

The Cow In The Apartment

Burton Rascoe

Helping yourself is one of the
best possible ways to help others

HAVEN'T YOU at one time or another remarked, or heard, without protest, a friend remark: "Radio and TV would be all right if it weren't for the commercials," or "He used to be a pretty good writer, but he is turning out nothing but commercial stuff nowadays," or "Commerce and religion don't mix well," or "It's the commercial angle that is tied in with the project that I object to"?

If so, have you ever realized that every one of those expressions and others like them are nothing whatever but displays and airings of baseless and rather vulgar snobbery?

We are all — every single one of us — engaged in trade. Trade is our way of helping ourselves and others.

The man who deposits a bottle full of milk before my apartment door every morning is in trade, even though he belongs to a driver's union; and his being in trade is a way of helping me and others. Since I live in an apartment in the

city, I can't keep a cow handy, even if I knew how to milk her. Even if it were possible for me to keep a cow in the apartment, the cow would produce more milk than I can use. I couldn't stop milking her; for if I did, she would go dry. I would have an unproductive cow on my hands in an apartment, and the cost of feeding and cleaning up after her would be great. If I tried to get back some of the cost by selling the surplus, I would have to go into business, buy bottles and sterilizing and pasteurizing chemicals and equipment, solicit customers, keep books, keep publicly displayed the O.P.A. milk prices, file and pay quarterly income taxes, get, display, and keep paid up on, the necessary licenses, submit to regular federal, state, and municipal food and hygiene inspection, promptly report all symptoms of hoof-and-mouth disease, ticks or other cow afflictions, dun my delinquent customers, and Lord knows what all — and the surplus milk from one cow would cost me X-dol-

Burton Rascoe is a literary critic and free-lance writer in New York City.

lars for every 28¢ bottle of milk I sold.

So my milkman, in trade, helps me in more ways than he probably realizes; and he also helps so many other people. By helping the milk company to keep together, he even helps me to enjoy certain dramas on my TV. From the aggregate of profits in fractions of mills on the 28¢ bottle of milk, the company seeks to increase the number of persons it helps in the same way it does me.

ONE OF the ways the company can increase its number of milk customers is by advertising; and one of these ways of advertising is by helping the television companies to keep in business by buying time from the companies for the televising of dramas for which writers, directors, producers, camera operators, electricians, costumers, make-up artists, script girls, announcers, and actors must be hired.

Every aspect of all this is com-

mercial, from the creative talent of the writer of the drama, who trades the product of his brains for cash to the rest of the studio, to the work of the scrub woman who cleans up the studio. But the only thing that is labeled "commercial" is the selling-talk for the milk company, which appears at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the TV drama, and which consumes not more than three minutes of the TV audience's time.

YET THOSE three minutes are entirely devoted by the company to the helping of others — commercial script-writers, actors, scenic artists, cameramen, electricians, and others — all of whom are provided with a means of livelihood by the indispensable and economically justifiable "commercial" which makes it possible to see a good drama, well acted, without cost in my living room.

It is impossible honestly to make a great deal of money without doing a great deal of good.

Either some Caesar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand; or your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth Century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth; — with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country by your own institutions.

T. B. MACAULAY, Letter to H. S. Randall, May 23, 1857

Freedom degenerates unless it has to struggle in its own defense.

LORD ACTON (John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton)

The Essence Of Capitalism

Hart Buck

ONE OF THE inescapable facts of human life is that we must choose among alternatives. That fact furnishes us the clue to economic science.

It is as simple as this: Two years ago, I wanted to hear a recital by Anna Russell and an address by Archduke Otto. But I had to choose between them because they were appearing in different parts of Toronto on the same evening and at no other time.

As you read this article, you yourself have made a choice among alternative uses of your time. You could have turned to television or picked up a novel. Instead, you chose to read what I have to say about capitalism.

THE BASIC idea of capitalism is that if we are left free to choose what we want most, we'll get the most of what we want. That is all there is to it. Any alternative whatever to capitalism can only be a system in which the police may compel us to take B when we would prefer A.

It is quite true that capitalism is an economy of scarcity. Under

that name in the 1930's, its critics contrasted it with the economy of abundance which would arrive when capitalism no longer blocked the track. But this side of Utopia or Paradise, there is no economy of abundance. If there were abundance, there would be no need for economy. There is indeed abundance of air for us to breathe, and therefore no need to economize air. But practically everything else we want is in short supply; practically everything we want is such that we must work to get it and wait to get it, simply because we happen to want the kind of things that don't occur naturally, or don't occur naturally in sufficient quantity to satisfy all of us. There are not enough hands in the world to work, and not enough time to wait, to bring into existence all of the things that two and a half billion human beings want. Any economic system, therefore, is an economy of scarcity. The purpose of any economic system is to enable us to work and wait for the things we most want if we have to choose, and hence to overcome scarcity. Capitalism is the economy of minimum

Mr. Buck is statistician of The Toronto Dominion Bank.