

What Religion Means to Me



Block prints by Lowell Balcom

by **NILLA CRAM COOK**

WHEN I WAS four years old I went to California from the Mississippi banks where I was born and lived by the ocean near Los Angeles. My earliest memories are of dancing in the foam on the beach and holding out my arms to the sunset clouds where I thought I saw the temples of India. The *Jungle Books* had been read to me, and pieces of oriental furniture in our Iowa house stood out as things that belonged especially to me. But the temples I saw beyond the Pacific had not been described to me by anyone, and I told no one what I saw, only danced by the waves and held out my arms to the horizon. Nothing could have persuaded me that I had just come into the world or that there had ever been a time the temples I saw in the clouds had not been there. That they vanished during the day and were visible for only a few moments did not surprise me. I started to study music when I was five and compared the silent keys of the piano with the empty sky. India was visible as the sun approached it the way music is heard when the fingers reach for the keys.

When I was six my grandmother took me to one of California's mountain observatories to look at the stars through a telescope. I was much impressed with the rings around Saturn and the glow and size of the moon. If worlds were seen as specks of light and songs as specks of ink on paper, the stars in their marvelous arrangements were certainly an alphabet no one knew how to read. The telescope proved that there were invisible realities in the distance

and that I had not been wrong to see the domes and towers of Indian temples just because India was far away.

Shortly after the look through the telescope I saw a dramatization of Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* in the Los Angeles hills at night. It was a production of the Theosophical Society, and my father's mother, although she did not belong to the Society and kept her faith to herself, believed in reincarnation and had books of Eastern philosophy in the library of her house on the Mississippi. The stage on which the vision of Buddha was presented was in the out-of-doors beneath the stars, and it was like a glimpse through another telescope to the interior of the temples I had seen. Buddha was on a lotus throne above a dance of drums and fire, and it seemed to me that the temples, the music, the dance, and the flowers, mineral and animal and all forms of visible beauty, were there to merge the routine of the days with an immense Design.

When I was seven, living on the wooded gorge between North and South Pasadena in Los Angeles, the little girl across the street asked me if I were a Christian.

"What is that?" I asked.

"Why, a person who believes in Christ!"

"And what is Christ?"

"There was a terrific scandal. It was a neighborhood of Free Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, and Holy Rollers. The Holy Rollers rolled down a hill on the opposite bank of the Arroyo Seco, and the Free Methodists held

THE FORUM

revival meetings in a barn across the bridge. The Seventh Day Adventists had informed us that the world was coming to an end, and I hid with my little brother in a pipe in the cellar when we heard that the Germans were coming. But we had never been allowed by our free-thinking parents to go to church or Sunday school, and the freethinking friends of my mother burst into hilarious laughter when I shyly admitted that I had gone to the Methodist Sunday School with the little girl across the street.

"Open the door," they sang there, and it seemed to me that the door was in all directions. They said to ask for what you wanted in a prayer at bedtime, and I asked to see the horizon open and the worlds without a telescope. Awake in the middle of the night, it would seem that the walls melted away or that the horizon drew into them and penetrated them as a white light. That Christ can walk through walls was one of the things I was told at Sunday school, and, as I would try to visualize Him coming through the walls, His white robes would become the circle of the horizon and enclose me and reach endlessly outward. My five-year-old brother had a theory that God is blue and fills the sky. I agreed that this is true in the daytime but that at night God is a white light shining in the darkness.

II

WHEN I WAS nine years old, my mother was principal of a boys' school built by Prince Hopkins, a California millionaire with Utopian dreams about schools. Most of the students paid no tuition, as Prince Hopkins preferred intelligent boys to rich ones and paid their expenses himself. The building of Boyland, which is now the Samarkand Hotel, was the design of a white Persian palace in the hills above Santa Barbara. There were museums in it and swimming pools, science laboratories and a giant concrete map of the world over several acres, where we scampered across continents and swam in oceans. But what I liked best were the statues of Buddha Prince Hopkins had brought from Asia and placed over pools of water lilies. I made wreaths of flowers and threw them around a marble Buddha, which made me the adored pet of the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist servants.

My mother and Prince Hopkins believed

that children should not be forced to go to classes if they did not want to or to learn anything that did not interest them. Madame Montessori visited the school and set her seal of approval upon my mother's methods, and I was allowed to study nothing but music and astronomy and to ride a horse all day over the State highways and listen to Prince Hopkins read *The Arabian Nights* in the evening. I would ask him over and over again why the Caliph was called Commander of the Faithful. He had been in Bagdad and India and China and did not mind describing his travels to a nine-year-old or explaining about the Caliph over and over again. He read about the valor of the Arabs and their horses, and I galloped over the hills of Santa Barbara pretending they were the mountains above Mecca. Allah was valor, loyalty, and love, Buddha serenity above a dance of drums and fire, and Christ the light that shines in the infinite darkness. The three were the names of a mighty mystery at the threshold of the infinite, and the only knowledge that seemed to me worth pursuing was knowledge that led to them. But they were everywhere, and the design of a bird's wing or an onion skin under a microscope or a honeycomb or a snowdrop or the derivations of English from Latin were the rhythm of their design.

When I was twelve I was sent to a prim and proper girls' boarding school near Chicago, where, despite or perhaps because of the wild freedom of Boyland, I made a sensational record with high-school lessons. The radiation of English from Latin struck me with the wonder and delight with which I saw the oblique rays of the sunrise when I went out for a game of tennis before breakfast, and when not engaged in outdoor games I spent my time making charts of Latin verbs and marveling at the workings of algebra and geometry. I was thrilled and fascinated to find harmony and design in language as well as in space and the seeds of symmetry and music and the laws of growth and organic structure in mathematics. It was incredible that the sermons we heard on Sunday were called religion and mathematics and language merely knowledge. The gloom cast upon me by Protestant pastors was a form of death, and mathematics and science the pure and manifest language of infinite and ecstatic life. I therefore started an atheist

WHAT RELIGION MEANS TO ME

campaign which got me expelled from school and sniffed somewhat angrily when Professor Charles Beard, whose children I visited in Connecticut one summer, told me I would someday discover that my atheism was profound religion.

When scandalized Guardians at a Camp Fire Girls' camp in Michigan asked me what I believed in, if I did not believe in Jehovah, I would say, "In Camp Fire." Catholics, Jews, and all the abominations of Protestant pastors were assembled at the camp, and the American Indian ritual of the Camp Fire included them all. The Law of the Fire was to Seek Beauty, Pursue Knowledge, Hold on to Health, Be Trustworthy, Glorify Work, Give Service, and Be Happy. The Law was repeated around the three Fires of Work, Health, and Love in the woods on the shore of Lake Michigan, and I took my Wood Gatherer's rank there and chose the ceremonial Indian name of Akanta, which means Lightning. The forest, the seasons, the lore of the woods and earth and animals were a part of the Camp Fire ritual, and each bead on the ceremonial gown represented an honor won in music, crafts, athletics, or some kind of work or study.

Under the regime, in which we were congenital sinners, with adults posted to spy on us and Jehovah spying from above, it was a feat of cleverness to outwit the spies, but no one spied at camp, and honors won unfairly would have deprived other hard-earned honors of their value. Whoever had won the Camp Honor for following the rules was asked to rise at the weekly ceremonial, and a girl who had whispered after taps or eaten candy between meals would not have risen for anything, even though no one else knew anything about it. Fear of Jehovah was a negative reason for doing or not doing things, but Camp Fire had creative reasons, so closely in harmony with nature that truth-speaking seemed part of the divine law of the woods and earth. It was as though the unfinished life of the Indians had gone on and the essence of their earth and spirit knowledge been handed down to young America.

Dividing the year between divorced parents at opposite sides of the Continent, I had crossed it about twelve times by the time I was thirteen years old, and Camp Fire impressed me as a religion worthy of the bigness of America. I knew the two oceans and the great rivers, the

mountains and prairies and forests from the spruce of Vancouver Island to the tanglewood of Cape Cod. The grandeur of the Continent could be matched only by the promise of a religion that would include all religions, all prophets and bibles and the peoples they have sprung from, without calling one more or less true or authoritative than another. I was sure that this was the true and ultimate destiny of America as I traveled from the Golden Gate to the Provincetown harbor and vowed in the Michigan woods to follow the Law of the Fire.

III

WHEN I WAS fourteen I went to Greece with my stepmother, Susan Glaspell, to join my father, who had abandoned his theater, the Provincetown Players, and talked of starting a Greek theater in Delphi. We met him in Sicily, and he felt himself disgraced in the Cathedral of Palermo when I could not read the medieval Latin on the walls. He himself was a philologist from Harvard, Heidelberg, and Geneva and knew half a dozen modern languages as well as Latin and ancient and modern Greek. We crossed Italy, and as soon as we arrived in Corfu he taught me the Greek alphabet and began to make charts of Greek verbs, ostensibly for my instruction but primarily for his own entertainment. After a certain amount of wine, he would begin to write poems on the law of the transmigration of vowels and consonants from Sanscrit to the Indo-European languages and he had an enormously appreciative audience in me. I would dance up and down for joy when he showed me Sanscrit words in the ancient Greek dictionary and I spent the summer on Parnassus astounding the tutor who camped with us in the forest with my progress in ancient and modern Greek.

When lessons were over I would roam over the mountains alone or with a shepherd boy who showed me the secret springs and high places from where the sea is visible and how to jump over the rocks like a mountain goat. They used to hear my laughter from all the surrounding peaks, and at weddings and saints' days and baptismal celebrations I would out-dance everyone in the squares of the Parnassus villages. The mad joy of knowing that I was one with an infinite life made it impossible for me to feel any grief when my father died. Why they put on black and mourned for death I

THE FORUM

could not understand. I believed the myth of Dionysus, that death is a liberation to the Infinite, in which the spirit becomes Dionysian, divine, and returns regenerated. But it was a secret knowledge, which I did not dare express at that time and realized fully only when my mother died, five years later.

I was back in Greece again, married to a Greek poet and preparing to dance in the production of *Prometheus Bound* for which people from all Europe came to the Delphic Festival. I was very much devoted to my mother, and she was just past forty when she died, but I wove a robe of crimson and gold on my loom for her death, and Athenian society was shocked.

My husband tried to appease them by translating Whitman's hymn to death from *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed*, to explain to them how I felt, but he was the only one who understood that the more deeply I felt or loved the more certain I was of a Universal Ecstasy deeper than doubts or pain. I could not feel sorry for anything that returned to that Ecstasy, which a world of invented fears shuts out but which I was sure was the source from which matter and forms emerge and to which they must return. Consciousness of the ocean of life became more exultant when my mother, who was a drop of it I had loved, returned. Water is solid when it becomes ice but the same water becomes invisible moisture when the form of the ice melts. It was the water itself I loved, and the forms merely as its passing play. Nor did I believe that one is born of parents, but only *through* them, as plants are born through the earth but not from it. They are born from their own seed, and I felt that the seed of me was ancient, that India and the Himalayas and worlds before this one had given birth to me.

The five years that I was married in Greece I collected Indian books from wherever in Europe I could find them and studied Greek and Sanscrit philology and literature late into the nights. I spent a season in the Alps and on the French Riviera with my husband and baby, but cases of Sanscrit books and dictionaries went everywhere with me, and I finally broke away from the social entanglements that go with marriage and life in the city and returned to Parnassus.

I had a house with a loom and library in Delphi and wandered over the mountains above

it, sleeping on the ground in a shepherd's cape and eating brown bread and cheese and goat's milk at the folds of the sheep. Dionysus had been a wanderer, Lord of the Wood and Ivy, the flowering, the fruitful, youth, strength, and valor, the genius of nature and inspiration of Eros. I called his names to the thyme-perfumed earth and intoxicated myself on my own vitality. I never drank wine and abhorred tobacco and coffee and all the things that are supposed to stimulate externally. They impressed me as being props for old age and substitutes for the divine madness which turned any pain the world might throw on me into ecstasy.

IV

IN THE SANSKRIT books the immortality-giving drink is called Soma because it is associated symbolically with soma, the moon. The light of the moon is reflected from the sun, and the soul-intoxicating drink is divine vitality reflected in the body. The Vedas say that Soma lives in the mountains but that its true origin is in heaven. It is the milk of heaven born as Lord of the Wood. It has medicinal powers, heals whatever is sick, makes the blind see and the lame walk, and stimulates the voice as the Lord of Speech. It awakens thought, generates hymns, is a leader of poets, a seer among priests, the drop that grows in the waters, brilliant and youthful, shining without fuel in the waters which surround and nourish it. It is clothed in lightning, golden in form, invoked as fire, the lightning form of fire in the cloud, the bright divinity, holy, eternal, who has seized the brightness in the depth of the ocean. In Greek the word soma means body, because to the Greeks the body was the drink; and communion with the Soma Christou, the body of Christ, remains in the Greek liturgy from the mysteries of Dionysus.

India has taken its name from Soma because Indu is another name of the moon. The Indus River is the River of the Moon, and Hindustan the Land of the Moon, or of the divine drink, and the Hindus are drinkers of Indu.

When I at last set out for India I went directly to the Himalayan home of Soma, the Vale of Kashmir, and lived in a houseboat on a river the Kashmirians call the Royal Umbrella of Nila. Nila was another name of the Indus, the Sanscrit word for blue. Nila Naga was the Serpent of Eternity and guardian of Kashmir,

WHAT RELIGION MEANS TO ME



the Spirit of the Infinite and Eternal Blue. The main stream of the Indus is sacred to Nila, but the source of the Jhelum, which rises in Kashmir, is his royal umbrella. It is a circular pool in a mountainside, from which a stream gushes through the central channel of a garden, as though the pool were a round umbrella and the stream its stick. I made pilgrimages to the sources or valleys of all the sacred rivers of Kashmir and went to festivals in temples and groves and forests. It delighted and overwhelmed me to find the philosophy and conceptions of the Vedas laid out in the names of rivers and shrines and in temple ritual.

It was difficult for priests to whom I spoke in Sanscrit to believe that I had just come to India. The people took my Greek sandals and the robes I had woven in Greece for Indian sandals and saris and insisted that I was in all respects a Hindu. The Maharaja's court gave me facilities for visiting all corners of the beautiful Vale and found me a Brahman master of oriental languages to assist me in the study of Kashmirian literature and to teach me to read and write Hindu. At the end of the summer the priests of the Sanatan Dharma, as orthodox Hinduism is called, the Religion of Truth, met and decided that I should be "reclaimed" as a Hindu. The Sanatan Dharma is allowed under no circumstances to convert anyone to Hinduism or to recognize conversions or marriages performed by the Arya Samaj, an unorthodox branch which calls itself Reformed Hinduism

and takes in converts. But a born Hindu who has left orthodoxy and returned can be reclaimed, and the Brahmans of Kashmir called a meeting of the people to explain that it did not matter *when* a Hindu had left. It might have been thousands of years before, in a previous existence, and the people consented, with showers of marigolds and saffron petals, to the plan to reclaim me.

I had been named Nilla by the Mississippi, and they gave me the name of Nila Nagini Devi, Goddess of the Eternal Blue, after Nila Naga. Devi, which means goddess, is attached to the names of all Hindu women as the equivalent of "Mrs." Nila is Ananta, Eternity, and as the Brahmans lighted the three fires of the Vedic sacrifice, to name me, I told them that I had been named Akanta by the Fires of Work, Health, and Love nine years before. They were amazed and delighted. In Kashmir poetry Nila is clothed in lightning, and the Law of the Fire and whatever they heard of Camp Fire they called pure Vedic Hinduism. On the certificate they gave me to admit me to orthodox Hindu temples in India they indicated my caste in letters of gold as American Aryan.

"The reason we have never proselytized," they said when they had named me, "is that all religions are faces of the same truth, and to take a man from one religion to another is to deny it. But we have taken you because you bring us all religions and because your adoration of God as all-pervading has the ecstasy of youth. True religion is the bhakti of youth."

Bhakti is the devotion that "drinks God as the wild bull drinks the lake." Cults of bhakti have possessed India for thousands of years, and the Greek "bacchante" is derived from bhakta, the frenzied devotee. Bhakti had given me a reputation for eccentricity in the West which began when I was five years old, and it was like finding my home again after a long exile to be where it was understood. The things for which I had been considered unconventional and queer in the West were regarded as piety in India, and from one end of the country to the other I was received by people of all classes with a devout kind of love.

V

MY FIRST WINTER was spent in the Dailwarra temples of Mount Abu, a sacred mountain of the Jains which rises from the desert of

THE FORUM

Rajputana like a tower of jungle flowers. Jainism is an ancient form of Hinduism in which there is no caste and which makes non-violence and protection of all life the first commandment. The Dailwarra temples are a cluster of domes over the richest marble carving in the world and corridors of shrines containing marble images with the Eye of Wisdom inlaid as jewels in their foreheads. There was a Mahatma of the Jains living at Dailwarra, the Yogi Shantivijaya, who has a following of millions in India as a religious teacher and who took me as his disciple. I studied languages, served the altar fire of the temples, and practiced exercises of meditation and breath control with the rosary and instructions of Shantivijaya. I met many thousands of pilgrims during the winter, from all parts of India, and learned many things from my teacher which are not written in books.

In the spring I set out on a pilgrimage to the sacred places of Kathiawar, the land of Krishna, the Indian Apollo, and found the temples I had seen in the Pacific sunset over the Arabian Sea. The Jains have built cities of temples, thousands of white domes and towers on the tops of immense precipices among the clouds. From Kathiawar I went to Mathura and Brindaban on the Jumna River below Delhi, to visit the forest where Krishna danced the Rasa Mandala, the Circle Dance, with the Gopis, the milkmaids. Of all names, I loved that of Krishna Gopal best, because the Divine Herdsman was the life of the earth and the dance of the Gopis around him was the circle of the planets around the sun. Krishna-Bhakti united me by a tie of unspeakable love to the Indians.

From Brindaban I went to the Nilgiris, the Mountains of Nila, in the south. The Himalayas are called the upper curve of Nila Naga's body, and the Nilgiris the southern, enclosing India within the circle of Eternity. The Hindu State of Mysore is below the Blue Mountains,

and I was invited there to the birthday festivities of the Maharaja and to other royal festivals where I saw fabulous wealth on display. Bhakti had come to mean bhakti of humanity, and the existence of wealth and poverty made it essential for me to find some way of identifying myself with those in need. I fulfilled various difficult vows of fasting and asceticism, and was rewarded by one real glimpse of God and Ecstasy. What I saw made nothing too difficult to attempt if it would unite the drop of me to the sea.

I began with street cleaning. The lowest in the Hindu community are the scavengers, who, because of the work they do, are considered unclean and "untouchable." I went into the slums of Bangalore in the Mysore State and cleaned the streets and the drains. The flower of the Brahman youth joined me, and there was a great sensation in India. We sent reports of our work to Mahatma Gandhi, who was leading the all-India-antiuntouchability movement from the Yeravda jail, and he wrote us it was a very great work we were doing. For Brahmans to do the work of untouchables would automatically put an end to untouchability. Our campaign also branched into the founding of playgrounds for slum children, spinning classes held in the streets, and the remodeling of a theater where I directed a group of Kanarese players.

But when I went to visit Gandhi in the jail, his understanding of the depth of my quest made me decide that the work I was doing was only making me into the leader of a campaign and that to escape from egotism and love of the grandstand and the things that stood between me and my vision of the beauty religion I should have to give up public work and become the humblest of devotees. Gandhi assured me that if I succeeded in realizing my vision within myself I should be able to realize it in the theater my father called the "theater of our unrealized nation," the nation being the world and the religion a world religion.



WHAT RELIGION MEANS TO ME

My pledge of discipleship was transferred formally from Shantivijaya to Gandhi, and, after living for a time in a remote village of untouchables at the edge of the Mysore jungle, I went with my young son to his ashrama, or retreat, near Ahmadabad, and later to another of his communal colonies in central India. What made me place absolute confidence in Gandhi and my life in his hands was that he had successfully adhered to his vow of non-stealing, as he calls the vow of nonpossession of personal property. The highest ideal of Hinduism for thousands of years has been voluntary renunciation of all property beyond the needs of the body and dedication of wealth to art and religion. Gandhi had evolved the ideal into endless methods of practical application, and thousands of his followers gave up their property as a joyous experience of bhakti.

"To have you do your own work is my ideal for you," he told me. "To stop dancing this Prometheus dance of being bound and create the dance of liberation."

I had become like a skeleton from fasting and had a bald, shaven head. I finally saw that by making myself look like Gandhi I was not practicing the truths it was his ambition to teach people to practice. If they were universal, they would be universally applicable, in the West as well as the East, and to practice them in America, as a private individual and not as an apostle, would be the test.

"But promise you will do it right away!" Gandhi exclaimed. "Only by being true to yourself can you be true to me. Get to work on these new dances and stop wasting your time."

VI

THE BRITISH helped me to make the transition from a bald-headed, barefoot ascetic to an American girl. They took care of me when I fell ill after leaving the ashrama and treated me with such understanding and kindness and did so much for my little son that I left India in an ecstasy of love for all who are in it. But the war against untouchability had not ended, and I saw the stewards on the ship which brought me from India treated as social untouchables. In a spasm of indignation and inspiration I decided that I had to identify myself with the untouchables of the West as I had with those of India, and the only way I could devise of doing it honestly was by marry-

ing one. As soon as I reached New York I married a boy I had seen treated as an untouchable on the ship, without explaining to anyone why I did it. But I became violently ill the same day and found that I was doing both him and myself a great injustice and that the truth as I saw it could not be served in that way.

It took many months to adjust myself to life in New York and a great deal of vigilance to keep myself out of the commercial entanglements proposed by lecture bureaus and theatrical and literary agents bent on exploiting the newspaper notoriety which attended the absurdly garbled reports and interpretations of my doings. But the program which had begun with the ashrama vows had become a part of my nature, and the universal applicability of the vow of nonstealing became more than ever apparent. I found that, aside from rent, my living expenses amounted to no more than seven dollars a week in New York, because, as a vegetarian, I cannot eat in restaurants and adhere to very simple ideas about food. To remain in tune with the nature and universe I have known, I cannot take from it more than my actual needs. Anything I take beyond the requirements of my health is stolen from nature, which would provide for all if there were no thieves. Whatever I may earn from writing or from the theater of my dreams must be a trust of which I am merely custodian. Gandhi always pointed out to people in all walks of life that they do not have to stop working or earning but that they should consider themselves custodians and not possessors of their resources.

For me the essence of all religion is in the parable of the rich man and the eye of the needle. Religion which tolerates injustice and is not a rule of action seems to me to be useless. It is an empty shell, with which old age may console itself but which is powerless to give youth a life with just foundations and universal joy. Seeing this, youth imagines it has turned from religion, but it has turned from only the shell. Love and life itself are religion, because they are the pursuit of bliss, and youth has turned from sectarian prejudice, not from life. Life and love are bhakti, and in Eastern language I should say that religion means bhakti to me. In Western language there is no single word for it, but I might say that it keeps me a bacchante, drunk with primordial joy.

Has the New Deal Helped the Farmer?

A Debate on a Campaign Issue

I—Farmers Still Want the AAA

by CHESTER C. DAVIS

Administrator, Agricultural Adjustment Act

IT SEEMS TO ME that the first response to the question of why farmers favor the agricultural-adjustment program would very logically be another question: "Do they favor it?"

I say that most of them do. To argue they do not is to butt one's head against a stone wall of facts which the farmers themselves have built, stone on stone and fact on fact, and which stands there today as something that cannot be dodged. This opinion is still held by the vast majority of farmers, I am positive, despite the adverse ruling of the Supreme Court.*

I do not say that most farmers *would* favor the adjustment program if they could sell at satisfactory prices all they can produce. Such a condition does not exist, and there is no magic by which it can be brought about. So the hard-headed farmer judges against the cold background of present-day fact.

Most farmers know that the politician who, under existing international conditions, promises them an export outlet for all they can produce, is talking bunk. They would like to have it, certainly; they would like to see new industrial uses develop for their products, too; but, while these avenues are being opened, they can see no reason why theirs should be the only branch of our industrial organization to throw goods on the market for what they will bring.

Out of some 6,000,000 farmers in the United States, a few more than 3,500,000 were actively co-operating in the adjustment programs in November, 1935. The number has generally increased with each program offered or renewed, and the November figure is the largest

it has ever been, which indicates that the programs enjoy not only the favor but the growing favor of the nation's farmers.

There have been 6 referendums of the nation's producers of cotton, wheat, corn and hogs, and tobacco, including two successive ones for the corn-hog and tobacco producers. All carried. Not by any split decisions but by heavily preponderant majorities. In each of these any farmer or farm owner was eligible to vote who was a grower of the commodity involved, whether he was a contract signer or not. In all of these elections there was a large turnout; *in fact, a larger percentage of those eligible actually came out and voted than in any presidential election in recent years.* In the 6 referendums approximately 3,433,000 votes were cast for the programs and about 535,000 against — a ratio of more than 6 to 1.

The regions with the most experience with agricultural adjustment generally gave it the strongest support, and one or two specific instances will corroborate that statement. In the 1935 corn-hog referendum, 161,000 Iowa farmers voted for a continuation of the program, to 26,581 votes cast against it. In Kossuth County, Iowa, the home of Senator Dickinson, the vote was 2,906 in favor and 164 against. That is 18 to 1. The total of 3,070 votes, which included some absentee farm owners, equaled 97 per cent of the last census count of all the resident farmers in Mr. Dickinson's county.

I realize, of course, that the majority is not necessarily right. But I suggest that such a preponderant majority of farmers should prove embarrassing to any purported leader of farmers who undertakes to argue, while leading them, that they are wrong.

* EDITOR'S NOTE:—Although this article was written by Administrator Davis just before the Supreme Court's decision on January 6, Mr. Davis telegraphed this additional sentence.