

Time to Wake Up



EDITORIALS

*Never Forget That These Editorials Are The Opinion Of One Man
And He May Be Wrong*

The Reading Hour

No one who earns all or part of his bread from writing is likely to deny the importance of reading, but there is a possibility that both writers and educators emphasized the wrong thing; especially in the field of fiction.

In an introduction to a collection of short stories one of this era's most widely read, and most profitable writers, Somerset Maugham, says it succinctly:

"But before I go on to consider more particularly the stories which I am inviting the reader to read, I should like to point out to him that no one is under obligation to read fiction. To read some of the books on the subject that are written for the edification of the young, you would imagine that it was a duty that a man owed, not only to himself, but to society, to read certain novels. From the seriousness with which the authors of these textbooks treat the psychological, political, sociological characteristics of the novels they discuss, you would think that the main object of fiction is to impart knowledge. I imagine that these persons adopt this attitude because it adds dignity to studies which they fear many seem a trifle frivolous. They wish to offer a contribution to science no less important than that provided by the biologists who study rats, newts and guinea pigs. It is an attitude which has much gratified the vanity of authors. They have always had an uneasy feeling that there was something not quite serious in the writing of fiction, and it has been pleasant for them to look upon themselves as scientific workers; and of no small importance either, for the field they cultivated was after all nothing less than human nature. When they were told that the novel had taken the place of the pulpit, and that it offered the most convenient means at the present day for the propagation of ideas, they were quite ready to assume the position thus thrust upon them."

After having spent some little time in recent years wading through the trauma of 20th century fiction I suggest that fiction for entertainment needs a revival, and that fiction for education has about run its course.

Maugham continues: "The artist has a natural facility for creation, and to exercise his gifts is a delight to him; he creates in order to disembarass his soul of a burden that oppressed it and thus gain release. But this is no concern of the layman who reads his poems or looks at his pictures: to the layman art offers solace and relaxation and an escape from the reality of life; and sometimes it enlarges his soul, presents new ideas to his spirit and heartens him to cope with the difficult business of living. If it can do this its power is so great that the artist thus moves you that you are justified in ascribing genius to him. Genius is rare. No artist need be ashamed if he can do no more than offer entertainment. That too has its value."

So far as we're concerned it's a pity that more of our current writers can not accept this philosophy. Too many of them are victims of their own press agentry and carefully manicured criticisms which ascribe to their word a far greater content than they possibly could have.

In attempting to lard every epithet with sociological overtones, or to draw each character as a political prototype the composition fails as good reading and becomes propaganda.

And if there is one thing we need less of in the world today it is the propagandist, whether he is trying to sell you dandruff cure or a new form of government.

Writers have been taken too seriously, and having been taken seriously many of them have fallen into the mistake of taking themselves too seriously. This is the most deadly sin the creator of fiction can commit.

Have you read a book recently from the best-seller list that did no more than entertain? If you have, please recommend it to our attention.

This is just about the time of the year when tired, hot mothers really begin to keep an ear cocked for the first clang of the school bell.

Too Much, Too Soon

There was a time in recent history when the phrase, "Too Little, and Too Late" had a serious significance, but those of a conservative view in American politics today seem to be plagued with "Too Much, Too Soon."

Nothing has more damaged the conservative approach than the excesses of people such as General Walker and the John Birch Society. And in this sea of much discontent there are lesser lights making similar mistakes.

Tom Anderson, editor of one of the nation's largest circulation farm magazines, is an unhappy example. He cries wolf too continuously and too recklessly for general acceptance.

For instance in one of his latest sermons from the conservative mount he says, quoting President Kennedy.

"Sometime ago I asked each American to consider what he could do for his country and I also asked the steel companies. In the past 24 hours we have had their answer," Kennedy cried. This is demagoguery at its Rooseveltian best. Neither Truman or Eisenhower were intelligent enough to rise to this level."

Can you imagine what amount of editorial gall is poured into those few words? Here is a glib Tennessean, riding the conservative crest and in one sentence casting into outer darkness the last four presidents of the nation. The men who have occupied the chief executive post for the past 29 years — each and all are waved aside much as the medicine man tries to push away the worrisome children who are fouling up his pitch.

Perhaps, it has always been difficult to see clearly what lies near at hand or to understand that which has passed; and obviously it is impossible to see what lies distantly ahead.

But there are some verities in public affairs, and among these is that nothing constructive is ever accomplished by a completely negative attitude.

Perhaps, the greatest strength of world socialism today is that they have created for themselves the image of "doers", while those who have stood for democratic capitalism have either adopted or had forced upon them the negative roll of "not-doers."

Terrible Toll

Last week's death toll on the highways of Lenoir County was terrible.

Nothing we can find to say can possibly carry a new reflection upon this tragic four days that saw eight traffic deaths in Lenoir County.

Each of us who drives, or even who is a passenger on the highways must do his own reflecting, and none of us can avoid the feeling that the finger of fate could just as easily point us out.

This knowledge certainly imposes upon all of us the continuing responsibility of learning and practicing more each day the life-saving art of defensive driving.

On the congested streets and roads of our nation today it is not enough to drive safely, to abide by the law and to extend the courtesies of the road to those we meet or pass.

Every second that one is responsible for a motor vehicle he must concentrate not only upon doing what is correct himself but also upon that other person who is NOT driving correctly.

This is a huge responsibility, but unless each driver is willing — even anxious to accept this personal responsibility the bad story of our highways can get nothing but worse.

JONES JOURNAL

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Published Every Thursday by The Lenoir County News Company, Inc., 403 West Vernon Ave., Kinston, N. C., Phone JA 3-2375. Entered as Second Class Matter May 5, 1949, at the Post Office at Trenton, North Carolina, under the Act of March 3, 1879. By Mail in First Zone — \$3.00 Per Year. Subscription Rates Payable in Advance. Second Class Postage Paid at Trenton, N. C.



PERSONAL PARAGRAPHS

BY JACK RIDER

Perhaps because it agrees so completely with my own views I want to repeat for emphasis a paragraph from last week's paper that was taken from a new book by Former Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana:

"What bothers me about today's liberals is this: Through the ages, those called liberal fought to take the power away from the kings and emperors and to give it to the parliaments; now it is the liberals who are anxious to give more and more power to the executive, at the expense of the legislative branch. Too, the modern liberals preach tolerance but in some ways are extremely intolerant themselves. They would cast into outer darkness anyone who does not go along with them 100 per cent."

Does this describe anybody you know? It fits a great many I know personally, or through their writings. The Jonathan Daniels, Ralph McGill, Robert Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Paul Douglas, Jacob Javits, Martin Luther King breed — each of whom mumbles the 'liberal' litany but believes his own view superior to the law. Which of course makes each and all of them basically an anarchist.

The attitude as exemplified by the NAACP and the CORE approach that a law can be ignored because it is unjust is too absurd in a civilized society to even mention, except that it has been projected by such men who have the ear of the national news media. How can a teen-ager be expected to respect the law when his learned elders spit upon the law, and decide that rule by executive fiat or bureaucratic despotism is preferable to government by the due process of law.

Some examples of this executive tyranny include: Specific employment demands upon all government contractors that are written by civil servants who never have fought the ballot battle for their jobs. The Interstate Commerce Commission exercises this same kind of executive rule by telling bus station operators that busses cannot call at stations that have segregated rest rooms, restaurants or ticket windows. Aside from the racial aspect of such illegal rulings; what would happen if a bus station operator attempted under the same order to keep a man out of a woman's toilet, or the other way around?

Admittedly, progress by parliamentary process is slow, but it has the great grace of being sure. Government by law rather than by man is based in the presumption that all government should be by the consent of the governed. Certainly, the recent past in our nation in the sphere of racial integration has NOT been with the consent of the government, but has been government enforced by paratroop bayonet, economic sanctions, and the petty kinds of tyranny that a faceless bureaucracy can impose upon individuals who are "without day" in the federal courts which have become a mockery of their historic function because of their subservience to gutter-type politics.

The page from American history when our processes of government were a pawn of the tycoons is indeed a sorry thing to consider. But today the federal processes of government — and most especially the courts and the executive branch of government are just as surely the pawns of the power-hungry racists minorities as their predecessors were servants of the great trusts.

The fault, however, does not rest upon the oligarchical illusions of the federal judiciary, nor upon the ward-heeling deliberatenesses of the executive. The fault is that of the congress which has surrendered its powers over and over again on the altar of re-election and expediency. Congressmen who justify their abdication to the faceless brutalities of executive rule are guilty of the grossest treason of our time. Surrender of atomic secrets is trivial to the desertion of one's post in time of stress.