

Friendly—and Unfriendly—Voices

NO FRIENDLY VOICE, by Robert Maynard Hutchins. University of Chicago Press. \$2.

EDUCATION AND ORGANIZED INTERESTS, by Bruce Raup. G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$2.50.

EDUCATION AND THE SOCIAL CONFLICT, by Howard David Langford. Macmillan Company. \$1.75.

THE life of a college president, if he happens to be a man of talent and imagination, is likely to be an unhappy one. That is peculiarly true in an hour when Trustees, Legionnaires, and all the mouth-pieces of the status quo are reasserting their control over the educational system. Robert Maynard Hutchins, youthful, capable head of the University of Chicago, is the supreme example of the plight of his calling. He is talented. He expresses original, often noteworthy ideas on educational policy. And he is president of a heavily endowed university whose structural expansion is dependent upon the friendship of those who can afford to contribute to education—and who expect stolid, orthodox citizens in return for their investments. In *No Friendly Voice*, a collection of Dr. Hutchins' essays and speeches, all these contradictions are plainly revealed. When he rises to defend educational freedom—"the value of encouraging intelligent, calm and dispassionate inquiry into bringing order out of chaos"—he is expressing the concern of a progressive academician. Contrast this and more forthright passages on the right to think, with such wistful pandering as:

The American system is one which offers great incentive to initiative. It is based on the notion of individual enterprise. The path to leadership is open to anybody no matter how humble his beginnings.

Or his vision of a Board of Trustees:

A Board of Trustees is a body of public-spirited citizens who believe in the aims of the professors, namely, the development of education and the advancement of knowledge. . . .

Dr. Hutchins pays spirited tribute to the "pursuit of truth." Nowhere does he plainly suggest that it is hampered and stifled today because truth may be on the side of basic social change. One feels that he views the conflict as between men of good and bad will, or between the "intellectuals" and the anti-intellectuals, or between the scholarly and the vulgar. Is this reticence to name names merely "good strategy"? Was his flight from the red-baiters last Spring—when he "answered" their attacks by "proving" that Chicago turns out its quota of 100 per cent Americans—also "strategy"? It is fitting to remind Dr. Hutchins of his own warning:

Timidity thus engendered turns into habit and

the "stuffed shirt" becomes one of the characteristic figures of the age.

In *Education and Organized Interests* the extent of Dr. Hutchins' dilemma—and that of any avowedly progressive mind in the university system—is dramatically revealed. What Professor Raup has done, on an impressively comprehensive scale, is to compile the views and techniques of America's numberless pressure groups as they bear upon the schools. All the familiar charlatans, disguised in patriotic verbiage, are recorded here, together with those liberal and radical blocs which have mobilized to resist them in many spheres. Although Professor Raup's sympathies clearly rest with the insurgent forces in education, the book's value is often dimmed by a ponderous scholarliness; it is regrettable, too, that he did not explore the financial inspiration of many of our most patriotic agencies. Despite these shortcomings, one sharp impression emerges: the intensity and bitterness of the social conflict raging around us and being carried on in almost every sector. These "organized interests" are representatives of economic agencies: their clashes are symptomatic of a basic cleavage. And the school, because it is the training ground for millions of young people, is inevitably a focus for their efforts. So exhaustive a compilation renders almost ludicrous much of Dr. Hutchins' wistfulness. It demonstrates the precariousness of an abstract, almost timeless approach to the issue of academic freedom. Freedom for whom? To do what? And who are the real enemies of liberty? Professor Raup's position is essentially one of a general outline for social change with a determination to make pragmatic decisions about specific problems as they arise. I am surprised that he seems to believe this is in marked contradiction to the view of "the extreme left"; his conviction that they have a blue-print for every situation causes him to fight several windmills.

Education and the Social Conflict represents a positive integration of Professor Raup's survey. It is an important contribution and the fact of its publication by so conservative a group as Kappa Delta Phi, an educational society, is equally noteworthy. Dr. Langford has written a Marxist statement of the crisis confronting education, both in its intellectual repression and in its curtailment of the educational plant. Citing the roots of this condition in the economic collapse of present day society, he calls for that kind of social transformation which will unleash the energies of a confined educational order, provide abundant educational opportunity for the great bodies of people and set in motion those creative impulses now checked by capitalism. There is valuable ammunition in this book. There is critical analysis and a constructive program, unfettered by a desire to appease our overlords. At a time when the educational

world is in real ferment, needing guidance and direction, it should serve a real function. Because the interest in such a book will be widespread, it is unfortunate that Dr. Langford's work is replete with clichés which tend to denote oversimplification. His writing will open him to attack from those who dread his analysis. I cannot help feeling that the warm, fluent, persuasive writing of Dr. Hutchins belongs in *Education and the Social Conflict*. Certainly, for example, his emphasis on tolerance and scholarship should not be neglected by those who would fashion a socialist society. They should proclaim these as the virtues they are—and distinguish lip-service to them from genuine, planned devotion. JAMES WECHSLER.

Renaissance Man

WHERE SHAKESPEARE STOOD, by Donald Morrow. Casanova Press. \$1.

THAT Shakespeare has yet to be evaluated in Marxian terms is no less true than that the premise of this study is undeniable. Shakespeare was, certainly, "with the movement forward." Living in an England where the social struggle was between the old feudal order and the new rising merchant class, he took the road of progress—with the merchants. And since Protestantism was a cause allied to that of the men of commerce, his point of view was anti-Catholic as well as anti-feudal. These facts are familiar to the student of Shakespeare's history plays, although no one thus far has taken the trouble to present the evidence in sum. They are facts well worth stating, too, what with Catholic critics these days like the Countess de Chambrun, doing their best to revise Shakespeare into a Catholic (and hence as a friend of feudalism and medievalism); whereas the plays, if they prove anything at all, show their author to have been a child of the Renaissance (i.e., committed to progress).

It is, therefore, a pity that Mr. Morrow not only writes so wretchedly, but sees fit to ruin his argument by absurd assertions (and often a pathetic unfamiliarity with actual conditions in Shakespeare's day). What can it avail his thesis to try proving that a Catholic couldn't be a great poet because his Church discouraged interest in this world, thus robbing him of the source of figures of speech? Were there no great Catholic poets in Europe before Shakespeare? And, moreover, is it really an explanation of Shakespeare's greatness that "only toward the end of Shakespeare's lifetime did the new king, James Stuart, . . . throw over the tradition of Elizabeth and the Tudors, and begin that long Stuart hostility to the merchants"? By that token, the poet born ten years later would have been a little man! And a Catholic?

The material is available, and the subject important. But Mr. Morrow, however well-intentioned, has only clouded the truth with his inadequacy. TONY CLARK.

The Theater

Mankind Is Standing Up

AN EVENING in the "second year of the war that is to begin tomorrow night": a detail of soldiers digging a common grave for six corpses.¹ It is the usual procedure; the frazzled gravediggers sputter with bitterness; vary the chore by smashing a rat—"fine pedigreed animal fed only on the choicest young men of the United States"; proffer it to the Sergeant as a token of their regard; wait for the chaplains to perform the last rites. But while priest and rabbi dribble prayers the corpses rise, one by one. The soldiers sigh in terror till suddenly the dead men speak. Their words have a terrible tenderness:

Don't bury us . . . don't go away. . . . Stay with us. We want to hear the sound of men talking. Don't be afraid of us. We're not really different from you. Are you afraid of six dead men, you who've lived with the dead? . . . Are we different from you? An ounce or so of lead in our hearts, and none in yours. A small difference between us. Tomorrow or the next day the lead will be yours, too. Talk as equals. . . .

When the General learns that six corpses are standing in their graves refusing to be buried, he reacts with usual obtuseness. But his informant was *not* tipsy; the army doctor cannot report cases of coma. Indeed the six have been dead forty-eight hours. Frantic attempts to seal up the news fail. A New York editor has to forbid his reporter to spring "the biggest story of all time . . . Lloyds are giving 3-to-1 they won't go down."

It is an emergency requiring the best army brains. But despite the lovely arguments of three assorted Generals, the corpses are unmoved. When the Captain comes to defeat them with philosophy, they answer simply:

They sold us for 25 yards of bloody mud. A life for four yards of bloody mud. Gold is cheaper, and rare jewels, pearls and rubies . . . a man can die happy and be contentedly buried only when he dies for himself or for a cause that is his own. . . . We have been dispossessed by force, but we are reclaiming our home. It is time that mankind claimed its home—this earth—its home.

The war-makers have one last hope. "Get out their women . . . Women are always

¹*Bury the Dead*, by Irwin Shaw. Complete text in April issue of New Theatre Magazine, 15c; in book form, published by Random House, \$1.00. A regular production is announced beginning April 18 at the Ethel Barrymore Theater.

conservative. It's a conservative notion . . . allowing yourself to be buried when you're dead." But nobody can predict the outcome of conversations with the dead. As the six women approach their men, six various lives gradually unfold in the soft, burning talk of the dead to the wife, mother, sweetheart, sister. The purpose of this return to earth, the pain, bitterness, hope, the unsatisfied hunger, beat valiantly and desperately through the cry of the one who was first to stand up:

I got heaven in my two hands to give men. . . . They only know what they want—I know how they can get it. . . . I'm going to the living now.

And the last of the women calls with the dead: "Tell 'em all to stand up! . . . There's plenty for live men to stand up for."

The thought spreads everywhere, the vision breaks through the confusion of a world repeating: "You can't bury soldiers any more." "Mankind is standing up and climbing out of its grave." When the Church finally commands them to lie down in the name of God, the dead quietly walk from the grave in the direction of men. "The dead have arisen. Now let the living rise, singing!"

During the two performances (March 14, 15) of this play, *Bury the Dead*, the audiences listened breathlessly through every scene, for every word. At the final curtain the house seemed to shake with the cheering. And it was deserved. The actors of the *Let Freedom Ring* company had given robust performances, under the sensitive, sturdy direction of Worthington Minor and Walter Hart. The author, Irwin Shaw, had contributed to the anti-war movement its most moving one-act drama. But this was something more than precise embodiment of a protest. *Bury the Dead* provided two satisfactions for which people have been hungering: poetry and passion.

Shaw does not write razor-keen lines, nor does he build up blocks of action that pound like a trip-hammer on the tranquillity of the listener. Some of the power flows from the interaction of separate speeches with the accumulating emotion. In the opening, for example, the individual lines of the grave-diggers, loaded with irony, suddenly charge with new intensities as segments of action add to the

whole. But the basic power of the play grows out of its essential strangeness—a true, alluring strangeness through which emerges a mood of hope and terror. From the everyday world of literal fact the play rises to a new plane from where the common events of existence are illuminated in terms of the logic governing that plane. Which is to say, *Bury the Dead* is all one figure of speech. Now, the use of such a composite poetic image is justified only if it enables the writer to define more precisely and to intensify, to illuminate. Released from the limitations of literalness, *Bury the Dead* concentrates its emotional overtones, enlarges the range of the thought (by quickening the brains of dead soldiers and reconstructing their lives) and projects into a coming time action which is strangely logical and immediate.

It is not simply a matter of making dead soldiers rise. Hans Chlumberg used the same device in *Miracle at Verdun* (produced 1931, Theater Guild). When the French and German soldiers march out of a mass grave, Europe's governments are panicky: what if the thirteen million war dead return? Impossible! Calamity! Problem! They hold an international conference based on the slogan "Down with the Resurrected." But the soldiers returning to the world after eighteen years see chiefly one thing: madness of war preparation, the same flamboyant, poisonous, social stupidity everywhere; they return to their grave of their own will. It is a play drenched in bitterness, glistening with contempt for the living. While fiercely anti-war, its strength is withered by its hopelessness. The lines crinkle under the heat of cynicism, for there is insufficient human faith to impel affirmation. The lines of *Bury the Dead*, however, ring with an inevitability of triumph. "The dead have arisen. Now let the living rise, singing." Shaw remakes the Chlumberg device of despair into a passionate song of hope.

This work by a 24-year-old writer comes at a time when writing on the whole seems lacking in freedom and fire. All sorts of hot energies are wasted in an open season of attacks on criticism, leaving cooler, blander stuff for creative works. Obviously this is no explanation, but merely the report of a fact—and possibly a fact of negligible importance since nobody can take seriously a graph of literary productivity for a given calendar-interval. And yet, even taking a longer view, it is impossible not to notice an absence of literary passion beside the warmth, expansiveness, sentiment and histrionics which exist in abundance. "Men do not fight, nor die in cold blood for a cause; they fight because they are filled with faith and wonder," Michael Gold commented in 1933. A great deal has been accomplished since then; yet the statement would be equally relevant today; it could still explain, among other things, why a passionate one-act play like *Bury the Dead* has become a major event in the development of Left drama.

STANLEY BURNshaw.

THE THEATRE UNION presents

The First Play About Mussolini's Italy to Reach the American Stage

BITTER STREAM

A THEATRE UNION PRODUCTION

CIVIC REPERTORY THEATRE, 14th St. & 6th Ave. WATKINS 9-7450

BEST SEATS at BOX OFFICE 35c to \$1.05 Saturday Evenings

Evgs. 8:40. Mat. Wed. and Sat. 2:30 35c to \$1.55

For theatre parties call Sylvia Regan, CHelsea 3-6894

"A real play and a good show. Dealing with things which couldn't happen here. At least—not much."
—Robert Benchley, New Yorker

"An authentic play and well done. Has an honest portrayal of conditions today in Italy. I would urge everyone to see it. . . . Indispensable."
—John L. Svavik, New Masses

"Stunning new production."
—Robert Garland, World-Telegram