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Dog Fight At A Funeral

The televised, radio-announced, motion picture-filmed, newspaper-covered "mess in Washington" that has been going on reminds us nothing so much as of a dogfight at a funeral.

The "mess" referred to, of course, is the Congressional committee hearings on the McCarthy-Army controversy.

It is important, we suppose, whether Senator McCarthy or Army Secretary Stevens lied, and whether preferential treatment was sought for, or accorded to, a man drafted as a private. It would be our guess, though, that McCarthy has lied before; also that the army has been asked for, and has granted, special favors before.

The drama in the Washington committee hearing might be important in normal times. It is being enacted, however, against a backdrop of a world perceptibly and apparently inevitably drifting toward a war that may destroy civilization.

And everybody—including the participants and the members of the committee—appears to have forgotten what started it all. It all started over one Major Irving Peress.

Remember him? Perhaps not, because it's been all of two months since he was the center of controversy, and many a bulletin announcement has gone over the dam since then. But Major Peress was the bone the dogs first started fighting over. Senator McCarthy, remember, charged that the Army had promoted, and then honorably discharged, a Communist. The "Communist" in question was Major Peress, a dentist.

One way to put the McCarthy-Stevens row in focus is to go back into comparatively ancient history to the Peress case, and note, from the perspective of two months, how fantastic—and probably unimportant—was the Peress "mess".

Here's the story, as it was told sometime ago by Walter Millis, writing in the Republican New York Herald Tribune:

To begin with, it was not the Kremlin which put Dr. Peress in the Army and promoted him; it was the Congress. The story really begins in the desperate autumn of 1950, when Congress enacted the "doctors' draft," authorizing the draft of medical and dental specialists above the otherwise maximum age of twenty-five. When the medical profession justifiably protested this as barefaced discrimination, the armed services responded by adopting, as a policy, the automatic commissioning of these special draftees in ranks commensurate with their special experience and professional backgrounds.

Almost immediately a problem arose—in the shape of Dr. Stanley Orloff, a senior psychiatrist of the New York Department of Mental Hygiene. Dr. Orloff had been offered a commission in the Air Force Reserve; but he had simply refused to make any answer at all to the loyalty questionnaire that went with it. He did not get the commission, and shortly afterward found himself in the Army as a private under the "doctors' draft." He applied, under the announced policy, for a commission commensurate with his professional standing; and the forms duly arrived, including the "security" form.

This form includes a large number of questions about membership in the Communist party, or in "front" organizations, or about attendance at meetings or social contacts and so on; but at the end it explicitly points out that the subject may claim "Federal privilege" under the Fifth Amendment as to some or all of the questions. Dr. Orloff claimed the blanket privilege; and was denied his commission. Instead, he was shipped as an enlisted man to Fort Lawton, Wash., for transfer to Korea. Then he went to court.

As an enlisted man at Fort Lawton there was neither need nor opportunity for him to practice the psychiatric skills because of which he had been drafted. He contended that the Army either had to commission him and give him psychiatric work or else discharge him forthwith. The Army's dilemma is obvious. To commission him meant making an Army officer out of a "Fifth Amendment Communist"; to discharge him meant relieving any doctor who simply filled in the "privilege" blank (an action involving no legal or even moral obliquity in itself) of the arduous and usually costly duty imposed by the "doctors' draft," a duty which few doctors have welcomed.

It would take a Lewis Carroll to deal properly with what followed. The Army contended that once having drafted him, although as a psychiatrist, it could use him for any service down to kitchen police that it wished to use him for. But when Orloff secured a Supreme Court order requiring the Army to hold him at Fort Lawton until the case was decided, it turned out that the Army really did need his psychiatric skills; and it got a modification of the order permitting it to use him at other United States posts as a psychiatrist. But to defend its refusal on "security" grounds to grant the commission, the Army had to argue that in employing him on such officer's work it did so only under "limitations," one of them forbidding his use of drugs and sedatives in order to

prevent him from eliciting security information from patients!

With this incredible proviso on the work of a psychiatrist, one surely passes from Alice-in-Wonderland into plain Bedlam. The Circuit Court finally held (in March, 1952) that the Army did not have to commission Orloff, but that it could retain him only if it employed him in medical work. The case went on to the Supreme Court. And at just about this time, in October, 1952, Dr. Irving Peress, a dentist, was called under the draft. In accordance with routine policy, he was tendered a captain's commission; he got the questionnaire along with it; he, like Dr. Orloff, took the blanket privilege which it offered. But he got the commission.

Why, he himself does not know. Since Dr. Orloff, there had been numerous other cases of the kind. Some were commissioned; some were, and are, serving as enlisted men. Apparently the Army, torn between the terrors of McCarthyism if they granted the commission, the terrors of the American Medical Association if they did not and the dislike of making a favored class out of pleaders of the Fifth Amendment had difficulty in making up its mind. Dr. Peress seems to have been one of the last commissioned under these circumstances.

At any rate, Captain Peress pursued his highly non-sensitive duties as a dental surgeon. Meanwhile a new administration came in pledged to get the Communists out of government; the Supreme Court upheld the Orloff decision, but with a blistering minority castigation of the Army's conduct; and the draft act was amended (in June, 1953) to provide specifically that medical draftees "shall" be appointed to grades commensurate with their experience. Under this provision, Captain Peress was tendered, along with several others of his colleagues at Camp Kilmer, promotion to major. This was routine and did not involve a questionnaire.

Meanwhile, the Army had, however, looked again into the Peress case. He had been given another security questionnaire, before the promotion routine, and had again used the "privilege." By this time, the "heat" of the Eisenhower security campaign, as enthusiastically applied by the McCarthyites was on. With the amendment to the act, the Army couldn't demote Peress; it couldn't simply fire him as a Fifth Amendment pleader (without also discharging numerous others now serving as privates); it certainly could not court-martial him, since there were no charges; so it decided to declare him "surplus" and let him out under the honorable discharge procedure normal in such cases.

Others' Opinions

THEY CHOOSE THE STAGE (Christian Science Monitor)

Last year no fewer than 63 youthful graduates of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge presented themselves for the job of dramatic critic of one of the big London newspapers. Their chances of getting this job were somewhat reduced by the fact that the post was not even vacant. Nevertheless, these statistics illustrate vividly the increasing interest in the theater that is being taken by the rising generation.

Twenty-five years ago the brightest young people at the universities were absorbed in films; now the position is quite different; it is the theatre that causes excitement and holds young men and women away from their studies and the hockey field.

TOO MUCH LARNIN'

English As She Is Spoke

Greensboro Daily News

Miss Beatrice Cobb in the Morganton News-Herald complains that colorful speech is vanishing in the mountains nowadays—too much book-larnin', we reckon, leastways that's what we hearn tell.

However, all is not lost. People still make nouns do the work of verbs and vice versa—and why not? Thus:

They churched Pitt for tale-bearin'.
Granny kept faultin' us all day.
I don't confidence them dogs much.
I don't do nary thing to contrary her.
I didn't hear no give-out at the meetin'.

A letter-writer in the Chapel Hill Weekly gives a wonderful example for a sentence ending in a mess of prepositions:

What did you bring me that book to be read to out of from for?

We don't mind sentences ending in prepositions but that sounds like a little too much of a good thing to go for.

Editor Louls Graves of the Chapel Hill Weekly reminds us that the "tantamount" season has begun again. It always begins when somebody writes that "victory in a Democratic primary is tantamount to election" in these parts.

Mr. Graves doesn't like tantamount because (1) it is a funny-sounding word, and (2) it keeps on reminding him of a catamount. We knew a boy in school once who insisted that a mosque was some sort of a catfish, a conclusion to which he was doubtless led by way of "mollusc." Come to think of it, "tantamount" does sound a lot more wild and feline than does "equal" or even "equivalent."

Editor Welmar Jones of The Franklin Press hates "different than." We do too. It riles us. There's no sense or logic or good taste to it. It's a Briticism, that's what it is.

To our mind all this proves that words are living things; some are rough customers and others are perfect ladies and gentlemen. Some are dull and others sparkle. Some are finicky and others are solid. Some have guilt by association fastened on them while others borrow friendliness by connotation. Some are sweet and others are sour on the tongue. Either you like a word or you don't, and that's all there is to it.

LEWIS MUMFORD

One More Breath

In The NEW YORK TIMES

The power of the hydrogen bomb has, it is plain, given pause even to the leaders of our government. Their very hesitation to give away the facts in itself gives away the facts. Under what mandate, then, do they continue to hold as secret the results we may expect from the use of weapons of extermination—not merely on our own cities and people but on all living

organisms; not merely on our present lives but on the lives of countless generations to come?

Are our leaders afraid that when the truth is known our devotion to the perfection of scientific weapons of total destruction and extermination will turn out to be a profoundly irrational one: repulsive to morality, dangerous to national security, inimical to life?

Do they suspect that the American people are still sane enough to halt the blind automatism that continues, in the face of Soviet Russia's equal scientific powers, to produce these fatal weapons?

Do they fear that their fellowcountrymen may well doubt the usefulness of instruments which, under the guise of deterring an aggressor or insuring a cheap victory, might incidentally destroy the whole fabric of civilization and threaten the very existence of the human race?

Our secret weapons of extermination have been produced under conditions that have favored irresponsible censorship and short-sighted political and military judgments. Under the protection of secrecy a succession of fatal errors has been made, primarily as the result (since 1942) of our accepting total extermination as a method of warfare. These errors have been compounded by our counting upon such dehumanized methods to preserve peace and security.

In turn, our very need for secrecy in an abortive effort to monopolize technical and scientific knowledge, has produced pathological symptoms in the whole body politic: fear, suspicion, non-cooperation, hostility to critical judgment, above all delusions of power based on fantasies of unlimited extermination, as the only possible answer to the political threat of Soviet Russia. But demoralized men cannot be counted upon to control such automatic instruments of demoralization.

At a fatal moment our self-induced fears may produce the incalculable and irretrievable holocaust our own weapons have given us reason to dread. Only courage and intelligence of the highest order, backed by open discussion, will give us the strength to turn back from the suicidal path we have blindly followed since 1942.

Are there not enough Americans still possessed of their sanity to call a stop to these irrational decisions, which are automatically bringing us close to a total catastrophe?

There are many alternative courses to the policy to which we have committed ourselves, practically without debate. The worst of all these alternatives, submission to Communist totalitarianism, would still be far wiser than the final destruction of civilization.

As for the best of these alternatives, a policy of working firmly toward justice and cooperation, and free intercourse with all other peoples, in the faith that love begets love as surely as hatred begets hatred—would, in all probability, be the one instrument capable of piercing the strong armor of our present enemies.

Once the facts of our policy of total extermination are publicly canvassed, and the final outcome, mass suicide, is faced, I believe that the American people are still sane enough to come to a wiser decision than our government has yet made. They will realize that retaliation is not protection; that total extermination of both sides is not victory; that a constant state of morbid fear, suspicion and hatred is not security; that, in short, what seems like unlimited power has become impotence.

In the name of sanity let our government now pause and seek the counsel of sane men: men who have not participated in the errors we have made and are not committed, out of pride, to defending them. Let us cease all further experiments with even more horrifying weapons of destruction, lest our own self-induced fears further upset our mental balance.

Let us all, as responsible citizens, not be cowed subjects of an all-wise state, weigh the alternatives and canvass new lines of approach to the problems of power and peace.

Let us deal with our own massive sins and errors as a step toward establishing firm relations of confidence with the rest of mankind. And let us, first of all, have the courage to speak up on behalf of humanity, on behalf of civilization, on behalf of life itself against the methodology of barbarism to which we are now committed.

If as a nation we have become mad it is time for the world to take note of that madness. If we are still humane and sane, then it is time for the powerful voice of sanity to be heard once more in our land.

STRICTLY

PERSONAL

By WELMAR JONES

CHAPEL HILL.—Had an opportunity the other night, to hear Senator Alton Lennon, in an address here.

For whatever they may be worth, here are one man's impressions of him:

He isn't a big man. But he is an honest one. Also, he has courage.

In his prepared speech, his general theme was that the Russians are so scared of the hydrogen bomb, they are going to suddenly start acting like reasonable human beings. So we can stop putting money into armaments, and develop atomic energy for peacetime uses. That means a great, new area of peace and progress ahead.

In view of the current world situation, that hit a lot of the hard-headed realists among students here as rather silly.

I drew the impression, too, that he is basically isolationist. And that doctrine, it seems to me, is anything but realistic in today's world.

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News Making As It Looks To A Maconite

By BOB SLOAN

Twenty-two days from the publication of this column North Carolinians will decide who they want for United States Senator. The two chief contenders for the office are W. Kerr Scott and Alton Lennon. Both of the men seem to be running for the office on the basis of Scott's record as Governor of the state of North Carolina. Scott says that while Governor he worked to get the state government to assist the people in solving their many problems. Lennon says little or nothing about his past record of serving the people, but he says that Scott did not use his influence for the benefit of the people. It seems to me then that the question the voters have to answer before they cast their ballot is this:

Did Kerr Scott, while serving as governor, do what he could to see that more public schools were built, that rural roads were improved, that telephone service and electricity were made available to more people, that the state funds deposited in banks were made to draw interest, that teachers received more pay, that the government of the state in general did what it could to serve the people? These were the promises made by Scott, and his record as governor should be judged by how nearly he carried out his promises.

The only other factor in this Senatorial race that I can see is the fact that one candidate is confining his remarks to his own record while the other is chiefly concerned with attacking his opponent. Do we want a Senator who has carried out a positive program in public office or one who will concern himself chiefly with negative criticism?

Sunday afternoon, the Franklin High School Band gave an excellent performance under the direction of "Sammy" Beck. Outside of enjoying the excellent performance, the main thought that came to me was that there is no extra curricular activity in the school which teaches the individual the need to work with others and importance of doing your part of a job well as well as band work. In band work you can't do it half way and the rest of the group is dependent on you so you have to come through or quit. Schools need to teach children this as it is one of the traits that must be learned for successful living. With this in mind I hope everyone will strongly support the Franklin Band Boosters. Also at this time I would like to congratulate Mr. Beck on his excellent work here. You are hired to

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Do You Remember?

(Looking backward through the files of The Press)

50 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

S. T. Kelsey, the founder of Highlands, was here a few days last week visiting friends. All were glad to see him after his absence of twelve years.

Snow fell pretty briskly on the Burningtown mountains last Wednesday and Thursday.

Many a man possesses a big pile of money who was never worth two cents on his own merits.

25 YEARS AGO

By a vote of nearly five to one over his opponent Mayor George Patton was reelected Tuesday.

The high winds in Macon County last Thursday night uprooted hundreds of fruit trees and also blew down several trees in the forests.

The burning of the club house at the Highlands golf course last Thursday night is a severe blow to the citizens of that town.

10 YEARS AGO

The Franklin High School Glee Club will give a recital Sunday at the Macon Theatre.

Ralph McDonald, candidate for the gubernatorial nomination in the Democratic primary, will come to Franklin Monday and address the citizens of this county at the courthouse.

Mr. and Mrs. George Conley arrived Saturday from Macon, Ga., where they have been for several years, having moved back into their home on Iotia Street.