

# Saturday Review

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## If Good Men Do Nothing

WHEN Edmund Burke wrote two centuries ago that all that was necessary for the triumph of evil was that good men do nothing, he had in mind electoral reform, long overdue, that would bring his beloved English political system back to the principles of Magna Carta: freedom of speech, freedom of press, and above all freedom honestly to select true and proportionate representatives in Parliament. At a time when fraud and corruption in one form or another sickened decent people, this early champion of democracy asked that no good man forsake his duty to the cause of the freely elected and truly represented.

The American people, waiting between nominating conventions, will soon be asked not to forsake a duty of equal weight and importance: they will have the chance to select a President for four long years and his government for the next two. They will be asked also to root out fraud and treachery at the polls, to be acutely sure not to deprive any candidate of his true measure. It will, largely, be up to good men, aware of their duty, to see that this is done. In the 1960 Presidential election, suspected frauds in depressed areas of Chicago, among the Indians in New Mexico, and in many parts of the Deep South probably altered the true total Presidential vote, which was close enough to have such alteration mean a great deal to either side. The final vote in 1960 was 34,227,096 to 34,108,546, in favor of the Democrats, but had the Republicans cast but one more vote in each precinct in the United States they would have won by 46,616 instead of losing by 118,-

550, although the electoral vote might not have been greatly altered. The Honest Ballot Association estimates that in the 1960 elections at least 2,000,000 votes were subverted by one form of fraud or another.

The chief debate over the principle of the ballot has always centered upon its secrecy. In totalitarian countries new ways are continually found to evade even nominal secrecy, though a pretense is always made of a free, private ballot. Were a truly secret ballot to have been used in Hitler's early Germany, or Stalin's Russia, or Castro's Cuba, or any of the Iron Curtain countries overrun by Communism, no such obviously rigged returns as 97.5 per cent in favor of the regime would have been possible.

There are many ways of avoiding the truly honest ballot, of course. Intimidation is one, but there are others. Registrars have stuffed ballot boxes in small towns, gravestones have been voted in the anonymity of the great cities, and in the South today all manner of roadblocks are thrown in the path of voters perfectly qualified. Impossible illiteracy tests are the most common means of disfranchisement, now that poll taxing is illegal. The ballot itself can be counterfeited, tape can be stuck over a candidate's name, voting machine counters can be tampered with, and ballots still disappear. By repeat voting at more than one balloting place or under different names in the same district, by reporting fraudulent totals, by jamming the polls with slowdowns or in other ways delaying a voter's chance to exercise his franchise, dishonesty may triumph at America's polling places. By

slashing the voting curtain, a machine politician in control of the mechanics in his district can tell precisely who voted for whom, with attendant intimidation and retribution. But all this is not possible when the Australian ballot is truly used.

The Australian ballot is the finest means yet devised for making an election totally secret and totally honest. All candidates are placed on one ballot and the voter need never disclose his party preference. The advantage is that the voter, in the secrecy of his booth, is compelled to make a personal and independent judgment of each candidate. Not only is the ballot perfectly hidden from prying eyes, but independence of judgment is paramount in the process of selection. By now, of course, every corner of the Union uses some version of the Australian ballot, though not everywhere in its pristine state or original form.

BUT the right to vote is also the right not to cast one's ballot, and we are not talking here about slovenly or negligent citizenship. Non-voting as a principle has flourished in the United States. A recent study at the University of Chicago reports some of the causes of non-voting as physical disability, legal obstacles, disbelief in platforms and promises, disgust with candidates or politics generally, disgust with the voter's own party, belief that a single vote counts for nothing, or that all ballot boxes are stuffed and that it is therefore useless anyway. Add to these causes a normal dose of ignorance and timidity, indifference to issues or candidates, or genuine disbelief in the voting process, and the right not to vote assumes formidable proportions. But it is a genuine right all the same and one that should never be foresworn in this country by making the ballot compulsory. It is as important to be able to refuse to vote as to guard the polling places from fraud and chicanery, though it is equally evil to avoid voting for reasons of indifference, sloth, or pique.

So we go back to our first thought: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." If, because good men have done nothing, the candidates we must choose from are not fit for office, or their platforms are weak and reactionary, then the fault comes early—in nominating convention and party caucus. But if in the end there is a clear and honest choice of candidates and issues, then it is up to good men to see that the election is as honest as it can be made, through the greatest force for democracy the world has ever known: the free and secret ballot honestly cast by the greatest possible number of American citizens on November 3.

—R.L.T.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Quibbling Siblings

I SUBMIT THE following in response to the letter from Jonnel, Myra, and Benn You-Know-Who [SR, July 11]:

Unfeeling Monsters, fie and shame!  
To so besmirch Papa's name.

"He switched our birthdays!" you  
explode.  
(But oh, how fine the natal ode!)

And gleefully you shout his crime  
In unison—but not in rhyme.

From offspring of so great a guy,  
We all expect a better try.

Ingratitude's a sin, but worse—  
You might at least complain in verse!

BARBARA GRIFFITH.

Wantagh, N.Y.

## Kudos for Clark

SENATOR CLARK'S ARTICLE on Democratic liberalism [SR, July 11] is truly outstanding. . . . He has stated clearly and cogently what a liberal believes in, what he does not believe in, what he intends to do about implementing his program, and what he feels about the opposition. He has touched on all the salient points for and against liberalism so that no reader can feel he has ignored any of the ticklish issues.

The article is, in short, outstanding because even the stoutest conservative can quickly and clearly see what a liberal believes—regardless of whether the reader himself believes it or not. . . .

ROBERT O. WEISMAN.

Toledo, O.

## Air War

THIS IS TO CORRECT for your readers the column by John Ciardi concerning aircraft used in South Vietnam [SR, June 13].

Referring to Eugene M. Zuckert, Secretary of the Air Force, your correspondent wrote: "I think Mr. Zuckert was caught picking his nose and talking through his hat at the same time. There is not a man in the Defense Department, Mr. Zuckert included, who does not know that the B-26 was a flying coffin on the best day it ever saw back in World War II, and that twenty years in mothballs have added nothing to the cause."

Correspondents accredited to the Defense Department know that the B-26 used in South Vietnam is not the B-26 of World War II. The latter was retired from active inventory after World War II and has not been used by the Air Force since. In 1947, the Douglas-built A-26, which had compiled a distinguished combat record in World War II and was highly regarded by the crews who flew it, was redesignated the B-26. This was the B-26 that was sent to South Vietnam after being modified and overhauled with particular attention given to structural integrity. In South Vietnam it has performed effectively and with combat



*"... the food is wonderful and they don't make you eat it ..."*

loss rates lower than our experience in either World War II or Korea. . . .

JESSE E. STAY,  
Colonel, USAF,  
Office of Information,  
Department of the Air Force.

Washington, D.C.

## Something New

IT WAS A DELIGHT to find your new feature, SR RECOMMENDS, in the July 4 issue. I never realized how much I've missed such a service until I saw it in print. Thank you, and don't let anyone talk you out of it. We out here in the hinterlands need all the help we can get.

ILSE J. GAY.

Albuquerque, N.M.

## Housewife's Dilemma

I AM SO WEARY of being constantly told by women such as Marya Mannes and Eve Merriam [SR, July 11] all about the dreary, unfulfilled lives we housewives lead. May I venture to suggest that the fault lies not so much in the job itself—for what could be more creative than the rearing of a child, the molding of a human life?—but rather, perhaps, in the failure of our society to appreciate this all-important job. Perhaps if we were told more often what a great, albeit difficult, job it is, and given more credit for the intelligence, patience, and creative ability expended on our homes and offspring, we would be less eager to give up and look for another job. It certainly doesn't help to be bombarded with books and articles downgrading our role and subtly implying that satisfied homemakers are less intellectual and creative than their unhappy counterparts.

Of course homemaking and motherhood may not be satisfying to every woman, but

the fact remains that the vast majority of working mothers hold down jobs as sales-clerks, typists, stenographers, factory workers, and so on. These are not exactly highly creative endeavors and suggest to me that, instead of seeking fulfillment, most of these women, encouraged by what is becoming the prevalent feeling in our society, are merely escaping their responsibilities. Contrary to recently expounded myths, children still need someone to love and guide them at five or six or seven or beyond, and I have yet to hear of a truly adequate substitute for the family unit and mother love—and that includes Mrs. Merriam's fine-sounding but highly unworkable plan. To be human is to have unfulfilled yearnings of one kind or another. Let us not use this as an excuse to escape our responsibilities.

CAROL BEHRMAN.

Fair Lawn, N.J.

## In Print or Not in Print?

IN THE JAMES T. FARRELL article in your June 20 issue Haskel Frankel states, quoting Farrell on the subject of his poetry: "None of it's been published."

Mr. Farrell's memory must be fairly short. In the first issue of *Genesis West*, the West Coast literary magazine of which I used to be associate editor, some of his poetry was published.

BARNEY CHILDS, Dean,  
Deep Springs College.

Deep Springs, Calif.

## Taxi Talk

A BIG LOUD HURRAH for Goodman Ace and his "Dialogue in a Taxi" [SR, May 23]. It's perfect—succinct, subtle, and yet straight to the point. His column is always good, but this one's a gem.

MRS. WERNER ARON.  
Philadelphia, Pa.