



TV AND RADIO

Some Relevant Religion

LATE-NIGHT telephone-radio programs, in which listeners are invited to call up local stations for conversations with hosts that are heard on the air, have been growing in popularity. The insomniac may ask an honest question, deliver a harangue, or indulge in exhibitionism. Now long-distance telephone operators are becoming involved. The first national-audience telephone-radio program, *Night Call*, has been on the air since April. At the beginning, two Methodist ministers and one layman acted as a team of hosts in Baltimore, Des Moines, and Salt Lake City. Linked in a small network, they interviewed guests during a 2 A.M. (Baltimore time), fifty-five-minute program, and took calls from listeners, mostly in their respective areas, but occasionally from more distant parts of the country. Callers paid their own charges (\$1 for three minutes).

In the past month, the format of *Night Call* has been changed, and listeners are being invited to call collect to a telephone number in Detroit, where the new version originates. Russell Gibb, a lay broadcaster, has replaced the former three-host team. WBAL, Baltimore (1090 kc), WHO, Des Moines (1040 kc), and KSL, Salt Lake City (1160 kc), still comprise the basic network. They are all clear-channel (50,000 watt) stations; at night, in good weather they can be heard a thousand miles away and together they furnish basic national coverage. The Reverend Stanley F. Knock, Jr., who produces *Night Call* for the Television, Radio, and Film Commission (TRAFCO) of the Methodist Church, expects that direct feeds to more than a dozen radio stations, including Atlanta, San Francisco, Boston, and Philadelphia, will shortly enlarge an audience estimated in the hundreds of thousands.

For people who use the radio to fill their sleepless hours, *Night Call* is an oasis of intelligent talk in a desert of local telephone shows, where most of the time the conversation is a blasting of prejudice and a pooling of ignorance. For the Methodist Church (which is presenting the program through the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches), the regular, five-nights-per-week show is an experiment in "better Protestant radio programing." The Methodists are budgeting \$90,000 a year in production and line charges to reach this untapped "market" for religious broadcasting. It's an imaginative enterprise. Religious pro-

grams conventionally travel the back roads of radio's territory. Here TRAFCO is thrusting into the mainstream of the reduced nighttime traffic where the audience may be more receptive to "concerned" conversation.

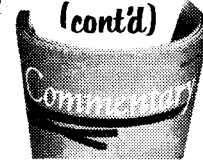
Nighttime radio listeners may be troubled, thoughtful, lonely. This is not devotional or proselytizing broadcasting. The church is meeting its audience in the secular arena. Subjects range from such topics as "Red China's Nuclear Potential" and "Birth Control in India" to "What Teen-Agers Are Reading" and "Is Fiction Getting Dirtier?" Union members jammed the switchboards when right-to-work laws were discussed. I heard a woman caller lambaste a bishop for the church's social gospel and the National Council of Churches' opposition to the House Un-American Activities Committee. Another woman caller argued with a librarian about the "filth" in *Catcher in the Rye* and *The King Must Die*. The program seeks to give secular dialogue an ethical, moral, nondenominational religious dimension.

Listeners often hear their own views expressed by people like themselves who are not experts; this may give them a feeling of community. If they hear contrary opinions, the dissonance is challenging and may stretch their minds. The new lay host is reputed to be "a shade more irreverent" than the ministers who preceded him; the producer hopes this will make for sprightlier talk. In this small conflict between Christian concern and show biz, however, lies the program's main weakness. Not all callers are lucid and reasonable. The hosts, in the past, have occasionally dealt rather summarily with a caller who made little contribution to the dialectic. This is necessary if more calls are to be answered and the show kept from bogging down. Yet the Christian dialogue calls for maintaining the connection, for patient persuasion. If the host is unable to do this, he should compensate by taking up the points left by the brushed-off caller. This requires generalized knowledge and skill in relating what has been said to the guest expert; otherwise the calls become fragments appended to the main dialogue between host and guest. Ideally, they should be woven into the totality of the conversation. Anyone interested in testing the new host might jot down *Night Call*'s telephone number in Detroit—313-846-6601. Call collect.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

Commentary*

higher education (cont'd)



*GRAYSON KIRK, President of Columbia University says: "Commentary provides a means whereby the general reader will find stimulation—and, fortunately, provocation as well—through articles relating to foreign affairs, the arts, literature, Jewish culture, sociology, and in short, the whole range of questions concerning the nature and direction of our society."

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As Others See Us



LONDON:

Goals in Vietnam

MOST LIKELY THE American military commitment in Vietnam will exceed in the end any of the estimates now being bandied about. The difficulties—physical, psychological, and political—of campaigning there are such that it is hard to set any particular limit on what may be needed to accomplish what the United States is setting out to do. Basically the Administration feels that its credit in the world as an ally and protector is at issue in Vietnam, that the Communists are very close to winning, and that it cannot allow them to win, whatever the cost. The effort now being planned is an effort to restore the situation within the present rules—that is, without using air power to destroy the centers of population or the economy of North Vietnam, without carrying the land campaign north, and without attacking China as long as China does not intervene directly. . . .

Within these general limits, there are different opinions about the strategic doctrine to be applied. Evidently there is to be a string of American base areas or strong points spaced along the South Vietnamese coast, adequately engineered and manned, relying securely on supply by sea with air transport as a supplement. One doctrine sees the perimeters of these base areas being pushed gradually outward until eventually the whole country, or the main centers of population, are secured. Others think this is too rigid and not realistic; they see mobile forces sallying out from their bases to fight wherever the Vietcong show themselves in sufficient strength. This seems to be closer to what will really happen. A static campaign behind fixed lines would not fit the national temperament or correspond to American military habit. But any plan will perforce be modified in action. All that is certain is that it will cost a lot and take a long time.

—*The Economist*.

TORONTO:

Plain Talk

HAS CANADA ANY RIGHT publicly to criticize the policies of the United States, or should it keep quiet when it disagrees with its big neighbor?

Livingston Merchant, former U.S.

ambassador to Canada, and Arnold Heeney, former Canadian ambassador to Washington, are both advocates of the buttoned-up lip. In their report on Canadian-American relations they recommend that Canada avoid public criticism of the United States on critical world issues in which Canada is not directly involved.

This is a proposition that Canadians cannot accept. It is true that the United States is carrying a heavy load of responsibility in the world today and that Canada itself owes its security to American protection. Canadian critics often do not keep these facts sufficiently in mind. Nevertheless, the government of Canada has a right—and must insist on retaining it—to disagree publicly with the policies of the United States even when it has no direct or special interest in the issue.

The fact is that any action taken by the United States in what the report calls “critical world issues” is bound to affect Canada, even though this country may have no treaty obligations, trade connections, or other direct interests in the area involved.

Vietnam, for example, is about as far from Canada, in every sense of the word, as any country on the globe. Yet the decision of the United States to intensify the war in South Vietnam and to bomb North Vietnam has created serious dangers for this country.

If this process of escalation should lead to a general nuclear war, Canada would be among the first nations to be hit by the missiles. With this in mind, Prime Minister Pearson was surely justified in urging Washington to go slow on the bombing attacks.

“Silence gives consent,” and it may create an entirely wrong impression of

Canada’s views on current American policies if we remain mute.

Canada did not protest officially, for example, over the American landings in the Dominican Republic. Yet few Canadians are prepared to accept the “Johnson Doctrine” that the U.S. has a right to intervene with armed force anywhere in the Americas.

Between nations, as between individuals, plain speaking is sometimes the only way to avoid misunderstandings that can destroy friendship.

—*Toronto Daily Star*.

MONTREAL:

The American War

THE *New York Times* reports that, in Saigon, it is viewed as definite that the United States will assume the main burden of fighting the Vietcong. This is the logical consequence of what has been happening in Vietnam.

Although it can still win occasional victories, the South Vietnamese army is a defeated army. If it had not already had immense American assistance, in the form of air power and ground power, it would have collapsed before now. The same is true of the South Vietnamese government. With coup d’état following coup d’état, it is difficult to believe it would have survived without the United States to stiffen its backbone.

The United States has evidently seen this takeover approaching for some time. As a result, it has slowly but surely been building up a very considerable military establishment in South Vietnam.

There is probably nothing else the United States can do, things being as they are. President Johnson has so firmly pledged his country to keep South Vietnam out of Communist hands that any failure would now be regarded as a terrible defeat and humiliation for the United States.

Thus, as the South Vietnamese government and armed forces become more of a vacuum, the United States must take their place. What started out as a strictly South Vietnamese cause is likely to end—one way or the other—as a primarily American cause.

—*Montreal Gazette*.

MILAN:

How Many Troops?

THE PRESS SAYS that Washington is now pessimistic about the situation [in Vietnam]. The fact is that the situation is even more serious than Washington imagines. The head of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam told a correspondent of the *Rheinischer Merkur*, “The Americans will need 2,000,000



—*Polish Weekly*.

“New Presidential Chair”