fiat which turns their world up side down. Now it is the unhappy task of the Pontiac School District officials to bring suit against these parents who are interested in their children, and Carl Merchant and his daughter Cari are first to feel the pressure.

Merchant, a 34-year-old weld inspector at General Motors Fisher Body plant in Pontiac, bought a new

home last year some four blocks from Lincoln Junior High School, in a predominantly white neighborhood. One of the main bases for his selection of the neighborhood was that he thought the nearby school would be a good one for Cari and the other six Merchant children. Suddenly Mr. Merchant discovered that the courts could overturn all these carefully laid plans for the education of his youngsters. He protested in every means available to him, but found that the ideology of "racial balance" left him no control over the education of his own children.

As Pontiac Police Captain Harry Nye testified at Merchant's jury trial, Jefferson Junior High School (the school to which Cari would be bused) is in an "unsafe area." Asked by Defense Attorney Richard Kuhn whether he would let a white, 13-year-old girl walk alone down the streets in the Jefferson school area, Nye said, "no." Nye said because of the high crime in the district, even policemen never enter the area except in pairs.

All questions of race aside, which of us would allow our 13-year-old daughter to be exposed to such a situation? Incidentally, questions of race should be set aside in this matter. The recent hearings on busing in the Buffalo schools brought out both black and white parents, all insisting that their children be let alone and be allowed to attend the schools in their own neighborhoods. Apparently none of us, black or white, have any compelling desire to see our children used as guinea pigs in sociological experiments.

"A lot of people feel the same way but they are too damn afraid to fight the busing order," Merchant said at the trial. "The people of Pontiac and Detroit have to know what's going on. I feel that I'm representing more people than just me."

You are indeed, Mr. Merchant. You are representing many parents deeply concerned about their youngsters.

### London: the Price of Socialism

For a pleasant day's walk, London is by far the best of the big cities. The shops are varied, the bookstores numerous, the people friendly. There is an agreeable bustle of traffic, without the crowding and discourtesy which plagues New York. The food is reasonably good — though the walker soon learns to be a bit choosy in the eating places he selects. It seems that the Englishman-on-the-street will settle for dreadful stuff served in many small London eateries, where the food does not measure up to similar casual eating places in Paris, Munich or New York.

The streets are a bit cleaner, the passerby a bit more friendly. In fact, the walker who is exploring on his own is likely to have a fine time, if he can remember to look in the correct direction before stepping into traffic. The left-hand traffic is always coming at the pedestrian from the wrong way, leading to some exciting moments for the unwary. This is not my first visit to London, but I continue instinctively to check the traffic in the wrong direction,

with my head turned away from British motorists who, so far at least, have been able to miss me as I step into their path. In the United States, a taxi driver would leave my ears ringing with abuse for such a stunt. In Germany, I would by now be a souvenir on the front bumper of a typically aggressive driver. In Britain, the most violent reaction to date has been a silent upward-rolling of the eyes imploring heaven to keep American tourists out of the street. Even at this late date the Englishman is a gentleman.

For the American shopper, there is no shortage of attractive goods, generally at prices somewhat below United States levels. But the impression persists that the typical Britisher is poor by American standards. The people on the streets of London, with an occasional exception, do not strike the casual walker as sharing any high degree of prosperity.

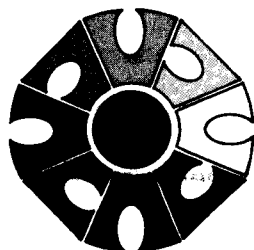
The reason is not far to seek. Though the goods for sale are not high priced by American standards, the Britisher's wage level leaves many consumer goods beyond reach. Though cars, shoes and food are not unreasonably priced for this age of inflation, the purchasing power of the public has quite clearly not kept pace. Large advertisements encourage young Londoners to join the postal service, where mail carriers are now "paid as high as 26 pounds per week." At the current exchange rate, that is a weekly income

of \$65. Try living the affluent life of consumerism in in the United States on \$65 a week!

Even the construction unions, with their strangle hold on the British economy, are not yet to the "guaranteed weekly wage of 30 pounds." As this column is written, the city of London displays on every hand silent, half-finished buildings where all construction has halted in an industry-wide strike for the 30 pound guaranteed wage. In the United States, that would mean a strike to achieve \$75 a week basic pay on construction work, a figure far below the going rate.

Britain has led the world in socialist measures in an economy dominated by labor union monopoly power. Since World War II, the labor dominated economy has relentlessly pushed up wages while resisting every effort to maintain or increase productivity. The result is the highest wage in British history, with comparatively low real purchasing power. All pay and no productivity was fun for a time, but the end result has been to price available goods out of the market for the British worker, until only the consumer armed with foreign exchange can afford to buy British products.

American labor might profit from this object lesson — while there remains the opportunity to change our ways.



## Center for constructive alternatives

**Your Brother's Keeper: From Genesis to Galbraith is the second CCA Seminar.**

What does man owe to God, to himself, to his fellow men, to the state? What is the proper role of the state? What does the state owe to its citizens? What do nations and social classes owe each other? Must authority and morality be imposed from without, or are they interwoven self-generating fibers in the fabric of man?

These, and many other questions, will be the subject of inquiry the week of November 6-10.

All papers and selected dialogue will be published and made available to the friends of IMPRIMIS.

**Participating, among others, with the students and faculty of Hillsdale College will be:**

Rev. Dr. Harold O.J. Brown  
Associate Editor of Christianity Today

Dr. Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn  
Author, Political and Social Analyst

F.A. Harper  
President  
Institute for Humane Studies

Father Joseph Ganssle  
Lecturer, Theologian, Pastor  
St. Elizabeth's, Denver

Dr. Israel Kirzner  
Economics  
New York University