

## Class Bends the Twig

**ELMTOWN'S YOUTH: The Impact of Social Classes on Adolescents.** By August B. Hollingshead. New York: John Wiley & Sons. 480 pp. \$5.

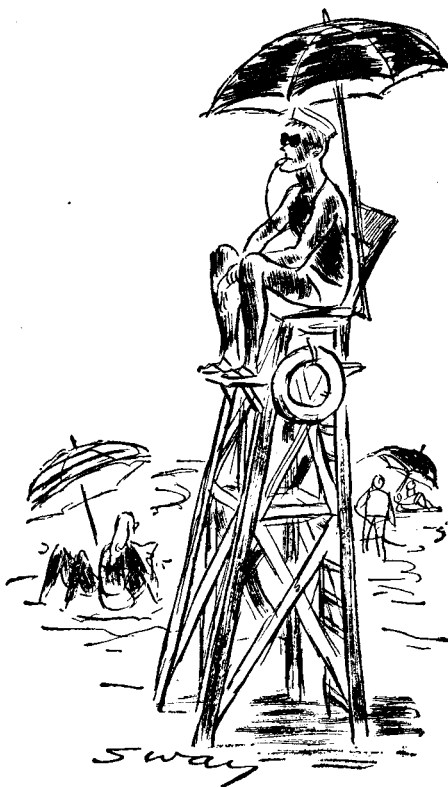
By ROBERT S. LYND

THIS is the story of the high-school-age world in one of those seemingly nondescript little Middle Western towns one glances at so casually from a Pullman window. Stretching out beyond the grimy back-side of a town that abuts on the railroad are the homes of 6,200 Americans, ninety-three per cent of them native-born; and for two-thirds of the families this town has been their whole world since before the turn of the century. In such a stable little community, living off small industries and agriculture, the seasons come and go, middle-class wives jockey for status at the Country Club, and children grow up and get fixed in the grooves of living to which they are born. There are no anonymous persons in a place of this size, and who one is and all one's life are the subject of continuous discussion. "Private lives are not private." Yet, lying seemingly so open to inspection, such a small community presents a formidable front to the intruder who comes in to record its secrets—especially if he is out to study such uneasy things as its class stratification and the lives of its restless, nearly-grown youth. It is a tribute to Professor and Mrs. Hollingshead as good human beings, as well as skilful investigators, that they were able to move in on "Elmtown," live there for a year, and get the cooperation that made possible this penetrating study.

The study tests the proposition that the class into which one is born steadily influences one, from birth, to become a type of person different from children born into other classes. Outwardly, "Elmtown" makes the familiar American denial of "classes," keeping strictly mum about this "un-American" phenomenon in its schools and all its other formal institutions. But, as the interviews in chapter four make very clear, "prestige structure is stratified into classes in the thoughts as well as the actions of 'Elmtowners,'" and even "the kids in high school know this. . . . There are definite classes here. . . . We have an aristocracy of wealth in this town, and a hell of a lot of poor people. . . . I discovered the first two months I was here that this town is class-conscious."

Just because "Elmtown" is so small, semi-agricultural, and so patently American, the clarity of the data in

chapters four and five on class cleavages and their bases makes this part of the volume an important contribution. Here we see, variously phrased by different citizens, (1) the small top class with money, bolstered by family status based on money—"and if you lose your money, you're dropped"; (2) the upper-middle class, of whom over half in this town have inherited or married their access to



money; (3) the lower-middle class, who have fairly good jobs but no social life except in the churches; (4) the "good, solid" working people and clerks "who live right but never get any place," and (5) the bottom fringe of workers "who aren't worth a damn and don't give a damn."

With great technical care, the families of the 735 high-school-age adolescents were assigned to the class to which each belongs. The study then turns to the comparative analysis of the children of these five identified classes—in their school experience, cliques and dates, religious activities, recreation, sex (here the smallness of the town really hindered the getting of information above the working class), and job selection. One sees upper- and upper-middle-class children getting more than their share of high grades, and the children of the two lower classes getting more than their share of failures; the differential participation of children of various classes in specific types of recreation, and the coercive closing-in on youth of both sexes of the social fate of their class.

## Tract for the Times

**STRATEGY FOR LIBERALS.** By Irwin Ross. New York: Harper & Bros. 211 pp. \$3.

By T. V. SMITH

WITH a catchy title, this tract for the times presents a thesis more seductive than sound. Its contention is that a "mixed" society (capitalism-cooperation-Socialism) would solve our problems. It is next to certain that the thesis is inadequate (as it was in Polybius for the Roman state, in Montesquieu for the British Empire). We Americans already have, in essence, the "mixed" society, but the problems here paraded are with us still, and with England still, whose mixture is more to the author's liking.

The trouble with the "mixture" is, as usual, that the author wants to master-mind the recipe. Though he shows that he understands that nobody ever yields power voluntarily, his recipe nevertheless calls for a federal government not with delegated powers, like ours, but with unreserved powers, which he hopes will be used indirectly. One glance, however (last chapter), at what he proposes to do at once with Congress, and presently to the Court, will disclose the utter impatience of his "strategy." Mr. Ross has not yet learned that whoever makes problems his pabulum will never lack what he can nervously view with alarm.

No doubt our predicament is one of means-ends, but not essentially so. To make the causal relation primary for liberalism is already to be psychologically committed (page Communism!) to radical strategy: a strategy, that is, in which ends are so romantic that they cannot be achieved at all, and can only be attempted by a point-to-point contradiction between each end proposed and every means indicated ("perpetual peace" through *internecine war*, "classlessness" by *classfulness*, "withering of statism" by means of *maximizing state power*, "pure justice" only through *heartless liquidation*, etc.).

It is just this "professional" liberalism (i.e., already psychologically infected with radicalism) which demands in a single session of Congress completion of a century's gradual progress in civil rights at the South; that called the Taft-Hartley Act "an enslavement of labor" and promised its complete abolition; and that—South, North, West, alike—substitutes for scrupulous communication between representatives and those represented a shoddy "Gresham's Law" of politics whereby promisers of hea-

ven depreciate performers of such moderate virtues as are possible on earth.

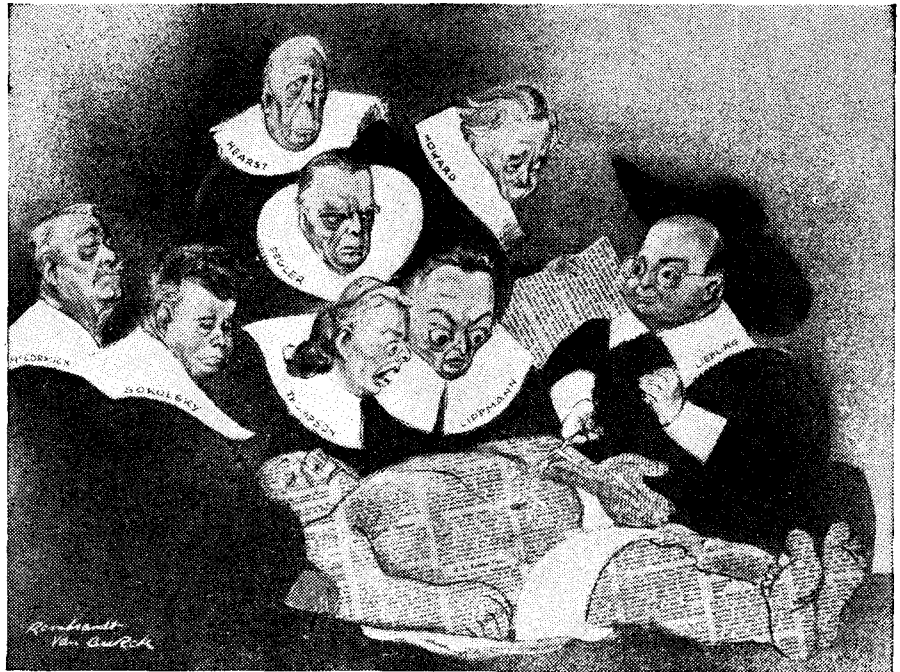
Liberalism should, in all conscience, be made of sterner stuff, as it was in Jefferson and Madison, who, more menaced by problems than we, built this republic on a strategy of forbearance and patience. Liberalism should be made of such self-esteem, to begin with, that *be-goodism* does not rest exclusively on "do-goodism." It should be made of such psychological wisdom as informs a citizen that only he who is prepared to live with himself where he is, could live any happier where he isn't. It should be made of the logical stuff to understand that the psychiatric feeds upon the chronically problematic. And it should be made of the moral stuff to abide the simple observable truth that only conservative men can build and operate liberal institutions; for only they are patient enough to manage collective processes gradually and only they are self-contained enough to abide the mediocre results of the inevitable compromise process of democracy.

Such are the issues raised by this book as distinct from the problems contained in it. These problems—poverty, depressions, labor, housing, gerontocracy, bureaucracy, etc.—are not soluble in the mood of this treatise. The author begs the most important questions, and approaches his problems in a mood that is impetuous, imprecatory, and, secularly speaking, is impious. Could the temper of this perpetration be made somehow to prevail, the American people would meet their trials of peace and war without discipline, with romanticism, minus reserves, and lacking endurance. The book will help to explain, alas, why "liberalism" is suspect by many generous citizens. It calls all the current clichés. It bleeds for all the good causes prevailingly popular. It has stylistic punch but hardly an iota of (good) humor. It has moral fervor but not modesty. It has concern for mankind, but little knowledge of men, least of all political men.

So as a tract for the times, it is exacerbativ; as a prod for politicians, it is minatory; as a manual for statesmen, it is miasm; as light summer reading for citizens, it is romantic; as a specific for patriotism in internationally trying times, it is lamentable.

Otherwise, it is a good book.

T. V. Smith is Maxwell Professor of Citizenship and Philosophy at Syracuse University. Included among his books are "Democracy and Dictatorship," "Politics and Public Service," and "A Preface to the Universe."



—After Rembrandt's "Anatomy Lesson," from the book.

"Liebling Dissecting the Press."

## Journalistic Malfesance

**MINK AND RED HERRING.** By A. J. Liebling. New York: Doubleday & Co. 251 pp. \$2.95.

By DON HOLLENBECK

ANOTHER refreshing backward look at some of the foibles of the metropolitan press is provided in A. J. Liebling's book whose title derives from the antics of some of our journalists over New York City relief investigations, antics during which to the horror of the press, a woman with a ratty old mink coat had been found to be drawing relief payments. The second half concerns other antics by the press in various matters involving investigations of Communist activity, but the collection also includes discussions of newspaper performance in Mr. Liebling's best barbed style. We go along from day to day aware of the shortcomings of our newspapers, but such is the ephemeral nature of news that we are inclined to forget just what those shortcomings are. "Mink and Red Herring" and Mr. Liebling's earlier collection, "The Wayward Pressman"—both made of his *New Yorker* articles—help to remind us specifically.

And if we forget about the shortcomings of the press, the press itself certainly forgets, too, undoubtedly from the psychological impulse that we forget that of which we are not proud. And that's the reason "Mink and Red Herring" appears at this time. In a foreword, Mr. Liebling explains

that following the great newspaper fiasco of last November, the press admitted that it had been wrong—columnists called for crow to eat, astrologers checked back on their star charts, and augurs examined the sacred entrails to find where they had gone astray. But, Mr. Liebling goes on, the newspapers he has been reading lately do not seem to recognize the possibility, implicit in their November admissions, that they may ever be wrong again. So he has hastened, he says, to bring out this collection of papers in which, in the pages of a magazine that does not claim unimpeachable infallibility, he has expressed occasional small doubts of the infallibility of the press. Well and good, and although we are inclined to agree with Mr. Liebling's forlorn conclusion—he says he has a hunch that the walls of the temporarily flattened Jericho are built of self-rising flour, and by the time the book gets out, the press will be sure that it is infallible again—recent events give us hope that this assurance may have been shaken. The fact that reportorial investigation turned up the story that fifty-one Illinois newspapers had been on a state political payroll shocked honest newspapermen to their boots, and although it took a number of weeks before that story got national circulation, it did get around finally, and it undoubtedly resulted in some journalistic soul-searching with what cannot help but be beneficial results.

"Mink and Red Herring" doesn't