

to merge oneself in the stream of mass values. The city state could only flourish on condition that justice and right were forged on the smithy of critical reason. Or Dewey. So close to us and yet so far, urging upon us the conviction that education has to do with the quality of experience. It will not do to exacerbate our ignorance by assuming that nothing important

has ever been said about the problems we face.

I myself would like to see the debate about neutrality continue because this is one way of carrying on a dialogue about the larger question of what education is and ought to be for our times. Both purists and non-neutralists and all their colleagues in between stand to gain in this dialogue.

correspondence

“RECKLESS RHETORIC AND FOREIGN POLICY”

New Brunswick, N.J.
Dear Sir: I find Ernest Lefever's article, "Reckless Rhetoric and Foreign Policy" (*worldview*, November), both baffling and troubling. I am baffled because I find it difficult to believe that anyone who has been alive in this country over the last five years could manage to intellectually elude most of the forces and ideas abroad in the land. I am troubled because we are told that the life and career of an important American is reducible to a single speech, the importance of which is by no means demonstrated by the author.

The devastating and dehumanizing effects of the Vietnam war on both combatants and civilians was a reality which I thought had been internalized by most people. But perhaps, in the instant case, it boars repeating. Anyone who has followed the Calley and Mitchell trials will notice the parade of pathetic, freaked-out former riflemen and machine-gunners from Charlie Company. With their long hair and beads and their reticent anger they are a walking repudiation of what they witnessed and enacted at My Lai and places like it. Listen to poor Paul Meadlo who cried as he fired into a ditch full of old people. Listen to Maples and Thompson as they tell of the dreams of death that come back nightly to haunt them. These dreams, no doubt, afflict the Viet Cong soldier as well, but he, thankfully, is not our immediate problem. He is not part of the grim array of walking wounded and moral cripples who join Weatherman as soon as they can get out of their uniforms or who join the drop-outs who cannot keep the aggressive traits they learned in Vietnam under control. He is also not the black veteran who is now wise in the ways of the M-16 and whose society has trained him, first on the streets of the ghetto and then in the paddies of the Delta and the hills of I Corps, to be an accomplished revolutionary and sociopath.

If Martin Luther King and seven complete synods of left-wing Protestant clergymen had willfully concocted, exaggerated, and falsified, they would still have fallen far short of describing the monstrous domestic effects of the war.

Perhaps, as Mr. Lefever has pointed out, the word "violence" has been debased. On the other hand, maybe it is our vocabulary that is inadequate to describe with suffi-

cient exactitude the death of a 13-year-old junkie who overdosed with heroin in a tenement bathroom. Perhaps our definitions are not up to characterizing the malnutrition and parasites which afflict the black kids of Beaufort, S.C. or the Chicano kids of El Paso, or the white kids of Clay County, Ky. If we debate the term "violence" by using it in these contexts, what words do you use? Do you call them accidents, perhaps, or maybe "benign neglect"? How about national absent-mindedness?

I think I stand with the mainstream of modern social science when I say that systemic violence is perceived by its victims as being every bit as illegitimate as extra-systemic violence is by its victims. How relevant was the "civility and fair play" of our system of justice at Kent State? Even if the tendentious verdict of the state grand jury had been different, it could not have raised the dead. Should the students at Jackson State have obtained an injunction or a writ of *mandamus* to stop the Sheriff of Hinds County or the Police Chief of Jackson from firing into the girls' dormitory? Why this unalloyed halo of sanctity over the head of constituted authority?

There are indeed many elements of our system that are worthy of praise and veneration, but there are others which are piebald and rotten. Is one required to have the same reverence for the judicial system of corrupt Hudson County, N.J., as he does for such models of municipal rectitude as Montgomery County, Md.? I trust that Mr. Lefever is aware of the fact that in most large cities in this country, the judicial system has completely broken down. These are places in which jail is a surrogate for trial. People confronted with this alternative are not disposed to wait for the mills of justice to grind exceedingly fine. I might add that the inequities in our legal system do not fall heaviest on Senior Staff Members of the Brookings Institution.

As to the question of rectitude in the dialogue on Vietnam, let us speak about Secretary Laird's testimony recently before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee where the Secretary failed to link the "protective reaction" raids against North Vietnam with our raids on the P.O.W. camps because "no one asked" him. I question whether, to use Mr. Lefever's terms, this was part of an "honorable" dialogue.

I am not privy to any "private conversations" with people in the Movement, but the consequences of a credibility gap among dissenters seem of far less consequence than a lack of candor among public officials, especially those with access to intelligence reports and the legendary "captured documents" which so conveniently appear when there is a point to be made.

The model of rationality and honor advanced by Mr. Lefever on behalf of the government and his paradigm of shrill irrationality applied to dissenters is without empirical foundation. It was, I recall, an official of the Johnson Administration who advocated the government's right to lie on behalf of its policies.

It may be unpleasant or jarring to admit that the war may have brought out the worst in America, but can it be reasonably alleged that it has elicited our most noble sentiments or that its distorting economic, social, and psychological effects are phenomena on which honest men can disagree?

How ennobling are the consequences of a war that causes over one half of our soldiers in the combat zone to seek relief from tension with the needle and the joint? How lofty is a conflict which, according to recent testimony, induces such violent reaction in Marines that they cannot be safely re-integrated into civilian life without extensive psychotherapy? Perhaps this data comports with what Peking or Hanoi want to hear. Possibly it is merely the cant and deception of demonic left-wing psychiatrists. I suspect, however, that we have not seen the final pathological manifestations of this conflict. To attribute these assessments to willful and malicious malcontents is to indulge in dangerous self-deception.

Ross K. Baker

Princeton, N.J.

Dear Sir: In the past I have found myself generally in agreement with the views and opinions of Ernest Lefever and have come to regard him as one of the most responsible and authoritative spokesmen for that particular part of the political spectrum we apparently inhabit. I am therefore deeply dismayed and bewildered by both the tone and the tactics of his article in the November issue.

Certainly there has been an excess of rhetoric on the part of many of those who have criticized U.S. foreign policy in recent years, especially among those opposed to the Vietnam war, and certainly the quality of dialogue and debate on public issues has deteriorated as a result. However, I can neither condone the ethics nor comprehend the practicality of combatting this "rhetorical overkill" by perpetuating its usage. Such phrasology as "no seasoned Communist propagandist would have dared"; "presented in the garb of self-righteousness"; "orgy of black terror"; etc.—this simply will not serve to advance that "quality of dissent and support equal to the seriousness of the problems we confront" which Dr. Lefever so rightly demands.

Since newspapers, books and magazines abound with

foolish and extravagant statements by those who should know and do better, I am particularly bewildered as to why Dr. Lefever chooses to weaken his own case by focusing on a speech of the late Martin Luther King, Jr.—especially a speech Lefever himself admits is "strange" and "uncharacteristic." By attacking someone no longer able to defend himself, I am afraid Lefever indulges in the very same tactics he deplores in others.

I can understand Dr. Lefever's feelings only too well. I, too, am tired of abuse and passion masquerading as fact and logic. But this is no time for us to lose our heads. There is every evidence that the nation is fast becoming weary of the Left's rhetorical excesses and that such tactics are becoming counter-productive, as sooner or later they always do. Whether the protesters like it or not, the war is winding down; the rallies and demonstrations are fading away; the inflated language is cooling off. In the exhausted silence that follows such outbursts, new realities will have to be confronted and new decisions made. The advocates of reason and moderation can then prevail—but only if they have preserved authority by remaining true to these principles. It is a great temptation to whack one's opponent with his own stick, but the just and rational man will choose a more worthy weapon.

Guy Davis

... AND "THE NEW STYLE IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY"

Nyack, N.Y.

Dear Sir: You have a most interesting tension in your November issue of *worldview*—in the contrast between old and new views of foreign policy in the lead article and the one by Ernest Lefever. I'm sure you will get an equally interesting division in correspondence on the two widely divergent angles these authors take.

May I come down heavily in favor of the "new style" approach (in "The New Style in American Foreign Policy," by Cynthia Enloe and Mostafa Rejai), which is, by inference at least, a rejection of the Lefever approach. Acheson's and, to a lesser extent, McGeorge Bundy's "principled" and "moral" approach to statecraft, which in the end comes off as a glossy veneer applied to the apparatus of pure power, are now seen as not even self-serving from the standpoint of the national interest. Authors Enloe and Rejai rightly see as a healthy development the more candid and hence more flexible new approach in the U.S. which no longer needs to be perceived as moralistic.

But Mr. Lefever is still caught back in yesterday. And his concept of loyalty to the institution of our State Department, right or wrong, is so constricting and myopic as to permit him to slander in quite cruel fashion the late Martin Luther King for attempting to apply the Christian imperative to America's Vietnam war policy. In fact, I feel so strongly about the matter as to ask why, in this instance, are we to prefer Mr. Lefever's views to those of J. Edgar Hoover in the realm of morality and the state?

James S. Best

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