

# EDITORIAL

## Manicure

Brett Slocum, a member of Boy Scout Troop 281, spent nearly 36 hours recently planting and manicuring a ragged triangle of land at the intersection of Routes 415 and 309—a project he devised and executed himself. This remarkable project, which was undertaken by Brett to fulfill requirements for an Eagle Scout award, prompted us to look around our community for other signs of similar handiwork.

There is abundant evidence that the Back Mountain is a brighter, cleaner, more pleasant place to live, thanks to the efforts of these scouts. Several youngsters have initiated painting projects—at neighborhood churches, at the Back Mountain Memorial Library, at the homes of elderly citizens. Others, like Brett, have weeded and planted and trimmed and clipped—around churches, in neglected cemeteries, near littered roadways. The projects are as varied as the boys themselves, with but one common denominator: each is a man's job.

We owe gratitude not only to the scouts who undertake such projects, but to the scoutmasters who guide and help them in their endeavors. These leaders include John Juris and Bruce Davies of Troop 281; John Stubeda of Troop 225; Lee Baker and Skyles Neyhard of Troop 155, and David Kopetchny of Troop 132. To each of you, and to the scouts you have trained for responsible citizenship, we say thank you.

## Power Policy

President Nixon has again called for the development and application of fast breeder nuclear reactors in the United States to solve the power crisis of the future. And he has again failed to set up the necessary government machinery to protect the public from the tragedy of accident or sabotage such facilities carry with them.

Speaking to a group of nuclear power proponents at the Atomic Energy Commission's Hanford works in Washington State last week, Mr. Nixon said he was pledging to "move this nation into an era of plentiful, clean and safe atomic power" by asking Congress for the appropriations for a second fast breeder nuclear reactor project. Mr. Nixon has yet to place any importance on the latter two, taking no action except to put wheels in motion to see that we have plentiful atomic power. The AEC, meanwhile, is taking mostly a hands off attitude when it comes to both clean and safe considerations.

While the President was calling for proliferation of nuclear power in the Northwest, in Colorado the AEC was ignoring its responsibilities concerning vast uranium tailings which have recently been considered a source of lung cancer. Thousands of Coloradans have found themselves living in houses and working in buildings which were constructed from materials from these tailings that still contain 85 percent of their original radioactive contents. The AEC maintains that such safety implications are not under its jurisdiction.

The first such fast breeder for the nation may be located on a site on the Susquehanna River near Meshoppen in Wyoming County. Though only experimental in nature, that facility will cost more than \$450 million, to be shared by government and industry. Billions of dollars have already been spent on the development of the use of nuclear power for generating electricity by the AEC, thus placing taxpayers into a position of subsidizing the power industry generally, with little or no satisfaction regarding safeguards.

Until the President can satisfy the environmental protection aspects of nuclear power, Congress should keep a tight hold on the nation's purse strings.

## THE DALLAS POST

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## Insights and Illusions

by Bruce Hopkins

Dear Mr. Agnew,

Your article, "The Root Cause of Attica," in the Sept. 17 New York Times was very distressing. I am a 23-year-old man (although you might have other names for me) who frequently loses his faith in humanity. Unfortunately you are a man who tends to enhance this feeling within me.

You have no conception of what humanism, or humaneness, is, my dear sir. I suppose it is politics that has done that to you, I don't know. You spoke of humaneness in your editorial, purporting that "the theory of American criminology and our penal system remain among the most humane and advanced in the world." The theory, perhaps, if there is one. The penal system as it stands—hardly humane. Of course I say this having never been subjected to life in a prison. I assume you speak on the same basis. Neither of us knows for sure just what we're talking about. However, if one-third of what I hear in the evil news media (I try not to believe any of it, but once in a while something strikes me as so far-fetched it couldn't possibly be fiction) and what I have learned and felt in talking to people at the Fortune Shop is true, then our system as it stands rates very low on the bell curve for humanity. Even average humanity is above us.

Tell me, Mr. Agnew, what is the purpose of a prison in America? Is it to punish? You know that is what I was always taught to believe. Prisons were for punishment. No one ever suggested to me that they were supposed to be used to rehabilitate. No, prisons were for suffering; paying for your sins against your fellow man. Have you noticed, sir, how selective we are when we send people to prison. We have established a Selective Service for jail. If you are wealthy enough you can usually buy your way out of a sentence. The poor have little chance. Our system is such that it can, if it so desires, send a man to prison for a good many years for the outlandish offense of possessing marijuana. An offense that is primarily quite personal. It's rather like arresting someone for masturbation. We can send a man to jail for the crime of physically loving another man, thus solving his problem by placing him in an entirely male population where his crime will be distorted and perverted until it is as devoid of love as possible. These are just a few of the more obvious elements of humanity within our system. Sometimes, Mr. Agnew, I wonder if there really is a theory behind American criminology. Is there a theory behind a

system that will condemn a 19-year-old boy to an indeterminate sentence of from 1 year to life for a \$70 robbery? A system that forces him to spend 11 years in prison, making in the meantime a bestselling book out of his correspondence, and then permits him to die—fact it, to kill him within the justice of the system? All for a \$70 robbery. This is humanity.

The most distressing aspect of your words, Sir, is that they imply that the George Jacksons and Attica inmates of the world don't deserve to live—Or at least not as much as the rest of us. It is as if you have made up a scale of values for human life:

"—to compare the loss of life by those who violate society's laws with a loss of life of those whose job it is to uphold it—represents not only an assault on human sensibility, but an insult to reason."

That statement, Mr. Agnew, is as completely devoid of a sense of human worth, moral responsibility and basic compassion for one's fellowman as any I have ever heard. And it comes from the mind of a leader of

men. You must not judge lives as you would judge livestock sir. If you raise cattle on the streets and rooftops of Harlem, it will probably not fare as well when you take it to the county fair. You can't bring a cow up in the ghetto and expect it to give good milk. All that takes time. First of all you must teach it to relax. A society that creates a ghetto and then punishes individuals for being unable to cope with it dare not boast about the humanity of its penal system. A society that will advocate the shooting of unarmed men, and make heroes of the murderers because the thing they killed was a "criminal" does not represent the pinnacle of humanity.

History, from which no one has ever learned anything, has taught us that politics and humanity do not get along well together. The Greek tragedies showed us that. And Anouilh's *Antigone*, written in the 1940's centers upon a man who allows himself to destroy all of his loved ones for the sake of a political philosophy. I am currently performing in that play, and it could have been written last week about Gov. Rockefeller and the sister of one of the dead inmates.



Mr. Agnew, these were your words on the governor's role:

"Governor Rockefeller acted courageously. Those who would have had him act otherwise have yet to learn the paramount lesson of our country; that acquiescence to the demands of the criminal element of any society only begets greater violence."

In a political sense, one might consider those words quite true. However, if we are to consider them on the basis of one man doing whatever he possibly can to help his fellowman along the way, then Mr. Rockefeller has betrayed us all. Looking at it as a human being, and not as a politician, I find the governor's action despicable. I find it as cowardly as an action could possibly be. There are some things, we must believe, that cannot be judged on the basis of society's laws or political laws; things that come under the category of human compassion; of human understanding; of—pardon the expression, love. My idealistic mind wants to believe that love for one's fellow man does not end when he is put behind bars. In fact, that might be where it could begin. For indeed, those who have been unable to cope with society are the ones who need most of the understanding and love of their fellow men. We could do so much more if we offered that instead of bullets; instead of punishment; instead of retaliation.

You tell us that the lesson of the century is not to acquiesce to the demands of our criminal element. An, but what exactly is a criminal act? For a long time, Mr. Agnew, my friends and I have acquiesced to the criminal acts of your administration in Vietnam, and indeed at Kent State, at Jackson State, and now at Attica. We have acquiesced although we did not want to. But despite the crimes you have committed against humanity, Mr. Agnew, and as worthless as I personally may think you are to us, still I believe in your right to exist on the same level as decent people. If only because you are a human being. Before you are anything else, and you are a number of unfortunate things, you are a human being. It is you who has yet to learn the paramount lesson of the century although it has been shouted out to you a number of times. The paramount lesson of all centuries has been the same: to love one another. How many times will we fail the course?

Love always (or until the end of the century, whichever comes first),  
BRUCE HOPKINS

## TRB from Washington

We can imagine an uptight President in Alaska, putting his hand out with a forced grin and saying, "Well, well, Wally. Long time no see!" And Wally Hickel, the man he fired from Interior along with six top aides, responding cheerfully, "Welcome to Anchorage! Have you had a chance to read my book, WHO OWNS AMERICA?"

"No, I haven't, Wally," (the script goes on) "I've been terribly busy on that wage-price thing, and brushing up on my Chinese."

"Keeps you busy, don't it? But I do hope you'll dip into the book sometime. By the way, I mention you in a couple of places. I just gave a copy to Emperor Hirohito."

"No hard feelings, I hope, Wally?"

"Oh, dear, no! Not after that Cabinet introduction you gave me on TV to the nation in December '68: 'He is going to bring a new sense of excitement, a new sense of creativity, to that Department.' Ermalee loved it."

"You sure brought excitement, Wally!"

"That was when you said you didn't want a Cabinet of 'yes-men.' Remember? You have to go now? Well, it's certainly easier to see you up here in Alaska, Mr. President, than across the block back in Washington."

Yes, that's the scene we conjure up as we read the Hickel book (\$6.95; Prentice-Hall). Oddly enough it makes us recall another Cabinet member, Elliot Richardson of HEW, the handsome Boston blue-blood. Richardson, you remember, made the mistake of thinking the president would buy that unanimous decision of the Supreme Court on school busing. What a goof that was! But Richardson is a shrewder man than Hickel; he didn't let a

thing like that get him fired. He just ate a little crow, accepted a ritual abasement from young Ron Ziegler, the White House press secretary, and submitted to a press conference.

We went to that conference. You have to see one of those things to understand the degree of cynicism and ridicule that the working press sometimes put into their questions. "Sir," one of them wound up, "weren't you at least a little bit dismayed and a little bit taken aback—just slightly—by the President's August 3 statement (repudiating the Richardson busing order)?"

Richardson, the scion of Yankee abolitionists, didn't make a direct answer.

Now Hickel is a different type! No subtlety. He's just a self-made businessman, a Babbitt. Believes in "positive thinking". Big, brash, bumptious, bouncy; as a boy on a tenant farm in Kansas he watched farms blow away, never thought of going to college, set out to see the world, wept when he saw the Rockies, picked up an occasional twenty bucks in welter-weight fights, made his way up to Alaska (too expensive to go to Australia), went back later to the States with \$1000 borrowed from Ermalee to buy a surplus Army plane and then, with a pal, flew north, to the awe and admiration of every Army post he careened over. "Son! Let me see that plane!" said one incredulous three-star general. He wound up in Alaska finally, five times a millionaire, building houses and motels. So then he helped make it a state, got to be governor, and, at 49, was tapped for the Nixon cabinet as a hard-nosed businessman, loathed by liberal reporters, a man who would get along fine, it was thought, with the oil

contributors. He kept the Nixon Inaugural in his desk drawer—the one about lowering our voices and bringing us all together.

He interpreted his job as cracking down on oil polluters and protecting the environment. Odd things began to happen. The White House told him to fire the hardworking, hold-over director of the Bureau of Mines (it would mean "two more votes" for the Administration's ABM). He did it but it bothered him. "How in hell does this help the miners?" he asked himself.

He thought Vietnam was phasing out. Then one night the President called in the Cabinet and just before his TV speech to the nation, told them he was going into Cambodia. "I listened with horror. . . . When I walked out of the room I was screaming inside."

The poor guy, you see, had a conscience. Fancy. Also he thought it was poor politics. He couldn't get to see the President in this, the most isolated of all Administrations. Half a million war protesters gathered in Washington and the President watched a TV football game, for the next one the President left town. "It was unbelievable to me," said this simple soul.

Then there was Spiro, always Spiro, always making speeches. For Spiro the defeat of New York's liberal Republican senator Goodell made the evening in spite of other GOP defeats; the VP strode over to the TV and said, "We got that son of a bitch!"

The Secretary finally talked it over with Ermalee. "Wally," she said, "you didn't come to Washington to play it safe." (That's the kind of wife who gets a man into trouble!)

## Kind Regards; No Regrets

He passed a sleepless night or two, re-read the Inaugural in his desk. Then he wrote one of the most famous political letters in history, a private letter, he insists, directed to his boss, trying to explain about youth. At the end he added that it would be a nice thing, if Mr. Nixon saw cabinet members occasionally, "on an individual and conversational basis."

Photostats were given to his staff for their comments. The letter got into print before it got to the White House. When he got home he said, "Ermalee, I have a feeling of relief."

Wally Hickel never ate crow—that's for sophisticated Boston Brahmins like Secretary Richardson. He writes in a cheery, low-keyed tone about it all, preaching "positive thinking". It is fun to read how the White House gets rid of a cabinet member who won't quit. He found out about the spite and paltriness of this Administration, one of the pettiest in this century. When the time came for the White House briefing on the cancellation of the oil and gas leases in the Santa Barbara channel which he considered one of his crowning achievements, he was told not to come. He was cordially disinvented to a White House prayer breakfast to which he had hoped to take his son, who had flown back from college for Mothers Day. He stayed for the 1970 election (by then he had a following with young people, conservationists, liberals, blacks, and types of that sort). Then the President let him go. That evening, with the news on radio, neighbors gathered at the door and sang, "For he's a jolly, good fellow." In the flyleaf of the book he gave to Mr. Nixon he wrote "Kind regards; no regrets."

There's a man who doesn't whine, doesn't repine, doesn't grovel. Ermalee, too.

## Changes

By Eric Mayer

The man was standing aimlessly, like half a road crew, on the outskirts of the construction site at Wilkes College. Clouds of dust raised by the bulldozers that toiled nearby swirled out toward him and some of the dust must have stuck to his T-shirt because it was dirty though his hands were clean. His eyes, narrowed down into the perpetual squint of those who can't quite understand any of what they see, passed vacantly over the excavations that are destined to be a multi-million dollar educational complex. When the man spoke, it was to the crowds of students who had filled the sidewalk between classes.

"Wouldn't give a damn dime to these colleges," he growled, to no one in particular. "Not a damn dime."

The Susquehanna flows through the Wyoming Valley like a rusty trickle through a gutter. Small, grimy towns—Plymouth,

Plains, Pittston—lay up against their culm banks, clogging the gutter like the debris left behind by a hard rain.

Abandoned coal breakers stare blindly through hundreds of dusty windows. The huge machines, the sifters, sorters, and chutes; the elevators, engines, and catwalks that served both as skeletons and vital organs have corroded or been dismantled. Bereft of purpose the breakers wait patiently for the past to return and, perhaps pray that the wrecking crews will soon spare them their slow death by decay.

These are the surroundings in which many of us attend school, or work or shop; the surroundings which breed, and are bred by, people who wouldn't give a dime for education; people whose spirits are as exhausted as the coal mines that should have provided their livelihood—who tend patiently to their bitterness, aging it; a rare wine to soothe

their rotting lives.

High school football thrives in the area. Middle-aged failures fill stadiums to cheer their more hopeful pasts. The editorial policy of one leading newspaper begins, quite literally, where its high school sports pages end.

Essentially it is an ugly area. The streets of Wilkes-Barre teem with ugliness; with people who are, as John Lennon put it, crippled inside. The agony of their disease, an all consuming hatred, a cancer of the soul, snarls out from distorted masks that once were faces. Were it possible, these people would hate themselves but since human nature works in devious ways they project their hatred outward—especially toward those they envy.

It isn't surprising then that colleges, with their much publicized promises of degrees and the good jobs that go with them, have

come under so much fire lately. Ignorance always despises wisdom, while envying it secretly.

It is a sad commentary on the state of this nation that the Nixon administration should see fit to turn for support to this particular minority of our population. The president slogged willingly through the stinking mire of the 1970 "law and order" campaign and has been tracking mud across the face of reason ever since. We all know about his silent majorities and his southern strategies. We've all been regaled by Spiro Agnew's attacks on various forms of intellectualism. (Attacks on intelligence actually)

The president and the country might well ask themselves if hatred and ignorance are really the solutions to the problems that beset the United States. Having been exposed to these commodities, Wyoming Valley style, I would say no.