



Collier's
EDITORIAL



Collier's believes...

FREEDOM SHOULD RING: WITHIN about a month the Freedom Train will pull into New York to remain until New Year's Day. A year's travel around the United States will have been finished. An amazing journey will be over.

Nobody quite anticipated what has happened. Somehow the arrival of the Freedom Train in a community seemed to give people a chance to express their deeper feelings. Love of country, love of liberty, hope for recognition of human dignity got intermixed in this carnival, just as the singing of The Star-Spangled Banner and the sight of the flag fluttering in bright sunlight quickens the pulse and awakens sentiments and emotions that most of the time are safely dormant.

The train itself was an inspiring thing, well designed to draw the crowds it summoned in such droves. The 115 documents, the Magna Charta, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Emancipation Proclamation and such, had all the force of records of some of the greatest moments in our history. But more important than the documents or the train was the timing. The year 1948 has been one when pre-eminently men have been compelled to think of freedom.

We have to thank the Communists for that. Because Russian ambition to rule was depriving so many people of independence, liberty suddenly became much more significant and interesting. When liberty is safe, we don't have to get excited about it. And we don't. But when actually it is in danger the situation is different and we are not bored by the recollection of the great episodes of our past.

So without intending to do so or even knowing that they were doing it, the Russians gave the Freedom Train a greater opportunity. When the Communists strangled the independence of Czechoslovakia and conquered Hungary, they compelled freemen everywhere to think about their own principles and their own security.

Times of danger often put principles to the critical test. The Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments

to our Constitution, is a sort of memorandum of the privileges we like to possess. The right to speak freely implies, however, a tolerance of the other fellow's right to speak freely.

If the differences of sentiment are quite marked, toleration becomes more difficult. Where agreement is fairly general, as between Democrats and Republicans, for instance, it is easy to endure the foolish opinions of those who do not see eye to eye with us. Where the differences are more emphatic, as between the Wallace party and either Democrats or Republicans, it is much harder to tolerate strange doctrines. Yet the Emancipation Proclamation on that same Freedom Train and now also embodied in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of our Constitution is a reminder that men previously ignored also have rights.

The Communists in the United States impose an even greater strain upon our principles and upon our tempers. They frankly try to take advantage of our freedom, to destroy our freedom. They seek a refuge in the Bill of Rights in order to deprive us of the privileges embodied in the Bill of Rights.

No people as practical as those who have won liberty and independence for themselves, certainly none as practical as Americans, will carry the logic of liberty to the point at which liberty is lost. This is axiomatic. Abraham Lincoln exemplified that in his treatment of the Copperheads. If Communists ever get numerous enough or important enough to be a real internal threat to American principles, common sense will not permit them to destroy us.

We are far from that now. Meanwhile, we are strong enough and secure enough to enjoy the great free way of life celebrated by the Freedom Train. During the past eleven months some 3,500,000 Americans have actually visited the train and gazed at the documents. Nearly 45,000,000 Americans have in one way and another participated in the program. The year 1948 is in a special sense a Year for Freedom. The assemblers and exhibitors of the historic documents of our liberty aboard the Freedom Train have done well by it. . .

WE, THEIR ELDERS, SHARE THE BLAME: WE BELIEVE that the early manifestations of sex in high school trouble teachers, parents, writers of letters to the editor, and numbers of other important and conscientious citizens. We think also that the young and the adolescent are also bothered. Old folks have no monopoly of worry.

Every school since Noah has had its problems and some have had their scandals. It is our impression that today's high-school boys and girls are not much better than were their fathers. Not much worse either.

It is a fact, as Amy Porter shows in her article published in next week's Collier's, that parents, generally speaking, are complete flops as instructors in matters of sex—and schoolteachers are not much better.

The reasons for this failure are obvious enough. Principles and practice even among the mature don't always coincide. Shame, modesty, the natural impulse for privacy tend to keep parents and teachers mute or awkward in the discussion of such affairs.

The truth is that the young are much better than their elders fancy. For one who breaks the unwritten and unspoken code, there are the many who do not fail. The majorities comply with what is silently expected of them.

The few who do not conform create the scandals and make the problems for the school and family and society. Surely we should do better in informing the young.

A few communities, churches and social agencies are now equipped to help those who have blundered. But the numbers of those ready and able to help are indeed few.

If we are concerned at all, we might be concerned intelligently.

To us this means first improving the routine of instruction as much as possible. Then work out civilized methods for helping those who have made early mistakes. . .

W. L. C.

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