VOLUME XV, NO. 8
FEBRUARY 21, 1962

WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH WORDS?

YEAR in and year out, a journal of opinion receives in the mail a steady flow of books and pamphlets for review, as well as occasional manuscripts submitted for publication. These materials are always welcome, since they are the natural food by which a magazine lives, helping to shape its content, giving the editors indication of changing currents of interest in the contemporary life of the mind. The editors choose for review or original publication what seems to serve best the general purposes of the magazine, creating, to some extent, a continuing current of intellectual exploration and development.

For those who do this work, the question naturally arises: What is being accomplished? What is the most that can be done in this way? How much of the effect, on the other hand, is lost in the dull averages of mere intellectual conditioning? More than other people, editors, by reason of their constant exposure to the enormous volume of the written word, acquire a well-tended modesty concerning the influence of present-day intellectual communications. They continue to feel that their work is important, and that it has to be done, but they frequently indulge the natural inclination to wonder about the effect of what they do.

Such questioning becomes acute whenever there is received through the mail a piece of writing which is manifestly intended by its author to change the thinking of mankind and the subsequent course of history. Even if the communication were all the writer intended it to be, this estimate of its influence is almost certainly over-optimistic, if not altogether absurd. But if such expectations have little practical ground, what is a sensible hope on the part of a serious writer? What *can* he contribute to the general increase of human understanding? This seems a fair question.

He seeks, let us say, the formation of opinion. In this context it goes without saying that the opinion he wishes to spread is constructive in character. What are the possibilities and the limitations?

We know of no generalizations speaking to this question which seem more comprehensively accurate than the views of two distinguished nineteenth-century historians, W. E. H. Lecky and Henry T. Buckle. In Lecky's view, "the success of any opinion [has] depended much less upon the force of its arguments, or upon the ability of its advocates, than upon the disposition of society to receive it, . . . the predisposition of society [having] resulted from the intellectual type of the age." Of men of genius who work in the field of ideas, Lecky wrote:

> They embody and reflect the tendencies of their time, but they also frequently modify them, and their ideas become the subject or the basis of the succeeding developments. To trace in every great movement the part which belongs to the individual and the part which belongs to general causes, without exaggerating either side, is one of the most delicate tasks of the historian. (Introduction, *History of Rationalism*.)

Buckle is somewhat more daring:

> Owing to circumstances still unknown, there appear, from time to time, great thinkers who, devoting their lives to a single purpose, are able to anticipate the progress of mankind, and to produce a religion or a philosophy by which important effects are eventually brought about. But if we look into history, we shall clearly see that, although the origin of a new opinion may be due to a single man, the result which the new opinion produces will depend upon the condition of the people among whom it is propagated. If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation, it can do no present service, but must bide its time, until the minds of men are ripe for its reception. Of this innumerable instances will occur to most readers. Every science and every creed has had its martyrs; men exposed to

> obloquy, or even to death, because they knew more than their contemporaries, and because society was not sufficiently advanced to receive the truths they communicated. According to the ordinary course of affairs, a few generations pass away, and then there comes a period when these very truths are looked upon as commonplace facts, and a little later, there comes another period in which they are declared to be necessary, and even the dullest intellects wonder how they could ever have been denied. This is what happens when the human mind is allowed to have fair play, and to exercise itself with tolerable freedom in the accumulation and diffusion of knowledge. If, however, by violent, and therefore artificial means, this same society is prevented from exercising its intellect, then the truths, however important they . may be, can never be received. For why should certain truths be rejected in one age, and acknowledged in another? The truths remain the same; their ultimate recognition must, therefore, be due to a change in the society which now accepts what it had before despised. Indeed, history is full of evidence of the utter inefficiency even of the noblest principles when they are promulgated among a very ignorant nation. (*History of Civilization in England.*)

The only thing we should like to question in this account is Buckle's assurance in declaring that "the truths remain the same." No doubt there is a sense in which this statement is quite accurate, but the *form* in which a truth is expressed seems so important to its understanding that one might argue that in new form it becomes a somewhat different truth—the difference lying in its perceived *pertinence* to prevailing human interests. The universe is filled with facts, and the intellectual universe, one may suppose, grows with the development of corresponding ideas about all those facts, but they do not become "ideas" until some man thinks them and gives them voice, and when this happens the legitimate "truth-content" of the ideas expressed depends upon their relevance to areas of human concern. Truth, in other words, comes into being when a statement of fact is put into a form which gives it a clear relation to the growing body of knowledge of mankind at a particular moment of history.

Take for example one quite evident characteristic of the present generation of human beings—the notable interest in psychological questions and issues. The development of this interest brought into being a whole new region of "truth" for contemporary man. Carl Jung called attention to the inward turning of human attention in 1939, in his book, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul:*

> The rapid and world-wide growth of a "psychological" interest over the last two decades shows unmistakably that modern man has to some extent turned his attention from material things to his own subjective processes. Should we call this mere curiosity? . . . This psychological interest of the present time shows that man expects something from his psychic life which he has not received from the outer world: something which our religions, doubtless, ought to contain, but no longer do contain—at least for the modern man. The various forms of religion no longer appear to the modern man to come from within—to be expressions of his own psychic life, for him they are to be classed with the things of the outer world; but he tries on a number of religions and convictions as if they were Sunday attire, only to lay them aside again like worn-out clothes.

A full development of this point—not Jung's point, but our point, which is that in any given epoch of history or culture, certain regions of thought represent the relevant or significant thinking of the time, and are therefore the places where *truth* is slowly being disclosed—would require a symmetrical review of the various frontiers of modern thought; perhaps the wide concern with psychology will be sufficient illustration, although another example might be made of the deep thrust into contemporary thinking of Gandhian ideas about nonviolence.

An obvious critical comment to be made about the foregoing is that neither the subjectivism of modern psychological investigations nor the philosophy of harmlessness given wide currency by Gandhi and others can be properly spoken of as "new." This is of course correct. Nonviolence goes back to the time of Buddha, and perhaps much earlier. And if you take the trouble to investigate the literature of antique religions, you may be able to turn up startling evidence of

psychological knowledge in the distant past. Louis Jacolliot remarked in the last century that, in contrast to the psychology of the Orient, "Europe has yet to stammer over t e first letters of the alphabet." In any event, more and more modern psychologists are evincing an interest in the psychological disciplines of the East, to what profit remains to be seen. But what should be said here is that even if ancient cults or groups are found to have anticipated the modern world in certain branches of learning or science, this practically lost knowledge does not become "truth" for modern man until it is cast in the idiom of contemporary understanding, or made a living part of the organism of present-day thought. This, really, is the general idea we have been trying to make clear, as an answer to the question, "What can be done with words?" Effective writing today or at any time is writing which feeds the growing tips of the organism of contemporary thought. It speaks to the needs of the time in the terms which the time is likely to understand.

The body of contemporary thought is never static—at least, it is not static in a period of discovery and growth. Some years ago, in Volume VI of MANAS (1953), we published a series of articles entitled "Books for Our Time," in an endeavor to present to readers what seemed to the editors to be the most important frontiers and advancing columns of modern thought. There were eight articles, giving consideration to eight books, with a final article of summary and discussion (MANAS for Dec. 9, 1953). These books covered broadly the fields of philosophy, religion, psychology, education, and politics. (With a little encouragement from readers, we might seek permission from the publishers of these books to reprint appropriate extracts from them in the form of lead articles for MANAS.) The eight books discussed are *The Human Situation* by W. Macneile Dixon (Longmans, 1937), *Psychoanalysis and Religion* by Erich Fromm (Yale University Press, 1950), *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* by Karen Horney (Norton, 1937), *Richer by Asia* by Edmond Taylor (Houghton Mifflin, 1947), *The Higher Learning in America* by Robert M. Hutchins (Yale University Press, 1936), *To the Finland Station* by Edmund Wilson (Harcourt, 1940), *The Root Is Man* by Dwight Macdonald (Cunningham Press, 1953), and *The Reach of the Mind* by J. B. Rhine (Sloane Associates, 1947)

What do these books represent? Our editorial view of them is that they embody the expressions of thinkers who are able, in Ortega's apt phrase, "to live at the height of the times." This is another way of saying that their work embodies the maximum assimilable truth-content for the age in which they live.

This is of course a thumping value judgment. It is a judgment, however, we have been obliged to make by the felt consequences of reading the books and contrasting them with others. Some extremely worthy writers might have been added to the list—Ortega, for example, whose works are very nearly indispensable for a clear understanding of the age we live in—and there are others we might now add, such as Joseph Campbell and A. H. Maslow, and possibly one or two others, but to read carefully only the books named in the list gives the student a fairly complete idea of the world we live in, and also a sense of intelligent direction for working toward a better future. And this, in short, seems to us to be about the best that one can do with words.

There is one thing that ought to be noted about writers of this sort. They all give some evidence of a deep sympathy for their fellow human beings. This is practically necessary, if an individual is to make clear and useful communication to others. A man who writes to illuminate some major aspect of the human situation does so because he cares about the human predicament. In consequence, he takes the trouble to inform himself concerning the prevailing ideas of his contemporaries and addresses himself to their attitudes and condition. He writes with due regard for their sense of reality, but with equal regard for the enlarging

sense of reality it has become his business to explore. It is his sensitive touch with what people feel is important to them which gives him an audience, and it is his vision of what he hopes may *become* as important to them that gives his work its pioneering quality. This is the undeclared but vital ethical component in all effective writing. The man with this quality does not compose uneven dithyrambs to celebrate his private insight into the secrets of life and nature, but writes to be understood on matters that by common agreement need understanding. His altruism is not worn on his sleeve, in the form of extravagant announcement, but is functional in his life and work—like good manners, it may be taken for granted.

It is now time to note some exceptions. Buckle spoke of "great thinkers"—we might for convenience term them: geniuses—"who, devoting their lives to a single purpose, are able to anticipate the progress of mankind, and to produce a religion or a philosophy by which important effects are eventually brought about." We do not presume to make rules for such. It seems to us, however, that thinkers of this caliber and distinction fulfill the conditions we have suggested without need of deliberation or manifest intention. They do by a kind of divine instinct what the rest of us accomplish only with great labor.

Having read recently Carlyle's almost forgotten essays on Heroes, Hero-worship, and the Heroic in History, we confess to a fresh conversion to his doctrine. The origin of great figures—heroes, saviors, teachers and philosophers—does indeed create mysteries for which we have little explanation; but these are mysteries one may find it considerably more tolerable to live with than the desperate darkness which comes from the enthronement of mediocrity and the expectation of nothing but more of the same. To take a side in this matter, it seems to us a prime responsibility of the writer to maintain a mood hospitable to the recognition of great men. We have had enough of the rule of statistics, which too soon become logistics, since statistics deal with matter, not with mind.

> I am well aware [wrote Carlyle] that in these days hero worship, the thing I call hero-worship, professes to have gone out and finally ceased. This, for reasons it will be worth while some time to inquire into, is an age that as it were denies the existence of great men; denies the desirableness of great men. Show our critics a great man, Luther for example, they begin to what they call "account" for him; not to worship him, but take the dimensions of him,—and bring him out to be a little kind of man! He was the "creature of the time," they say, the time called him forth, the time did everything, he nothing—but what we the little critic could have done too! This seems to me but melancholy work.

There is no need to wait—indeed we are under a stern necessity not to wait—for the coming of great men to help us, nor is there any cause to "worship" in the theological pattern of abasing impotence. What Carlyle calls us to in the present is the recognition that we have a headless monster of a Civilization which has only abortive monuments in the form of machines, and no mind to give it synthesis or control. It is an endowment of human greatness to refuse to be driven by no more than habits out of the past into labyrinths which have no outlet at all. We have let grow up around us the kind of life that bites off the head of human independence—which is the seed of all greatness—as surely as Herod slaughtered the innocents of Israel.

The great need of the present, which may be served with words, supported by acts, is to re-establish the dignity of human decision—which is at once the dignity of mind and the dignity of man. If each one who sees the need would find his own way of doing this, we might recover, sooner than we think, the sense of having a destiny which is our own to shape.

Letter from **FRANCE**

PARIS.—Some time ago a colleague said upon leaving Paris that he thought France was perhaps six months from bloody revolution. As the senseless violence in Algeria has continued to spread to the metropolis it has seemed more and more likely that he was right. The violence is senseless, but it has a pattern. During the negotiations between Algerian nationalists (F.L.N.) and the central government, the violence revealed two positions: that of the F.L.N., which was in effect saying to the government, "Without us, you cannot settle with the Algerian people"; and that of the O.A.S. (Secret Army Organization), the military-fascist group of European terrorists, also talking to the government: "Continue these negotiations and you will *see* some violence! French Algeria is the only possible solution!" Recently, as negotiations seemed to be approaching success, European names have tended to disappear from the casualty lists as the F.L.N. relaxed, while the Muslim toll mounted as the O.A.S. increased its activities.

A page in a recent issue of Paris' socialist weekly, *L'Express*, reminded me of conversations in the past year or two with one of its editors, a man with qualities of intelligence, sensitivity, and an integrity said to be rare among French journalists. He is firmly convinced of the fascist character of the De Gaulle regime and seems to document his charges well. His tragedy is that he can offer no alternative. In sober fact, there is at present no alternative.

On this page of *L'Express*, an Algerian student speaks. What follows is a free translation, and if the rendering is by an amateur who takes occasional liberties, it was not done with the license of a professional propagandist.

"I was born," begins this nineteen-year-old, "and grew up in the Casbah of Algiers. I studied in the Guillemin High School . . . dominated by two clans: one Muslim, and one European. At the least excuse, even the most ordinary strikes, they became two enraged packs, ready to fall upon one another . . . . The O.A.S. has broadened this situation; it threatens and kills all our intellectuals, all those who have actively worked in the F.L.N.

"Dozens of corpses, headless, armless, sometimes no 'more than trunks, have been found on the beaches, in the forests, in the ravines . . . .

"For very lively reasons, I had to exile myself, leave my country, my family, my friends, and all that was dear in this beautiful country made hideous by war. I am continuing my studies in a provincial High School in France, and find myself in an atmosphere completely unfamiliar.

"For the first time in my life, I am with the French. Upon arriving here, I said to myself, 'These are the real French, not the trash of Algiers; I must not hate them!' I came to love them, and they, me, I thought.

"I explained the war in Algiers to them: why men were falling by the thousands. I showed them the ugliness, the ferocity and the inhumanity of colonization and colonialism. I showed them a people, my people, bullied, degraded, treated like beasts. I tried to make them understand that the Algerian Revolution is a noble and humanitarian one. They nodded their heads, and I was content. I really loved them.

"But after a while I saw that this was only a facade. They nodded out of politeness. One day someone said to me, 'And your crimes, the women violated, my brother killed in Algeria for nothing. Why? Why do you kill?' I tried to make him understand that crimes could be answered only with crimes; we are not yet able to turn the other cheek. I told him that every state in the world, including France, was born in blood and fire. And he answered, 'You want independence? All right, take it and leave us in peace!'

"I was breathless. Was this a real, intelligent and understanding Frenchman? I wanted to cut him to pieces. These are the things that changed me, made me hate the French.

"I was born in war, grew up in war; I have never been happy, nor have my relatives and my ancestors. But the French have.

"Among us, Algerian Muslims, we talk of nothing but war, armaments, bombing outrages, rifles, machine guns, airplanes and napalm. And at the same time, Frenchmen discuss literature or philosophy: Bergson, Montaigne, Sartre. While men crawl in the streets like dogs, the French read of the loves of Soraya . . . .

"When one speaks to them of Algeria: yes, they say, the Algerians are right, the war must be stopped . . . and then they sit down to another cup of coffee.

"I hate the French because there is in them this more or less hidden indifference. I hate the Frenchman because I am jealous of his comfort; I hate him because he is rich and exploits me. I hate him because he is an accomplice of a government itself an accomplice of the O.A.S. I hate him because he has degenerated . . . . I hate him because . . . he has allowed the repressive methods of the colonialists to be implanted in France itself. . . .

"Frenchmen, you must wake up, understand that to neglect Algeria is to do violence to France. You must take this into account. Not only that, but you must act. You say 'fascism shall not pass,' but fascism has already passed. It has been in Algeria since 1930, and in France since 1958.

"Gustave Ben has said: 'Anarchy is everywhere when responsibility is nowhere.' Frenchmen, you must assume this responsibility. For you and for me!"

This is the stuff of tragedy of this student whose life is being wasted in hatred; of my friend, the editor, who sees his country drifting toward revolution and despite his intelligent concern, his long political experience, can offer no solution. "Fascism shall not pass?" he quotes bitterly. "Who is going to stop it?"

ROVING CORRESPONDENT

REVIEW
TO ABOLISH EXECUTION

THE British publisher, Penguin Books, has performed a signal service to education in respect to the death penalty for criminals by issuing two companion volumes—*Hanged by the Neck*, by Arthur Koestler and C. H. Rolph, and *Hanged in Error*, by Leslie Hale (MP). Although most reviewers, we note, have dealt with both books at once, it is our opinion that they merit separate treatment.

J. W. Freeman's foreword to the Koestler-Rolph book supplies an effective paragraph of introduction:

> This admirable book refuses to let the hangers get away with it. Each of the Establishment myths is challenged in turn—and so is the Establishment itself, whether it speaks through the mouths of policemen, hangmen, judges, or any of the lesser hushers-up of official secrets. The final list of murderers executed between 1949 and 1960, with a short—and scrupulously fair—description of each one's crime, provides an important piece of documentation which has been lacking from the abolitionist brief. It is a wretched parade, this ghostly army of lame dogs and lunatics whom we put to death in those eleven years. Few of them, it seems to me, could not have been reclaimed as decent citizens if society had been prepared to take just a little more trouble. And those in almost every case were the mentally deranged, whose hanging—with respect to Lord Goddard—not even the hangers greatly enjoy defending.

Koestler's own introduction pictures the stark scene which occurs when an "oddly assorted crowd" gathers outside the prison on execution mornings. While hangings in England are no longer served up as a public spectacle, there is still an involvement of many segments of the public. Some are reformers who wish to make an anti-hanging demonstration, some come to pray for the man being killed, and some are relatives or friends of the soon-to-be deceased. Koestler suggests that the most poignant commentary on the whole process is the bringing of a wreath of flowers to commemorate a man who is not yet dead: "To buy a wreath for a man who is not yet dead is to acknowledge and share the freezing certainty that is in the mind of the prisoner himself, the quality of which was unforgettably imagined by Dostoyevsky in *The Idiot."* Dostoyevsky wrote:

> But the chief and worst pain may not be in the bodily suffering but in one's knowing for certain that in an hour, and then in ten minutes, and then in half a minute, and then now, at the very moment, the soul will leave the body and that one will cease to be a man, and that that's bound to happen; the worst part of it is that it's certain. When you lay your head down under the knife and hear the knife slide over your head that quarter of a second is the most terrible of all. You know this is not only my fancy, many people have said the same. I believe that so thoroughly that I'll tell you what I think. To kill for murder is a punishment incomparably worse than the crime itself. Murder by legal sentence is immeasurably more terrible than murder by brigands. Anyone murdered by brigands, whose throat is cut at night in a wood, or something of that sort, must surely hope to escape till the very last minute. There have been instances when a man has still hoped for escape, running or begging for mercy until his throat was cut. But in the other case all that last hope, which makes dying ten times as easy, is taken away for certain. There is the sentence, and the whole torture lies in the fact that there is certainly no escape, and there is no torture in the world more terrible. You may lead a soldier out and set him facing the cannon in battle and fire at him and he'll still hope; but read a sentence of certain death over the same soldier, and he will go out of his mind or burst into tears. Who can tell whether human nature is able to bear this madness? Why this hideous, useless, unnecessary outrage? Perhaps there is some man who has been sentenced to death, been exposed to this torture, and has been told "you can go, you are pardoned." Perhaps such a man could tell us. It was of this torture and of this agony that Christ spoke, too. No, you can't treat a man like that!

But we do treat a man like this—in the majority of the nations of the world. The most advanced country, penologically speaking, is Sweden—and, as Koestler points out, since its complete abolition of capital punishment, Sweden has greatly reduced the problem of violent crime. Penologists, psychiatrists, and the majority of the informed who serve the press are convinced that the time will come when capital punishment is

unheard of in civilized lands. Yet before such a desirable eventuality comes to pass, hundreds of criminals' lives will be taken by society-sanctioned murder. Books such as *Hanged by the Neck* and *Hanged in Error* (to be reviewed in a later issue) are sure to sway a certain number to the side of abolition—and, in consequence, hasten its coming. Furthermore, what Mr. Koestler sees and is able to get across is that this issue not only concerns the life of the criminal, but also the quality of "life" in the society which presently condemns him to death. The society intelligent enough to save itself from compounding the evils of violence by execution may also, conceivably, develop enough moral stamina to save itself from war.

Portions of chapters 2, 3, 5, and 7 in *Hanged by the Neck* have previously appeared in the hard-cover edition of Koestler's *Reflections on Hanging*, published in 1956. New material in the present Penguin edition includes the preface, introduction, the first chapter, an interesting section dealing with "The Police View" of capital punishment, a chapter titled "What About the Victim?" and finally, in conclusion, "A Creed for Abolitionists." This creed deserves as much circulation as possible, and to that end we reproduce it here:

A CREED FOR ABOLITIONISTS

One should not deride what is sometimes called the "emotional" condemnation of the death penalty, for the emotions or inherent feelings can sometimes be a sure guide to what is right. But the abolitionist case is complete on other grounds; and it may be convenient to have, in summarized form, a "creed" which crystallizes one's thoughts:

1. Every kind of punishment deters, but the experience of abolitionist countries shows that the death penalty is neither a necessary nor a unique deterrent.

2. The death penalty is irremediable. When a mistake has been made—and it is known now that there have been mistakes—nothing can put it right.

3. The hangman is a disgrace to any civilized country. Doctors (through the B.M.A.) have made it clear that they would never take over the executioner's job by administering lethal injections. We depend, for our professional killers, on the type of person who voluntarily applies for the job of operating a rope and trapdoor.

4. Murder is largely committed by insane or psychopathic people, to whom the death penalty has little or no meaning.

5. Reliance on the death penalty discourages the reduction of crime which would follow an all-out attack on its social causes.

6. The death penalty foregoes all hope of reforming the offender.

7. Executions magnify the unwholesome news value of murder reports, leading to imitative crime.

8. This is the one public problem, above all, in which governments should lead the governed. "The voice of the people" can be sane and rational, or irrationally impassioned when under the influence of demagogy or sensationalism.

9. There are worse crimes than direct murder, yet we punish them with prison sentences of a few years' duration—and often we do not punish them at all: fraudulent conspiracies, for example, which often result in ruin and even premature death for many victims.

10. The few murderers who would have to be imprisoned for life—perhaps one a year—are certain to be the mentally dangerous types who would have to be placed in lifelong confinement sooner or later, whether they murdered or not.

11. The Old Testament doctrine "an eye for an eye," etc., totally rejected by the New Testament, was in any event no more than a relic of a Babylonian law which *prohibited the exaction of more than an eye for an eye.* Even so, we do not commit indecent assaults on men convicted of indecent assault or burn down the house of a person convicted of arson; and whereas the murderer's victim meets his death in minutes or seconds, we take an average of five months to kill the murderer, playing with him all the time.

12. Abolition of the death-penalty has never made any difference to the numbers of murders in any country.

Hanged by the Neck, a Penguin "special," may be obtained from Penguin Books, Inc., 3300 Clipper Mill Road, Baltimore 11, Md. Price, 85 cents.

COMMENTARY
AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

IT has become impossible for MANAS to keep track of the various expressions of the Peace Movement. A few years ago we used to get an announcement or two a month, but now we get stacks of mimeographed releases, with new groups appearing, it seems, several times a week. Readers who would like to be posted on this sort of information should subscribe to *Peace Action Calendar*, a bulletin issued periodically by the New England group of CNVA (Committee for Nonviolent Action), P.O. Box 849, New London, Conn. The Jan. 15 issue of the *Calendar* lists fourteen activities or demonstrations for peace in which people are invited to take part. Information on where to go and whom to see in order to volunteer is provided in adequate detail.

The Civil Defense Protest Committee of New York City has taken on the function of providing material to people in other cities. In 1955, a few pacifists were jailed for refusing to take shelter when the alarm whistle announced the beginning of the New York State compulsory civil defense drill. Each year other participants joined in the protest, and in 1961 more than 2,000 people gathered in City Hall Park to disobey what they regarded as a ridiculous and deceptive law. Last year the police could make only token arrests of fifty-two persons. By this time the protest against civil defense had spread to other states, and it will likely grow into a nation-wide annual demonstration symbolic of the longing for rational policies in behalf of peace. The New York Civil Defense Protest Committee has prepared a packet of printed materials on the organization of such protests and will send it to anyone who writes for it. The address: Civil Defense Protest Committee, Room 825, 5 Beekman St., New York 38, N.Y.

The (San Fernando) Valley for SANE is getting out a bulletin, *Daily Action for Peace*, which has a suggestion of something to do on each day of the month. Write to: Valley for SANE, Box 391, Encino, Calif.

The first issue of *Women's Peace Movement Bulletin* has appeared from 2670 Bedford Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. It is filled with news about women's activities for peace throughout the country and the rest of the world. This bulletin will appear monthly as an information exchange for all women's groups. It has lively reports on dozens of peace actions now going on, with more to come.

This fragmentary report hardly diminishes our pile of material from peace groups. It was Victor Hugo who wrote: "There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world; and that is an idea whose time has come."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

A DIET FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?

Two reasons were given for last week's account here of "the new pacifist": First, it should be clear enough to everyone that exploration of all potentially constructive deviations from conventional attitudes should be attempted; second, if there is a *new* sort of hard-headed pacifism, students and young people in general should be made aware of it—for they, presumably, comprise the generations that will reach from this century into the next. Now, with a similar line of reasoning and with all due trepidation, we introduce another departure from Western convention which, for many pacifists, is not unrelated to their views. We have reference to the determination, among a growing minority, to live on a meatless diet to spare what may be a great deal of unnecessary suffering for animals, to encourage further respect for life in all animate forms, and to conserve the diminishing acreage of food-producing land.

The vegetarians have traditionally been viewed as faddists and sectarians, often with a good deal of justification. However, Gandhi, who was much more than a faddist and who has been a true ethical inspiration to more human beings than were reached during the combined lifetimes of Buddha and Christ, insisted that *ahimsa* (harmlessness) applied to the animal orders of life, as well as to relations between humans. A good number of present day pacifists, who have no connection with vegetarian societies and who do not belong to any particular sect, have come to feel the need of making the doctrines of integral non-violence organic to every aspect of personal living. So the number of "new vegetarians" is gradually increasing, along with conscientious objectors, pacifists, and non-violent direct-actionists.

Since no MANAS editor has committed himself to the studies and disciplines which should accompany sensible relinquishment of a flesh diet, we hope we can speak dispassionately in presenting the case that may be made in its favor. Among other things, men who are determined to take no life, not even animal life except in the case of dire necessity, maintain that those who prefer meat nevertheless recognize the superiority of the flesh of non-carnivorous animals. With the exception of tribes who regard roast dog as a delicacy (and cannibals), the peoples of all times have been disinclined to eat the flesh of carnivores, simply because it doesn't taste good. The most intelligent and longest-lived animal, the elephant, is a strict vegetarian, as is the most useful creature for man, the horse.

At this point, one of the new vegetarians may maintain that a society of persons determined to exist on a meatless diet is not the sort of society which would harbor violent partisanships and the animosities which make for war. This was the Gandhian view, which may not be at all ridiculous.

There is no doubt that a diet which eliminates the eating of meat entirely requires some study and care. No one can be a successful vegetarian unless he is prepared to study nutrition, unless he learns something about enzymes, vitamins and minerals, the qualities of various proteins, the necessity for a variety of the amino acids, etc. And, of course, not every person has the time or opportunity for such study, and many who are marked influences for good in the world do not have an inclination in this direction.

But one argument against a meatless diet, inevitably formulated by the hearty meat-eating enthusiasts, now appears to be questionable in the extreme—the argument that only "good red meat" provides proper physical strength. No one familiar with the records of the past five years of competition in the basic sports of running and swimming would deny that the greatest, most versatile swimmer has been Murray Rose of Australia, or that the greatest runner has been

Herbert Elliot, also of Australia. Though it is conceivable that these two remarkable athletes will be surpassed this year, they have been true champions, gifted with a phenomenal endurance which has impressed trainers and sports writers alike. Now, in case you are not aware of it, both Rose and Elliot are complete vegetarians, and both moreover attribute a great deal of their extraordinary stamina to the fact that a meatless diet makes them less liable to the accumulations of toxins. A 26-mile Pikes Peak marathon foot race—to the 14,000-foot summit and return—was again won in 1961 by a 25-year-old vegetarian. The second place winner, a runner approaching forty years of age, was also a vegetarian. Losing the next several places to the stalwart meat-eaters, the vegetarians picked up eleventh place with the help of a 62-year-old vegetarian, and, successfully completing the arduous trek was another meatless disciple, aged eighty-two years! Two-time channel crossing champion Jack McClelland is a vegetarian, and now we see a report acclaiming a second world championship in tree-climbing and timber topping to Canadian Danny Sailor—vegetarian.

The list could go on and on, including six-day bicycle championships and other athletic pursuits which depend for success upon general physical condition and stamina. (At this point we recall that in his book on championship swimming, Johnny Weismuller relates that he was unable to prevail in any distance swimming events until he trained on a meatless diet.)

So *we* are convinced that intelligent vegetarianism, rather than being a handicap to the sort of physical well-being which is most important—endurance and stamina—is an obvious contributor. We are also convinced (by way of *Bread and Peace,* by Roy Walker, C. W. Daniel Co., Ashingdon, England) that the amount of productive land which must be used in the raising of cattle would feed at least three times as many people on a non-meat basis. We are also aware of the fact that it is meat, and not vegetables, nuts, fruit, berries, cheeses, etc., which leads to greediness and gluttony, and it is not beyond reason to establish a correlation between gluttony and personal and national self-aggrandizement at the expense of the rights of others.

There is something about the deliberate raising of meat by way of an artificial life and death for livestock which should, we think, rub us all a bit the wrong way. The Indian who took his food from the forest respected the animal from which it came, was not given to waste, and the animal itself lived out its natural existence until the encounter with the hunter took place. Not so with the animals who end up on freight trains and trucks, crowded unhappily together in a collective anticipation of the fear which surrounds the slaughterhouse with funeral pall.

So a good many men and women who are not faddists, and especially a good many of those who seek alternatives to violence in interpersonal and international relations, are taking this subject seriously, because they feel an obligation to be as consistent as they can. At any rate, the arguments for a diet which does not depend upon animal suffering or exploitation should at least be known—with increasing documentation—by the young people of the world. There are so many ways in which we obviously need new standards of living, and this may be one of them.

Readers are invited to contribute sober discussion. So many important questions are clearly related.

FRONTIERS

Interview on the Press

WE'VE never read a copy of the Louisville (Kentucky) *Courier-Journal*—we've never even seen one—but we suspect that it is a good newspaper. We suspect that any publishing activity that Mark Ethridge has something to do with is likely to have a lot of good in it. This is the only pleasant conclusion we have been able to draw from a careful reading of the latest pamphlet in the series on American Character, issued by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions (Box 4068, Santa Barbara, Calif.).

It is difficult to see what this pamphlet reveals about the American character, unless it be that the American character submits willingly to an almost totally characterless diet of reading matter in American newspapers and mass magazines. The pamphlet, titled *The Press,* presents interviews with Mr. Ethridge, who has been identified in various capacities with Louisville's leading newspaper since 1936, and C. D. Jackson, who is the publisher of *Life* magazine, having begun his association with the Luce enterprises in 1931. The interviewer is Donald McDonald.

The conversation with Mr. Ethridge soon became a discussion of the not insignificant virtues of the Louisville *Courier-Journal* and the Louisville *Times.* There wasn't much else to talk about, unless Mr. Ethridge were compelled to spend the whole time condemning his American contemporaries. He found something nice to say about the New York *Times,* the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch,* and the Washington *Post,* but it is apparent that his mind was not crowded with examples of good newspapers clamoring to be named. The interview with Mr. Ethridge is interesting chiefly because of its evidence that a conscientiously run newspaper need not be a commercial failure—not in the South, at any rate. (One gains the impression, from this and other sources, that the South, despite its obsessing problem of race conflict and injustice, has in some ways a more responsible attitude toward public issues than one finds in the North. This is a curious situation which we are unable to relate to any particular cause except the possible survival of some Southern gentlemen.)

The answer given by Ethridge to a question about the future is worth repeating. Mr. McDonald asked:

> Q. I believe you said in your Pulitzer lecture at Columbia that it is foolish for newspapers to attempt to compete on an entertainment basis with other media of communication, principally television. What do you conceive to be the unique function of the newspaper, the thing that it and no other medium of communication can do, or can do quite as well? How can the newspaper survive and flourish in the generation ahead?
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> ETHRIDGE: Well, I think we haven't reached the end of the technological change in newspapers, nor have we reached the end of the consolidation process. I think a number of papers are going to die; the death rate will continue. . . . What is possible, I think, is that you may some day see small newspapers with much higher advertising and circulation rates and greater quality. A good number of people of my own acquaintance in the United States subscribe to the London *Sunday Observer,* a high-class paper; the Manchester *Guardian,* and the London *Times.* They are looking for quality and are willing to pay a premium for it. I think the newspaper will continue to be the prime source for information on local and regional events. The newspaper will be the prime source of information about things that affect your schools and colleges, your highways and government. Beyond that, I think the newspapers that survive are going to become semi-magazines. They are going to serve a deeper purpose than most of them now serve.

Mr. Ethridge may not be aware of it, but this prediction is already being fulfilled by the existence of five (and perhaps more) semi-magazine type newspapers—Lyle Stuart's *Independent,* M. S. Arnoni's *Minority of One,* Burton Wolfe's *Californian,* Charles Wells's *Between the Lines,* and *I. F. Stone's Weekly.* These papers are obviously the work of competent journalists who have felt compelled to try to fill the vacuum in decent and useful newspaper publishing in the United States. While now

monthlies, semimonthlies, or weeklies, these papers will surely grow and come out more frequently if they gain the needed support. An interesting sign of the times is Albert Schweitzer's decision to become a regular contributor to *Minority of One*, his first letter appearing in the February issue. *(Minority of One*, 77 Pennington Ave., Passaic, N. J., $5 a year.)

The second half of the pamphlet on the press is less interesting, unless you are seeking further causes for discouragement about publishing in the United States. Asking the publisher of *Life* about the role of the mass magazine in the United States in relation to the American character is like asking J. Edgar Hoover to make some adverse remarks about Patriotism, Religion, Home, and Mother. Except for Mr. McDonald's high-powered questions, the interview with Mr. Jackson is a complete blank. For example:

> Q. I'm going to quote something Professor Oscar Handlin of Harvard said and I would like your response to it. It comes from the Spring, 1960, issue of *Daedalus* which was devoted to the single theme of "Mass Culture and Mass Media." Among other things in his article, Handlin said: "Mass media... operate within a series of largely negative restraints. There are many things they cannot do. But within the boundaries of what they may do, there is an aimless quality, with no one in a position to establish a positive direction. In part this aimlessness is the product of the failure to establish coherent lines of internal organization; in part it flows from the frightening massiveness of the media themselves; but in part also it emanates from a lack of clarity as to the purposes they serve."
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> JACKSON: I'd sure like to know what he's been reading. I haven't got the foggiest notion of what he's basing that criticism on. When he says "aimlessness" and "lack of internal organization," what does he mean? Internal organization of what? Of the publication? or the nation? or the community? or the family? What's he talking about?

McDonald tries again, with more from Prof. Handlin:

> Q. . . ."In the world of actuality, Americans are factory workers or farmers, Jews or Baptists, of German or Irish descent, old or young; they live in small towns or great cities, in the North or the South. But the medium which attempts to speak to all of them is compelled to discount these affiliations and pretend that the variety of tastes, values and habits related to them does not exist. It can therefore only address itself to the empty outline of the residual American. . . . [given these difficulties, the mass medium is] doomed to irrelevance in the lives of its audience, and the feedback from the consciousness of that irrelevance, without effective counter-measures, dooms the performer and writer to sterility."

To this general analysis, Mr. Jackson replies, "I know now what he's talking about. He's been looking at television."

Well, not much needs to be added. Prof. Handlin said it all, or very nearly all. *Life,* to paraphrase Oliver Herford, brings its own sort of exclusiveness to the masses. The trouble is not simply the very low common denominator that Prof. Handlin speaks of, but mainly that *Life* sees absolutely nothing wrong with the way of life it celebrates, perceives no hint of a symptom of the cultural schizophrenia which afflicts us all. You would hardly expect this slick and shiny juggernaut of modern magazine publishing to do any soul-searching.

Mr. John Cogley offers some closing remarks at the end of the pamphlet. They are good, in that they note: "What one thinks of man is the heart of the matter for all our institutions, not least of all the press." But when Mr. McDonald raised for comment the question of what *Life* thinks of man, and man's ideals, he got no answer at all from Mr. Jackson on either point. *Life,* we suspect, is simply, cleverly, and exclusively, pro-story, hardly pro-man at all. And with the multitude of stereotypes *Life* has lying around in the fires, it doesn't have to think about the answers to the great questions: it just looks them up.