



Correspondence



To The Editor:

I cannot resist writing you to express my admiration and delight at Professor William Nolte's perceptive and eminently just appreciation of Malcolm Muggeridge. As an unreconstructed naturalist I cannot but regard Muggeridge's conversion to transcendental religion as a poetic retreat into fantasy. Like Professor Nolte I believe that the alternatives between "heaven in heaven" and "heaven on earth" are exclusive but far from exhaustive. Even Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich would have agreed with us. But unlike Professor Nolte I regard Malcolm Muggeridge as a human being, as a subtle observer of human nature and conduct, and as a social critic many cuts above the blustering H.L. Mencken, who should be more appropriately compared with Westbrook Pegler. Muggeridge's style has a depth and nuance that Mencken's could never reach; and in marked contrast with Mencken, Muggeridge has no cruelty in him even in the cause of truth. Not that Mencken was always interested in the truth.

Sidney Hook
Stanford, California

To the Editor:

Benjamin Stein's assertion that James Dean is "the most famous Hoosier of the rock generation" (February issue) might be fitting for someone bred in the jungles of New York, the Liechtenstein of America, but it shows how little he knows about either Hoosiers or the rock generation.

The most famous Hoosier of the rock generation is Tom T. Hall of Connersville, Indiana.

W.J. Griffith III
Bean Blossom, Indiana

To the Editor:

I have one comment, which may or may not be useful, on Irving Kristol's stimulating essay on "Republican Virtue vs. Servile Institutions" (February issue). Kristol's description of the "more democracy and less responsibility" trend seems to be valid, but is it enough merely to describe it? How can we explain it? Obviously, as Mr. Kristol observes, we are dealing with attitudes and value orientations that have evolved over time. But why? Perhaps the increasing "bigness" of America and its increasingly impersonal institutions (from churches and schools to corporations) undermines an "individual sense of responsibility" and leads toward collective apathy and mediocrity. For example, no social scientist to my knowledge has studied the consequences (social as well as economic) of the evolution of large corporations, which are more economical and efficient, and the near elimination of family-owned businesses, which are unable to compete. The economic consequences are marvelous for society as a whole, in economic benefits, but may be undesirable in social consequences. There is much integrity, pride, and responsibility that obtains in running a successful family busi-

ness, and the large transfer of this group from independent entrepreneurs to cogs in an efficient corporation may contain the social consequences that Kristol describes. Of course there are other factors, too. Increased mobility and rising expectations in America have, over time, eroded republican virtue and substituted a belief that all must participate equally. I only wish that Mr. Kristol would have taken more of a stab at explanation as well as description.

Bud Folsom
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To the Editor:

I'm a fan of Banfield, and Wilson. I find the *New York Review of Books* to be inane. Marcuse and the New Left and radical chic arouse my ire. So our prejudices match, yours and mine, and I should be a happy reader. I'm not though; and when a member of your "target population" is mad enough to want to cancel you should pay attention.

The basic problem is your snide attitude toward equal rights for women. Your constant put downs in *Current Wisdom* and the Continuing Crisis have become too much for me. It's fine to poke fun at things like that provided there is also some apparent respect for them otherwise. In the five issues of *The Alternative* I have seen thus far there is only scorn. Your attitude toward racial questions seems very similar. I will not support a publication with so little respect for the fundamental rights of others.

Charles A. Lave
Irvine, California

To the Editor:

In his discussion of Ludwig von Mises' views on Christianity and socialism (February issue), Ralph Raico is quite correct in saying that Christianity has no explicit social doctrine. For that reason, he is quite incorrect in blaming Christianity for the abuses of the various social systems under which it has labored. Ecclesiastical statesmanship, like political statesmanship, requires one to change what evil one can, and to leave unchanged what can be changed only at the cost of tearing the Church asunder. Moreover, remarks such as "Christianity...has practically canonized war..." prove only that Mr. Raico has read neither the Sermon on the Mount nor the Roman Martyrology. Finally, I should like to remind him that the Christian churches have not always been "parasites and oppressors" in the temporal sphere. I point merely to the Catholic Church's vast patronage of art, literature, and scholarship throughout the ages, and the instrumental roles played by Protestant denominations in reform movements such as American Abolitionism.

As to Christianity's relationship with capitalism, I believe there are certain points of intersection between the two, but I must conclude that the differences far outweigh the similarities. Ultimately, *laissez faire* is a

closed social system—as are all social systems. The modern political ideologies—socialism, welfarism, capitalism—are pre-eminently concerned with the things that are Caesar's. They evolve in response to concrete historical situations, and change as those situations change. In other words, they stink of mortality. The Christian, on the other hand, has one eye—only one, to be sure—fixed on the next world, that small, still changeless point around which this world gyrates. The Cross stands atop the peaks which shield the dead strifes and forgotten contentions of the past from the eyes of the living.

I do not deny that Christians take sides—often different ones—on the issues of the moment. But unlike the ideologue, they do so ironically, knowing full well that the Gordian knot of existence cannot be cut by social or political means.

The book of life has closed on Dr. von Mises and all his scholarly successes; the book of history is closing on capitalism and all its economic successes. Time is a master who pays his servants well, but alas, he can only pay them in the wages of time. The Christian dares to ask for more.

And because he dares to ask for more, he can dare to hope.

Paul Strohl, Jr.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Quite without realizing it, I'm sure, Mr. Paul E. Reinken has provided *Alternative* readers with an inside look at *Business in America* (December 1974). The theme of his article is not, as its title suggests, a defense of natural monopoly, but a defense of the Bell System's looting of business communications users to offset poor returns on Bell's household markets. I don't credit the phone companies' new competitors or the FCC with any altruistic concern for the free market, but if the phone companies were currently providing their business clients with the cheapest, most efficient service, I doubt that any newcomers would try to compete. Mr. Reinken has identified the business communications market as having "high-profit communications items," and, as far as I can see, his only justification for the phone companies' former monopoly in that market is the low-cost service provided to the households. He claims that those on low and fixed incomes will suffer with high rates and eroded service as a result of the FCC's new rules. The clear implication here is that it is the phone companies' responsibility to serve as a redistributor of income. As a free enterpriser, I find Mr. Reinken's implications and his invocation of "the public interest" as reminiscent of *Atlas Shrugged*.

Mr. Reinken's only valid argument against the new FCC rulings lies in his statement, "They want the right to skim off the dollars in high-profit communications items, but with FCC protection against Bell's counter-competition." Hidden in this statement is the impli-

cation that the FCC will not allow Bell to cut prices against new competitors. Whose fault is that?

Sucking on the public teat must have some sort of stupefying effect, for those who suck the longest seem to believe the collectivist drivel about public interest, fair profit, and greedy businessmen. The phone companies earned their place at the Federal sow by virtue of their self-interest. The other piglets wallowing in the mud for a place at Big Momma will earn it the same way.

Frank Grange
Galt's Gulch, Colorado

To the Editor:

What a pity that Martin Northway's frothy little piece about Jimmy's (The Woodlawn Tap, March 1975) was all bubbles and foam. Aside from the inaccuracies (Jimmy's wasn't even there in 1946, nor yet imagined during the University's "athletic heyday") the profile fails to give a hint of the rich and heady brew that your readers could have tasted. Put it down to Mr. Northway's relatively recent introduction to this shrine to an era when Robert Maynard Hutchins was rounding out his career at the University, a well-known local paper headlined Tom Dewey's defeat of Harry Truman, and Dean Acheson would not "turn his back on Alger Hiss."

Jimmy, of course, came from behind the bar at the U.T., and most of the interesting drinkers followed him to his own place on 55th Street. Bernie and Ralph helped in those days,

and the latter (an ex-Marine) was known to vault the bar occasionally in order to head off an incipient riot when the usual instruments of detente (the Encyclopedia Britannica, complete works of Plato and Aristotle, and other books of reference) failed to pacify the beery antagonists.

It was there, among friends, that the comedy of Ed Asner (Mary Tyler Moore's Mr. Grant), the exquisite raillery of Severn Darden (who drank only milk) and the splendid talent of Fritz Weaver were shaped. Where Jimmy kept a bottle of Old Prerogative (probably the finest bourbon whiskey ever made and never offered for sale) under the bar, and only two of us were allowed to have any. Where Peter Van Doren talked sense and hope into Kevin Rooney, trying to ignore the bullet-grazed forehead (Kevin hanged himself in a New York jail a few years later). And those were the days of Shag Donohue's Red Door, the Twelve Tribes, Nichols and May and Jimmy's famous debate in Mandel Hall defending the virtues of booze against some long forgotten disputant.

There was no one singing "rousing German songs in the front room" (there was only one room, anyway), no "uproarious...fraternity brothers" and few if any university administrators. But those were all things we were happy to do without in those days—over a quarter of a century ago—in this Great American Saloon.

Karl Zimmer
Indianapolis, Indiana

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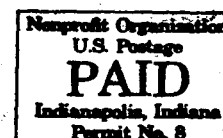
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