

Commentary And Perspective



Photo by Barcelona

by mif

Christmas, like taxes, comes for sure, once every year. With it comes new and fabulous hopes—all highly calculated to make us reach deeper into our hearts (pockets) and give (buy) with that good old Christmas spirit. And each year, Santa Claus gets a little less believable, tinsel gets a little tinsel-ier, and the spirit of the season gets a lot further away from its meaning. It's just another Christmas, y'know, a little less special than the one before.

Well, that's a drag and I'll tell you why. This world is a pretty dreary place for most 364 days of the year. It sure can use one day (and a few more if we can get away with it) when people aren't hassling each other because they're a longhair, or a Black, or

by mary beth

Since 1965, Cesar Estrada Chavez, a forty-two year old Roman Catholic with barely an elementary education, has made La Causa, the plight of 5,000,000 Mexican-American migratory workers, his cause. Cesar Chavez is a radical.

His radical literature includes two papal encyclicals Rerum Novarum and Quadragesim Anno which acknowledges that all men have the right to a decent wage and reasonable comfort.

This is radical.

In February of 1968 in order to recall the non-violent roots of La Causa, Chavez fasted for twenty-five days.

This too is radical.

If you disagree, just ask Gov. Ronald Reagan who is quoted as saying that Chavez's actions were "immoral" or Sen. George Murphy who referred to La Huelga, the strike of California grapes, as "attempted blackmail."

Yet, despite these oppositions, the revolution has begun. Perhaps "radical" is not such a dirty word after all. Who knows? The expected life span of the average migrant worker (48) may rise to the nationwide standard of 70.

On July 29 of this year, after a nationwide boycott and five years striking, 26 union contracts were signed. These are relatively small gains after a lifetime of nonviolent efforts. Yet, Chavez waited as did his models and predecessors Gandhi, Nehru, Martin Luther King and Zapata. For he believed as they believed that nonviolence was effective for those whose cause was strong.

There could be no question of strength in this case. The harvest wage for heavy labor in temperatures ranging from 115 degrees to freezing was \$1.65 (5 cents above the federal minimum wage) plus an extra 25 cents for every additional box of grapes picked. Because of this, families often resorted to child labor. There was no job security or fringe benefits, not to mention the

a redneck, or because, because, because, because. Sometimes, even those guys playing war, drop their guns and relax (as it were) for that one day. That's kind of nice, even if it is silly and sentimental.

I've never been able to quite understand why things like that happen, why people all of a sudden "transform" themselves on Christmas, why they care for each other, give gifts and go so far as to sort of relate to one another. I suppose it all stems from Christian tradition and the story of Jesus, December 25th being his "birthday" and all. It's puzzled me because I could never understand why we're so pious and HONORABLE on just that day. I mean, if we're really into paying tribute to Jesus (which, if

grossly inadequate sanitary conditions. Certain harmful pesticides sharing chemical effects comparable to nerve gas often proved fatal and heat prostration ran a close second.

Because of language impediments and the itinerant nature of their work the Mexican-American minority was often unable to defend themselves. As a result, they suffered greatly. During an eighteen month period, the American Civil Liberties Union received 174 complaints of police abuse from Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles alone.

But the fight is not over despite the fact that conditions for the grape workers are slowly improving. The cause has now moved on to improve conditions for the lettuce workers but as Chavez would say, "The fight is not lettuce or grapes. It's always people."

Note; On Monday December 7, 1970, Cesar Chavez was arrested for "radical" activities.

even by some kind of weird Pavlovian subconscious training, is what we're doing), then we should be doing it all the time. But we're not children anymore and we all know why it isn't that way all the time.

Still, I'm glad it happens once a year because it really is a good custom, no matter why you get into it. I suppose at this point, America, late 1970, we should be thankful that something like Christmas still exists.

And it is fun to give your friends stuff that you dig, like music, poems, etc. and let them enjoy it too. That feels good. To me, the much-talked-about "Spirit of Christmas" is just that. Giving the things that I'm into to my friends. Turning them on, hoping that they can find enjoyment, happiness, value in those things. Sharing. That's what Jesus was all about. And whether or not he was the "Son of God" is unimportant. He was a good, honest person, from what we can tell about him, a person who was into sharing. So it seems right that we should honor that. Despite all the nonsense that Christmas produces, all the quasi-good will, all that plastic tinsel humanitarianism, it still happens and it's as real as it can be, under the circumstances.

And if we keep working at it, maybe sometime we can carry that spirit over to other, less accessible days. Have a good Christmas and share it with someone you love. And love someone you haven't shared anything with.

Looking Ahead

During the first semester the N.C. Essay has gone through a period of very rapid development which has been met with considerable enthusiasm and support. We are finally beginning to be able to plan ahead and to formulate some editorial policy.

We are interested now in building up our staff of writers so that no one will be under the kind of pressure that leads to sloppy work. We need news reporters, reviewers (especially for dance) and feature writers. We would welcome more editorials and commentaries. We would be glad to receive an occasional or even one-time contribution from people who are not interested in writing regularly.

If anyone would like to submit poems, short stories, essays or articles for the literary issue, please leave them in the office today. On January 18, we plan to devote most of the paper to a critical appraisal of the school at the end of the first semester. Objective, humorous, editorial or prophetic articles or ideas about NCSA should be delivered to the office by January 10.

Ed Schloss "On Broadway"

If you are in New York over the vacation, here is a listing of some of Broadway's major attractions currently playing, with a capsule review in alphabetical order:

Applause - A delightful musical adaptation of *Ail About Eve* starring Lauren Bacall as an aging Broadway actress who is forced into competing with a younger woman who slowly moves into her life and tries to usurp everything she possesses in order to get to the top. Lauren Bacall is a pure delight to watch and listen to and is well worth the price of admission. The rest of the cast back her up admirably with fine direction and choreography by Ronald Field. The music and lyrics by Charles Strouse and Lee Adams are not quite top draw, but there are many fine musical numbers so that one can sit back and enjoy the fun without despairing.

Butterflies Are Free is a lovely comedy by Leonard Gershe with some serious overtones about a young man who has been blind from birth, and learns to live with his handicap away from an over protective mother, who almost succeeds in destroying his self-assurance. Sensitive writing, good direction and fine acting make it a good evening's entertainment.

Company as a musical is not quite as fine as the original cast album on Columbia Records suggests, although it is still a fairly good evening. The book for **Company** by George Furth is a collage of review sketches and has no real dramatic continuity to hold it together, but Stephen Sondheim's score outshines the rough edges and Harold Prince's direction is fastpaced and generally exciting.

Home is far and away the most exciting theatrical event of the season. John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson turn in bravura performances, which can't afford to be missed by any serious playgoer. The play by West End's David Storey is an elegiac character study of two men who are forced to examine moments they have tried to forget in their past in order to carry on the simplest of conversations. Lindsay Anderson has directed the proceedings with great acumen and he is more than rewarded for his efforts by two great men of the theatre.

Last of the Redhot Lovers is another typically uneventful evening with Neil Simon's "Laugh Machine". It involves this time a man who runs and operates a seafood restaurant in New York, who finds serving his customers a poor substitute for companionship. He decides to have a fling in his mother's apartment with three women acquaintances on three separate occasions, but none of his attempts work out successfully. James Coco has good comic timing and does the best he can in a role that gets progressively more tiring to watch. The **Odd Couple** was Simon's tour de force because the laughter grew out of the situation, but here we have one liners which don't grow, but are transplantations from "Laugh-In".

Promises, Promises is Neil Simon's adaptation of Billy

Wilder's film, **The Apartment**; while on the whole I regarded it as fun, the musical suffers from a strict adherence to the movie version. Burt Bacharach has composed an infectious score and Hal David has written an average set of lyrics, but the story of executives on the prowl is derivative and would be tiresome if it wasn't for Robert Moore's slick direction and the clever lines Doc Simon has concocted for us.

Purlie is a raucous musical adaptation of the play, **Purlie Victorious** with some good acting and singing but not enough to compensate for a woefully weak book, a deceptive musical score which at first seems better written and more exciting than it actually is, and uninspired direction. It isn't enough to merely edit the original play, throw some songs in, and expect miracles to happen, even though Melba Moore makes you believe in them, whenever she's on stage singing her heart out.

1776 tells the story behind the signing of the Declaration of Independence with extraordinary effectiveness. Pete Stone has penned a remarkably accurate book without turning a momentous event into a historical treatise on John Locke's "Social Contract". The direction by Peter Hunt is carefully constructed and is at its best when congress is in session, which is most of the evening. The performances are the closest thing we have on Broadway to ensemble acting, and they could hardly be improved upon. Unfortunately, the music is undistinguished and gratuitous to what is otherwise a first-rate evening.

Sleuth is an incurably overrated melodrama by Anthony Shaffer, which relies on all the standard devices which worked in old William Castle productions, but fails to elicit a response when you know you are supposed to react by salivating at the mouth like Pavlov's dog. The acting is impeccable. Anthony Quayle is particularly fine as a novelist and gamesmen, but Keith Baxter is quite effective too, when he comes to his house for a visit. However, there is little to recommend here, since the dialogue can't match the visual effects which evidently are supposed to be enough in themselves.

Two By Two is a tendentious evening from start to finish with the exception of a delightful newcomer, Tricia O'Neil. The Richard Rodgers' score is achromatic with little assistance from Martin Charnin's lyrics and Peter Stone's book, which is based on Clifford Odets's last play, **The Flowering Peach**. Danny Kaye does well enough as Noah, but it doesn't take him long before he blends in with the other animals going aboard.

Fiddler on the Roof and **Man of La Mancha** are still the best musicals around town and are worth at least one visit for musical theatre aficionados. In addition, you may want to catch the last performance of **Hello, Dolly!** at the St. James Theatre on December twenty-seventh.

Hunt for **The Clue** in the next issue of the Essay. Merry Christmas, mystery fans!

