

life), Frank's final public view is not entirely adequate as a guide to understanding this matter.

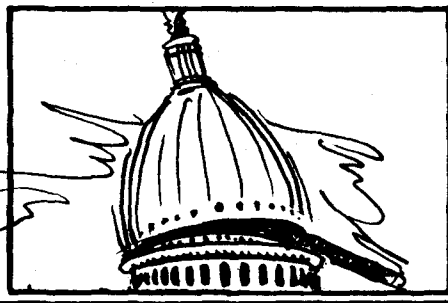
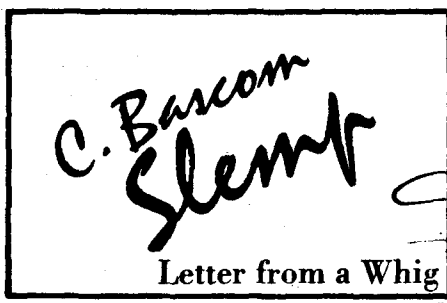
But as to that issue, and others, this is not the place to argue his perceptions with him. Yet if we are to derive anything of continuing value out of Frank Meyer's thought other than the crucial central perception, we must learn to apply his mode of analysis to contemporary problems, not humbly and meekly to accept his every opinion as *Writ*. There is nothing startling about this notion, nor anything specifically limited to Frank's legacy as opposed to that of any other significant thinker.

But two tendencies are already at work now, just one year after his death of cancer at age sixty-two, in April 1972. The one goes like this: Well, Frank Meyer wasn't really up on everything, and so, though he was a fine man and all that, he just isn't relevant to us now. That's the creeping mindlessness one hears echoed by so many, especially

younger people, who are off hunting another adoration-worthy guru (having foolishly adopted that least gurusque gentleman, Frank S. Meyer, as their guru in the first place). The other sentiment, voiced by fewer people, of course, because fewer bothered to invest the time and energy in contemplating his thoughts in the first place, content merely to know that he was a Great Person, is this: Frank Meyer was the greatest mind conservatism in America has produced, and he was always correct, so we had best take to heart everything he ever said, and believe it. M. Stanton Evans, a first-rate conservative mind himself, said of Frank that "his libertarian conservative writings (will rank) among the principal achievements, not only of modern conservatism, but of political thought in general." Which is true, and a far cry from the parodied, jejune Meyerphilia mentioned just above.

We must always be on guard against the damage that retrospectives can do

to the thoughts of seminal minds. It is as easy to bury Frank's thoughts by lavishly adoring them *in toto* as by dismissing them as "irrelevant" to the seventies and beyond. His legacy is his cardinal insight, and his mode of analyzing events in light of that crucial tension which he perceived in fundamental American political and philosophic thought; his legacy is *not* the every particular in his corpus of writings. Whatever one's political or ideological or philosophical "thing," there is enormous worth in Frank Meyer's contribution to the world of ideas, available for the taking. He was a splendid teacher, not just because of what he taught, but because of his attitude toward learning. We learn from Frank whenever we contemplate the problems he considered — if we are cognizant of his central beliefs in those matters, are willing to make some of the efforts he made to grapple with them, and are determined to allow him to live in us not as captain but as coach. □



### The Washington Scene

(WASHINGTON)—For the sagacious pundit and judicious observer of the Washington scene, 1973 already heralds the truth of that widely sung chorus line—Only in America.

Only in America could a court declare jurisdiction over the ethical question of abortion and get away with it. And only in America could a presidential candidate win with the landslide proportions of Richard Nixon, without enabling his party to capture a majority in either the House or the Senate of the United States Congress.

Through the peculiarities of the American political process, the demarcation for the battle between the Republican President and the Democrat-controlled Congress has been drawn. Although the President's political insensitivity to those hallowed halls of wisdom, marble, virtue, and hot air would make executive-legislative relations trying under even the best of circumstances, this particular political breakdown does little to help the problem.

The words "constitutional crisis" are already synonymous with the ninety-third Congress and rumor here in Washington has it that Ted Kennedy's government in exile stands ready and waiting to offer its leadership to save the country. Although the Nixon Court has also shown indications that it has its own ideas on what it will take to save the country.

Journalists and academicians have

long speculated over what a second Nixon term would entail. Various writers had seen signs which indicated that the President was a Tory Socialist at heart, while others had assured us that, in truth, Mr. Nixon was a Hobbesian liberal. Neither image was particularly reassuring for the American liberal, and neither image was very pleasing to the American conservative. It is, however, unlikely that these next four years will produce any definitive interpretation of the Nixon philosophy. Instead, it seems more likely that the President will attempt to meet the challenges of his time to secure the base for that so very elusive "emerging political majority."

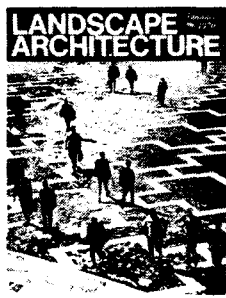
The first signs of how Nixon envisions his next four years came when the Administration introduced its Federal Budget for Fiscal Year 1974. Ever since the New Deal, and particularly with the Great Society programs, the prevalent philosophy had been (in the words of John Kenneth Galbraith) that "all federal spending was automatically good," irrespective of any other considerations. That completely misunderstood Washington commentator, Nicholas von Hoffman, also expressed the character of Great Society philosophy in his tribute to former President Johnson: "You (Johnson) were so impulsive. You tried to solve social problems like a drunken hardware wholesaler trying to snag girls in a Paris nightclub. You drank so much of the so-

cial betterment bubbly the nation woke up with a hangover. Every right-living nation ought to go on that kind of drunk every so often, and even if you went about it the wrong way, you got us thinking about what we should be doing." But this "spend-now-pay-later" philosophy has resulted in an almost uncontrollable federal budget, with mounting deficits and no end in sight. Furthermore, since an increasing tax burden, wild spending, and runaway inflation were not producing the utopian results everyone expected, popular resentment has followed in the form of a fiscal and social hangover.

Thus it would seem, (if the President can keep his mind on domestic matters for a sustained period, and unforeseen international problems notwithstanding), that the stage is set for a debate on what the future direction of this country should be.

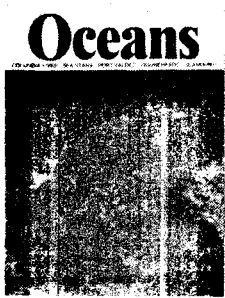
The dismantlement of the Office of Economic Opportunity, as part of the Nixon Administration's government reorganization plan, has emerged as the focal point for the debate between Congress and the Executive. Synonymous with the war on poverty, OEO has not had a successful history. Its failure was characterized by overcentralization, and the top-heavy nature of the structure reflected a "support-the-rich-build-a-bureaucracy" approach to the problem of poverty. Funds which should have benefited the poor were used to pay the salaries of the War on Poverty Generals. And there were many instances in which 75 percent of expenditures for particular programs were administrative in nature.

Needless to say, as the Administration has pointed out, the war on poverty has not been eliminated; OEO's responsibilities are being shifted to other government agencies, with the exception of the Community Action Agencies. Through special revenue sharing programs, the states and local communities will have opportunity to determine the efficiency of their particular programs and the discretion to continue them in a way better



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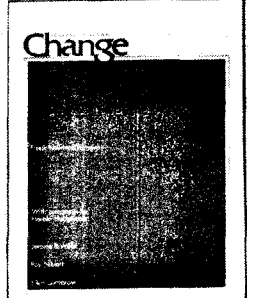
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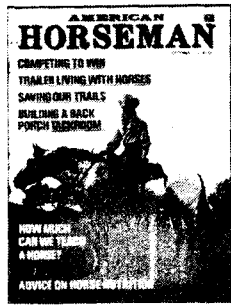
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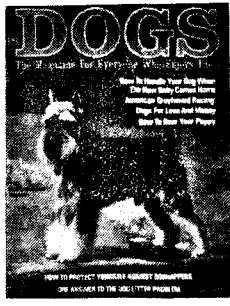
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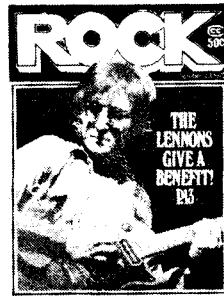
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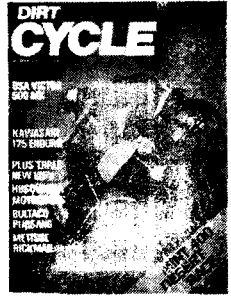
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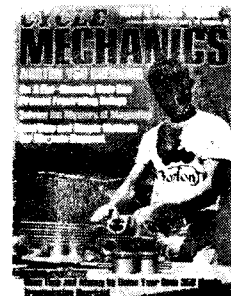
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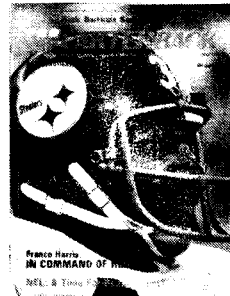
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designed to meet their own needs. But OEO is the sacred shibboleth and symbol of the Great Society, and congressional opposition to its dismantlement is, therefore, strong.

Howard Phillips, a former Republican congressional candidate from Massachusetts who has long been associated with the arch-conservative Young Americans for Freedom, has been appointed to carry out the dismantlement of OEO. Phillips, to the chagrin of his congressional opponents, has made it clear that he enjoys this task and that he intends to be the last Director of OEO and not necessarily the best. Although it is the belief of many that the distinction of the former is a prerequisite for the latter.

The Washington press has given wide publicity to Phillips, a modern day Cato (as he cheerfully calls himself), bent on the destruction of Carthage. His "wrecking crew" and "gaulleuters," as they are invariably called, are equally pleased with their assignment. But as one of Phillips' conservative cohorts wryly observed to me, "the meeting of conservative minds here at OEO is not to be confused with the YAF reunion," which apparently is not to be held until later in the year.

Congressional reaction, in the form

of the customary hot air, has been vociferous if nothing else. But little more has been forthcoming. In a leaked Administration memorandum, which received wide circulation here on Capitol Hill, the strategy for the successful conclusion to the dismantlement of OEO was laid out. OEO is to be dismembered by the end of Fiscal Year 1973 (June 30, 1973) before congressional opposition to gather and develop a legislative counterstrategy" can be accomplished.

The Nixon Administration's memorandum serves to illustrate the dilemma with which Congress is faced. Although the first session of the 93rd Congress began on January 3, 1973, and the dismantlement of OEO is not to be completed until June 30th of this year (six months), it is considered doubtful by congressional observers that the languorous mechanisms of Congress can get in gear in time to meet this challenge. Congressional critics of the Administration, however, fear that the dismantlement of OEO could establish a dangerous precedent. They argue that it should be the responsibility of Congress, and not the Executive, to determine the nation's priorities and how the American tax dollar should be spent. This explains why the controversy has not taken on

the ideological overtones one might expect, and many conservatives have indicated their opposition to the President's policies.

If the President is successful with his programs it might not only be the first step towards returning this country to the path of fiscal responsibility, but it might also eventually signal the reversal of the Great Society philosophy. However, as Irving Kristol in a recent column observed: "The '70s, as I sense their drift, will be years of assimilation and adaptation, of 'cooptation.' Big government is not going to go away, any more than pornography or abortions or women's lib will go away. These innovations may or may not have been altogether desirable. One may even think that, on balance, they have been altogether undesirable. But so far from their being repealed, they are on their way to being institutionalized—to being rendered conventional, un-subversive, in the end uninteresting (though not un-influential). The result will be an America quite different—but not altogether different—from the America we have known." Kristol is undoubtedly correct in his summation of the seventies. But this does not make the present debate any easier, nor its outcome any more certain. □

## Book Review

# The Kennedy Promise

The Politics of Expectations  
by Henry Fairlie  
Doubleday \$7.95

Is nothing sacred? Historical revisionists are dumping on Camelot and the Kennedy Clan! Where is Ted Sorensen when we need him most? The icon-smashers include British liberal Henry Fairlie as well as a gentleman named Halberstam (in the ironically-titled *The Best and the Brightest* and a certain Ms. Clinch (*The Kennedy Neurosis*), none of them coming from the long-critical Right. Both "charisma" and "options" seem destined for history's trash bin.

As Fairlie and others have noted, those Kennedy-idolaters who credit the Kennedys with being the dominant figures of the 1960s shouldn't absolve them from the nastiness of the decade. Fairlie's thesis is that the Kennedys were basically politicians who clothed their pursuit of power in lofty rhetoric, promised more than they could deliver, and raised expectations to such a pitch that when they were not satisfied by the political system, the system came under bitter attack.

JFK the politician has been obscured by JFK the martyr. Having out-spent his rivals to capture the Democratic candidacy for president in 1960, Kennedy ignored the half-dozen men he had hinted he would choose as vice-president to pick a running mate on pure political expediency. Campaigning in the Midwest in 1960, he wasn't above a little corn: "The American cow is the 'foster mother' to the human race and a great asset to the

nation." Campaigning throughout the nation, he named the "Number One" problem in America to be, in various places: the depressed areas, the decline in farm income, and unemployment. Yet he told the readers of *Missiles and Rockets* magazine that "Certainly, national scientific goals will be our first objective." Part of his paper-thin margin over Richard M. Nixon (a politician of the period) was due to the "missile gap" JFK discovered, which JFK's Secretary of Defense debunked not too long after the campaign. Evidence abounds: John F. Kennedy was a masterful politician, politician, politician.

As Fairlie points out, the period of the fifties and sixties was one in which the intellectual elite was enthralled with the concept of the strong chief executive, a head of state who could wield the power of the federal government to do "good things" here and abroad. President Kennedy had long shared this view of the presidency. (It is good for a chuckle, by the way, to watch the current agonizing of the liberal senators who have only discovered the problem of a strong president when faced with one not doing what they want.) Fairlie cites Kennedy's pre-presidency belief in a strong leader as expressed in a speech in January, 1960 before the National Press Club: the chief executive "must be the Chief Executive in every sense of the word. He must be prepared to exercise the fullest powers of his office — all that are specified and some that are not." In office, he urged us all to sacrifice for the country he led, "Ask

not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." If the appeal to patriotism wasn't enough, there were other appeals, such as to the desire to survive thermonuclear war. "Each day we draw nearer to the hour of maximum danger, as weapons spread and hostile forces grow stronger," President Kennedy told us in his State of the Union speech in 1961. We were in danger, but a good bit of that danger may have been due to the man who promised "we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty." Rather like a blank check drawn on the lives of the American people, Fairlie effectively contrasts this with Eisenhower's prescription for meeting the hostile ideology of communism: "To meet it successfully, there is called for, not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crises, but rather those which enable us to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint, the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle." Eisenhower promised less, yet would not have renegeed on what he promised. One cannot imagine Ike refusing air cover at the Bay of Pigs because it would embarrass us at the U.N.

There were other forms of appeal for support of the President, to be sure. One of the most effective was the linking of JFK with "images of excellence": the dinners with artists, Nobel laureates, and the like; Robert Frost at the inauguration; the Cultural Gatherings which were to degenerate into radical chic parties by the end of the decade. Kennedy knew the value of image-making and quoted Burke to the effect that "...the whole world marks our demeanor." From the "philosopher-king" president down to the