

SOLILOQUY IN LATE AUTUMN

BY TED OLSON

YEAR's ebb again: the slow tide sagging
Torpidly sleepward; earth's veins, and men's
Sluggish with frost; shell ice along the fens;
Meadows flint to the heel; the wind bragging

Empty and loud in the eaves. So all years ended:
Another harvest; hay once more in the stack
Rain-rotted, a stench of dust, tobacco-black;
All to do over, nothing as he intended.

Sick of it, sick of the imbecile recurrence
Of life, he watched the cattle turn away
Unsatisfied from the counterfeit of hay,
And envied them their stoical, drugged endurance.

Life's ebb, he knew: the sap as surely
Draining out of the arm as from the bough;
The mind a flinty furrow where the plow
Turned rust; and twilight coming down, too early.

World's ebb. . . . Above him the windy ceiling
Of cloud tore wide a moment to an immense,
Star-pitted gulf; he had a giddy sense
The flimsy planet underfoot was reeling

Drunkenly on through space to some appalling,
Inscrutable doom, to wreck on cosmic shores
Swept clean of its cargo of men and their greeds and wars,
And better so. . . .

He heard the cattle bawling,
And took his pails, and went about his chores.

EDITORIAL

The Meaning of Violence

To get at the unvarnished reality of any important problem is without doubt the hardest task that faces the thoughtful American citizen today. In this land of euphemism, slogan, and myth, a stark fact is as rare as a naked archbishop. The wary observer soon learns that things are never what they seem, that the appearance of reality is almost always fraudulent, and that Truth is invariably hidden under bushels of camouflage. Hence, when the American begins to concern himself seriously — as he must now soon do — with such an intricate problem as that of tolerance towards those revolutionaries who wish to overthrow his present form of government, it is little wonder that he is baffled and confused.

Not that this problem of free speech is a facile one, even when shorn of current confusion. It has been a thorn in the seats of the mighty for centuries and it may well continue so on into history, along with war, apathy, and greed, as one more problem which the human race seems incapable of solving. But the fact that tolerance presents a vexing question should not prevent the citizens of

this insecure Republic from adopting a realistic attitude toward it.

The problem in America today, reduced to its simplest terms, is one of definition. Three groups, of which only the first is important, are concerned: the Communists, who favor destruction of the present democracy; the New Dealers and allied Utopians, who have a flair for tinkering with dynamite; and the Reactionaries, who insist that anyone able to define the word dialectic should be burned at the stake. These latter groups, to repeat, are inconsequential: the New Dealers will soon or late be tossed on the scrap heap along with other discredited quacks; and the Reactionaries are never more than natural fungoid growths behind club windows. But the militant Communists are a potent force in America today and their intentions will bear examination.

To begin with, the fact that Earl Browder and his fellow extremists receive orders, or even gold, from Moscow can be dismissed as unimportant. It should be obvious that an idea nurtured in the Kremlin can be just as sound as a theology sprouted in Asbury Park. If memory serves,