

AMERICA FACES 1933'S REALITIES

A Reading of the Signs Which Indicates That We Have Emerged From the World of Dreams in Which We Had Been Wandering and Are Ready to Deal With the Facts That Confront Us



As the New Year Dawns We Set Sail for New* and Fuller Adventures.

From a Woodcut by J. J. Lankester.

What is the next chapter in the epic of America? What, as the new year opens, is the prospect for the fulfillment of the American dream? These questions are discussed in the following article by Mr. Adams, who has won wide recognition as a student of history and as a surveyor of the American scene.

By JAMES TRUSLOW ADAMS

AS the new year dawns we are all looking toward the future. We scarcely think of the past. Nor are we, as we were a few years ago when we rolled in prosperity, living in the present. A large part of our emotional life is concentrated in hopes or fears as to what is in store.

These hopes and fears are mostly economic; they arise out of a system which is enormously complex. In almost every preceding business crisis of equal intensity, they would have been based on the prospects for weather and the crops. In pre-industrial days it would have been a question of plenty or famine: Even after the industrial era was well under way, an especially bountiful crop of wheat or corn would have been counted upon to help the

mired wheels of the industrial machine to turn again on firmer soil.

Today, so far from there being any dread of famine or lack of commodities of any sort, we actually fear nature's bounty as exploited by our own too efficient methods. What we dread, unless civilization breaks down entirely, is not lack of food from drought or pest but the ending of what I have elsewhere called "the American dream," from failure of mind and character to control and organize the vast forces at our disposal.

The dream is a vision of a better, deeper, richer life for every individual, regardless of the position in society which he or she may occupy by the accident of birth. It has been a dream of a chance to rise in the economic scale, but quite as much, or more than that, of a chance to develop our capacities to the full, unhampered by unjust restrictions of caste or custom. With this has gone the hope of bettering the physical conditions of living, of lessening the toil and anxieties of daily life. We had actually believed ourselves not simply to have abolished the possibility of famine but to be within sight

of abolishing poverty. It is this dream, in its various aspects, which to many today appears to lie shattered under the debris of the economic crash of the past three years.

IN quite a different way from that understood by the "Sunshine" movements and Pollyannas of the past, the new and dangerous elements in the troubles of the world in this depression are psychological. It is, therefore, well worth while to consider what is to be the psychology of 1933. In forecasting the future we have to consider the past, even if our whole interest is in the future. In considering the psychology of 1933 we must take into consideration what it was before 1933.

Looking back over the past century and a half or more, the economist plots for us the graph of alternate prosperity and depression, the familiar phenomenon of business cycles. It seems to me that the historian can plot a somewhat similar curve for the mental atmosphere of the nation. Within each economic cycle of approximately twenty years we may discover at equally regular intervals, related to the business cycle, a period of about four or

five years in which the people have attained most nearly to balance of mind, a period in which the American dream has had the best chance for fulfillment.

When in America the extreme prosperity of each cycle (always feverishly hectic with us owing to our temperament and opportunities) has got well under way, we have lost our balance completely, as we did between 1926 and 1929. It was no new experience. Americans had done precisely the same thing in the great speculative periods of 1834-1836, of 1852-1857, in the overexpansion of 1871-1873, in 1890-1891, and notably in 1905-1907, the last period culminating in the so-called "rich man's panic."

The characteristic of all such periods is the loss of touch with the realities of the situation. Concrete examples from each period might be given, showing how even many of the most noted business leaders lost their hard-headed sense and were living in a dream-world of unlimited expansion and profits. In such periods, when the crash comes, always sudden in appearance, we lose our balance again violently in the other direction. Then, after

The New York Times

Published: January 1, 1933

Copyright © The New York Times

two or three years of trial in the fires of comparative poverty, we gain the best balance we possess in any of the years of the regular cycle. In my opinion 1932 may well have marked such a turning point, and if it did, considering our relation to the world today, the fact is of great significance.

IN an article in *The Outlook* in December, 1928, when I predicted that our whole economic system, falsely based, must crash within a few months, I added that such a "crash would not be a mere business affair" but "a colossal psychological disaster." It came, and the nation was as though shell-shocked. Its psychology became abnormal in another way. The dazed mentality of the people still held the ideas which had become firmly lodged in the immediately preceding period, such as our complete self-sufficiency, the discovery we thought we had made of perpetual prosperity, the solution of all problems by the mass production-high wage theory, and so on.

We could not let these things out of our minds, which were not functioning normally. We did not reason but merely felt the vague anger and sense of something wrong which comes to a thwarted child. We were in a daze, and leaders in high quarters had no better mental therapy to offer than Pollyanna suggestions such as might be made to a patient in a hypnotic state.

In these two periods of boom and depression, the American dream had been so changed as to have lost its saving power. The dream of a richer, better, fuller human life for all citizens instead of for a small class had been turned by our leaders and ourselves into a statistical table of standard of living, the items consisting notably and almost wholly of tangible and expensive possessions.

The Spring and early Summer of 1932 may be considered to have marked the crisis in our national mental disorder. Throughout the preceding years since the crash in 1929 we had not only persisted in the old hallucinations but at intervals, in the stock market and elsewhere, had acted upon them as though they were realities. Between April and July, 1932, there was a violent alteration in our psychology. As in a vast physical purge and flux, the hallucinations were swept out of the minds of many of us. This psychological change was reflected in the panic prices on the security markets. We suddenly let go of hallucinations, beliefs, stocks and bonds in one simultaneous flood. The remainder of 1932 may be regarded as a period of mental convalescence.

IN contrast with the past, what I may now look for in 1933? It seems to me that the outlook, psychologically, has many hopeful features and some dangers. If I am right in my suggestion of a psychological cycle operating within the economic one, then it would appear that as a nation we are entering upon that portion of the cycle following the abnormalities of boom and crash when our minds and outlook on life are at their best. Taking ourselves collectively, we are likely to be less ridden by hallucinations, to face realities more steadily, uninfluenced by mere wishes, to live more by reason and less by emotion, and to reappraise life once more in saner values.

There is the practical danger ahead. If the depression deepens, that owing to ignorance all sorts of quack remedies may be proposed for its cure. This has been characteristic of all periods of depression from biblical times down, and we cannot escape this particular symptom. Against this, however, looking ahead into 1933, I think we can set many encouraging ones; I think the psychological conditions will be better for recovery of prosperity and the American dream than for a long time past.

So long as we retained our old illusions and hallucinations we were incapable of reacting to reality; so long, for example, as we were firmly convinced that prosperity in

the United States was in no way dependent upon that in other nations we were incapable of making the apparent sacrifices for the prosperity of others which, in reality, was the only way of regaining our own. That delusion persisted, speaking generally, until the great purge at the beginning of last Summer. With our returning sanity we are beginning to face the reality of international dependence instead of being unable to turn away from the fixed idea of complete independence as a peculiar attribute of the United States of America.

We still have some way to go toward full and willing acceptance of

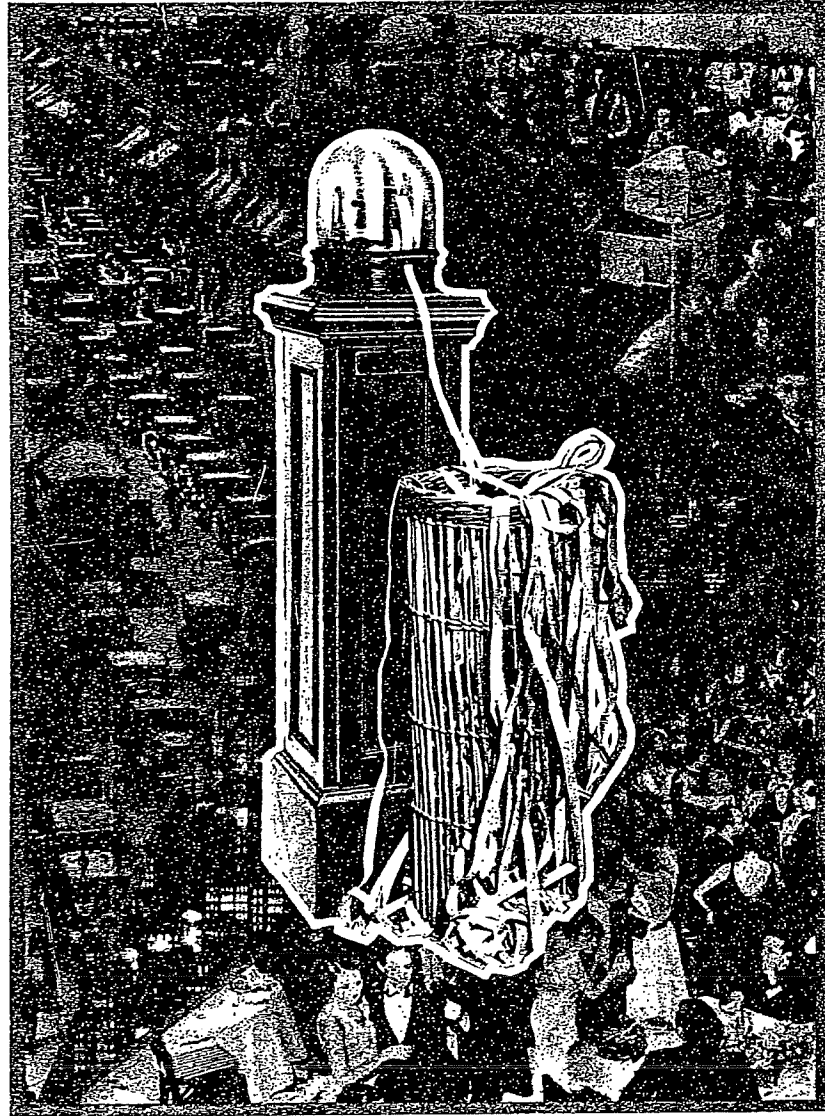
and cotton by buying and storing the surplus crops of American farmers.

Once freed from the intellectual tyranny of the unreal, we shall be able to face the real and find that prosperity cannot return without some rise in world prices; that they cannot rise without increasing international trade; that trade cannot be increased unless the flow of goods and the functioning of the exchanges are relieved of the fetters of prohibitive tariffs and un-economic debts. These are the realities of the situation, though men may differ as to how to achieve the desired results.

It was an indication of what I

other hand, a sense of reality in this respect is steadily seeping down through the mass of our people. Whether it will permeate the whole sufficiently for the nation to act in accordance with reality within the next four months or so is perhaps the most important psychological problem in the entire world for 1933. All that can be said is that, like the passing of the shadow in an eclipse, the light of reason appears to be steadily extending over the nation.

There are other indications that we have freed our minds from "wishful thinking" and are able to face the realities of the world again like normal adults instead of abnor-



Times Wide World, Neanith, Dr. Erich Salomon, Associated Press Photos.

"The Trouble Was Not That Americans Took Pleasure in Cars, Expensive Devices and a Miscellany of Gadgets, but That They Had Come to Believe in the Fallacy That a Full and Happy Life Could Be Built Out of These Things . . ."

the concept of dependence and toward devising the best methods of cooperation for the common aim. The chief point is that we have recovered enough to envisage the reality, or that at least a sufficient number of people have done so to make the psychological background for any international action better than at any time before last Summer.

This is a fact of prime importance, for so long as we were unable to look at the realities of the situation, which are international, and believed only in the unreality of our supposed independence, we spent our strength and wasted time and money in such fantastic methods of attempting to save ourselves from disaster as taxing ourselves to hold up the world prices for wheat

think was a turning point in the psychology of the American people last Spring and early Summer that in July Senator Borah changed his attitude, at least publicly, and came out for a revision of the war debts under certain conditions. It is unhappily true that vast numbers of our people have not yet reached that point and still believe that the European nations should be able to remain on the gold standard while we force them to pay their debts and expect them to buy our surplus of goods even though we do not allow them to sell their goods to us.

This is mere wishful thinking. We are annoyed that we cannot make reality conform to our wish, and many prefer to insist on their wishes and deny reality. On the

mal ones or children. One of these is the overwhelming defeat of prohibition. The hallucination that it worked or, if not, that it ought to be kept just the same, has gone the way of other unrealities, and we have brought ourselves to face a complicated situation realistically instead of insisting upon the reality of an unreal solution.

Yet another indication may be found in our attitude toward our unbalanced budget. Until very recently the fact that we were running behind by billions in our national management seemed to be taken very lightly by both people and politicians. Even Mr. Hoover, who, both as President and a renowned "efficiency expert," might have been expected to realize the dangers implicit in the situation.

talked only about balancing income and expenses by 1934.

The reality was that, with the nation resting to an unprecedented extent upon governmental credit, the whole structure would collapse if that credit were impaired, and that it could not fail to be impaired by several successive and colossal deficits. Unwilling to face this fact, we preferred to believe that wishes were horses and that events would painlessly balance our budget for us with no unpleasant reduction in expenses, or extension of taxation to new classes.

OTHER examples might be given of our return to realities after our long period of abnormality, precisely as might be expected in the portion of the psychological cycle we are now entering. I judge from many of the hundreds of letters which I receive from strangers in all parts of the country that this change is beginning to make itself felt in the private life and that it came in marked degree only in 1932.

Most people before that had had to economize and depart from much of their accustomed scale of living as developed in the post-war orgy of extravagance. But to a great extent, even when not done resolutely but cheerfully and bravely, it had been done as a supposed temporary necessity. The old hallucinations, such as that we had found the way to eternal prosperity and that a high standard of living in material things had become the birthright of Americans, persisted. Since prosperity was believed to be always just around the corner a couple of months ahead, any genuine reconsideration of real values in life did not seem necessary. Both people and leaders had come to believe that the American dream was materialized in a bath to every bedroom and a two-car garage for every three-room bungalow.

THE trouble was not that Americans took pleasure in cars, expensive devices, and a miscellany of gadgets, but that they had come to believe in the fallacy that a full and happy life could be built out of these things even if acquired at the expense of most of the other things which civilized men and women have learned are essential. It was part of the general flight from reality which characterized the American mind in the years preceding 1929, and which was carried over until the Spring of 1932. With the return to reality since then, there appears to be a genuine reevaluation of the goods of life. People are beginning to doubt the salesman who tells them their social position depends on the price of their car or to wonder what a social position so dependent is worth in terms of effort, as compared with other good things.

It is partly that after going without many things for three years or so people have found that they were not so essential after all, especially when friends and neighbors were without them also. It is partly that, having no money to spend, they have found again many simple forms of happiness which cost nothing. But it is even more, I think, a part of the general return to reality instead of hallucinations implanted by high-pressure salesmen and mass opinion. The material standard of life's values has been debunked by the reality of an empty pocketbook, and there is a chance that the real American dream can now again replace the nightmare of all post-war and boom periods.

Summing up, I would say that the change in the psychology of the American people from 1932 to 1933 is of happy augury to the world. We are still in many ways provincial, as some other important nations are. We are largely ignorant of world affairs, as we found when we undertook to be the international bankers for the world. We have got to learn and to feel our way. The main point, however, is that we seem to have turned the corner and to have slammed the

(Continued on Page 14)

AMERICA FACES THE NEW YEAR'S REALITIES

(Continued from Page 2)

door of Fool's Paradise behind us. We are now willing to face the facts and revalue the goods of our own private lives. We are willing to face reality in our national life and in our international position. That is the great and important difference between the promise of what our national psychology may be in 1933 from what it has been for some years past. It is impossible to say whether we as a people shall in the future pass through the various psychological phases noted in every generation. We do not know to what extent the business cycle depends upon psychology and how much psychology depends on the cycle. There is undoubtedly action and reaction between them. After a generation has burned its fingers in a crash it becomes cautious and looks at things realistically. Then, gradually, a new generation comes to the front in business which has had no experience of panic and is wishful and optimistic, which loses touch with reality and follows dreams.

It may be said that if we could stabilize business, so as to have merely a steady volume year after year, we could stabilize psychology also. We do not as yet.

A Reading of Signs That We Have Awakened

however, know how to do this, so the experiment cannot be tried. All the many "plans" proposed call, first, for a degree of despotic action on the part of some central body which it is by no means certain would be accepted by the people; and, secondly, for a group of men of superhuman wisdom in control. Moreover, without abandoning economics for mysticism, it may be suggested that all nature is rhythmical—birth, life, death; the pulse of the blood, the tides; the planets and even the comets in their orbits; day and night; the seasons — and that nothing we know progresses steadily in a straight line.

* * *

ALTHOUGH the economic cycle influences the psychological one, there is much in human life besides economics. In spite of a certain school of historians, and it might well be that there would still remain psychological cycles, like those in the climate, even though we made the business progression absolutely stable—a thing there is no sign of our doing as yet

If I am right in my suggestion as to there being psychological cycles coincident with, if not indeed partly the cause of, the economic ones, we should be at our best in the next few years for dealing with all the problems which confront us. If, as I believe many signs indicate, we have come back to the world of realities, then there is a fair prospect for international recovery. If we have not, then there is little chance of early improvement for either the world or ourselves. There is also little chance for the American dream which alone has set our own nation off from others in the modern civilized world.

That dream has always meant more than the mere accumulation of material goods. It has been warped almost to the breaking point by the materialism of the past dozen years. We can recover it only if we come back to the realities, not simply the realities of political and economic policy, but the realities of human life and values. Our future as an idealistic people depends on whether we cling to The Dream or the stock market, not idle or false dreams, but The Dream, which we have tried to make real, of a fuller and better and happier life for all.

The New York Times

Published: January 1, 1933

Copyright © The New York Times



From painting by Grant Wood.

"The American Dream is an expanding concept which demands a more prosperous life."

'The Most Powerful Idea in the World'

A MAJOR part of the industrial power of the United States is now concentrated on military preparation. Our Army, Navy and Air Force will soon total three and one-half million men. Our defense investment during the next two years will exceed the entire cost of our Federal Government during the first two terms of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

This military program has grown out of our conviction that the Western World is faced with the very real possibility of a Soviet attack. Today most Americans are agreed that a strong, well-rounded defense force is our best hope of discouraging such aggression.

An adequate defense force is vital to our security and to our future. But let us not mistake it for a foreign policy in itself. Unless our defense effort is made to take its proper place, as part of a broad program for building a stable and peaceful world, we may find ourselves in serious difficulties.

Military power is not enough because it deals with only part of our problem

CHESTER BOWLES, former Governor of Connecticut, was head of O.P.A. He is author of "Tomorrow Without Fear,"

Our deep faith in the dignity of man is more than a match for the ideology of communism.

By **CHESTER BOWLES**

—the danger of aggression by the Red Army and the Red Air Force. But we are also faced with an idea, the idea of world communism; and planes, battleships and tanks have never yet been able to destroy an idea, even a bad idea. The whole history of mankind demonstrates that an idea can be matched in only one way, and that is by a better idea.

AS we face the threat of attack by the Soviet Union we are thankful that we possess the industrial and economic resources with which to build military defenses sufficient to discourage aggression. As we face the threat of world communism we should also be thankful that inherent in our American democracy is an idea which potentially is the most powerful in the world.

This idea is founded on the belief that every single person is valuable in his own right and for himself. It stems

from a deep-seated faith in the dignity of man, a belief that if we permit each individual to exercise his own capacities to the fullest we will thereby enable him to make a worth-while contribution to his family and to his community.

The democratic ideal did not originate in America. Its roots go deep into the history of Western civilization. But in America it found favorable soil for growth and development. Since the Declaration of Independence our concern for the human individual has passed through several stages. At the time our Constitution was written the most important restraints on men were political. So our Constitution and its Bill of Rights were directed primarily toward eliminating those political restraints with which the founders had had direct first-hand experience. The right of free speech, the free choice and practice of religion, the right of public

assembly, the right to a fair trial, were spelled out in clear and specific terms.

The struggle to establish these political rights took place not only in America but throughout the entire Western World. In England, France, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Italy and South America people fought to increase their liberties and to restrain the power of autocratic government. In France, and later in South America, the struggle burst into violent revolution.

BUT here in America the democratic ideal has always been expressed in broader terms than the right to freedom from oppression. From our earliest days we have been convinced that individual man not only had a right to speak his mind and to worship God in his own way but also to prosper in line with his ability, to rise to whatever heights he was capable of, to develop his talents for farming, industry or trade, to own his own land, to enjoy the benefits earned during his lifetime and to pass those benefits on to his children. We have also believed that individual man had the right to live in a society free of class (Continued on Page 29)

'Most Powerful Idea in the World'

(Continued from Page 9)

lines and arbitrary restrictions; the right to secure a good education and to participate in the life and progress of his community regardless of his race, creed or color.

This expanding concept of human rights, so peculiar in its early stages to America, became accepted as the American Dream, and millions of men and women from the Old World, crossed the oceans to enjoy its benefits. For many years it was clear sailing. In the early nineteenth century this American Dream could be readily attained by anyone able and willing to work. Our economy was primarily agricultural. A homestead could be had for the asking. A man's economic status was determined by his skill with hoe and axe.

HOWEVER, as our complex industrial society gradually took shape we began to run into difficulties. When far-away markets dried up, manufacturers were forced to shut down and workers by the millions walked the streets in search of nonexistent jobs. Farmers could not sell their produce, and there was hunger in the midst of plenty. Through bitter experience we came to realize that economic and social forces, clearly beyond the control of any individual, could be as destructive to human freedom and dignity as any autocratic government.

The result, over a period of many years, was the establishment of workmen's compensation, social security, unemployment insurance, minimum wages, monopoly controls, slum clearance, legally protected collective bargaining, and similar concepts designed to give the individual citizen at least a minimum of protection against the impact of economic forces with which he was powerless to contend alone.

From the earliest days this American Dream of human rights, this belief in opportunity and freedom for each individual, has been the subject of bitter controversy. Every political leader who has fought to expand these rights, from Jefferson, through Jackson, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson, La Follette, Willkie and Franklin Roosevelt, has faced the most bitter opposition from those who have neither cared nor understood what America is all about.

TODAY our democracy is still a long way from perfection. But in spite of our demagogues and our bigots, in spite of our bitter extremists of the Right and the Left, the Dream has grown. It has grown until today its principles are accept-

ed and respected by more people in America than anywhere else on earth. But we must face the fact that the greatest test of all lies immediately ahead. For the first time in history we are physically threatened by a powerful military force, in close alliance with a ruthless, well-organized movement which reaches around the world. There is every reason for us to feel uncertain and insecure.

WE are wholly right in building our Army, Navy and Air Force strong enough to discourage Soviet attack, and to win any war that the Soviet Union may be tempted to start. We are right also in looking to our internal security, and for setting up safeguards against espionage and sabotage. But we will be catastrophically wrong if we assume that we can build a de-



cent world with atom bombs, or that we can secure the peace by trying to force the world into an American mold, or, worse still, that we can defeat the Communist idea by turning our backs on our own dynamic American Dream, and adopting, whole hog, the cynical methods of our Communist opponents.

A REARMED America without ideals or principles is simply a potentially destructive force, feared by its enemies and resented by those who would be its friends. A rearmed America confident of its strength, secure in its convictions, and dedicated to the democratic ideal of expanding human rights and opportunities for all people, can guide this harried world toward a new era of peace and plenty.

But it will take a lot of doing. When we look across the seas we face human problems which are almost overpowering. Two-thirds of all the people of the world will go to bed hungry tonight. More than half of the world cannot read or write. In some countries as

(Continued on Following Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)
 many as 75 per cent of the people are suffering from preventable diseases.

THESSE shocking figures are a measure of the huge task that mankind faces. They are also a measure of our own opportunity.

Do we honestly see these people as people? Do we see them as human beings like ourselves, white, brown, black and yellow, but impoverished through no fault of their own, frightened and often oppressed by feudal landlords and corrupt officials? If our belief in human rights is something more than a Fourth of July phrase or an election day promise, we have a clear responsibility to assist them to build a better and freer life.

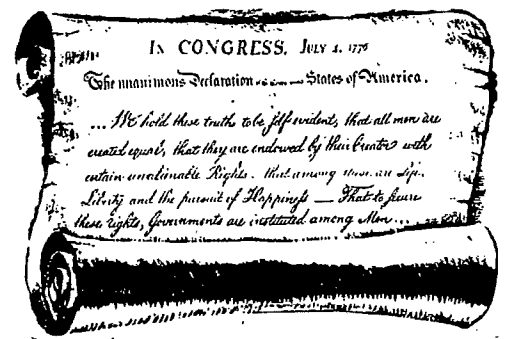
There are no glib or easy answers. The poverty of India, South America, Africa and the other underdeveloped areas has been accumulating for 1,000 years. Colonialism failed because it refused to accept the basic rights of those human individuals who were born brown, black or yellow. In the East the Gandhi and Sun Yat-sen revolutions were designed to restore those rights. In China the Sun Yat-sen revolution was captured by Moscow-trained Communists. But India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia and Burma are now free and independent nations with dynamic hopes and plans for creating a more prosperous and freer life for their people. The Near East is seething with new ideas and ambitions. Africa is gradually awakening to its unlimited future.

BUT the brave new hopes of the one billion people of these underdeveloped areas can never be achieved without help. Their ability to strengthen their economies, establish stable governments and offer expanding opportunities for the individual will largely depend on our willingness to provide bold and practical assistance.

If we really intend to help we must be prepared for some rocky experiences. We will often be dealing with new nations, born in revolution and inexperienced in self-government, which are faced with far greater obstacles than those which confronted the young American Republic at the end of our Revolutionary War. For instance, our early ideas of political freedom were clearly established. But for the vast majority in the impoverished East, the primary consideration from day to day is simple survival, and we will find that people who are constantly faced with the brutal facts of hunger and disease often view our concept of political democracy as a remote ideal.

Like America in 1783, most of the new Eastern countries have recently experienced the bitter oppression of colonial masters, and they are suspicious as we were then of for-

(Continued on Following Page)



(Continued from Preceding Page)

sign nations. This results in a widespread distrust and fear of Soviet imperialism and would-be Communist "liberators." But on occasion it also results in a certain skepticism of our own good intentions, which will often try our patience.

NO sensible man believes that our task will be easy. But the sooner we tackle it, the more hopeful our world will become.

Although the needs go far beyond any specific programs outlined thus far, they are well within our own resources. If we will provide an annual expenditure of only \$1 for every \$10 spent on military defense, and support that investment with broad technical assistance, we will enable the underdeveloped countries to move further ahead in the next generation than in the last 500 years.

The opposition, moreover, will be varied and powerful. The world Communist movement will bitterly contest a genuine, all-out attack on illiteracy, poverty and ill health. Communists everywhere will fight such a program because they understand its appeal to hundreds of millions of men and women who yearn for even a minimum of opportunity and human dignity.

A program of this kind can also expect strong opposition here in America. It will be opposed by those isolationists who propose that we place our sole faith in armaments. It will be opposed by the self-styled "realists" who point out that there are too many people in the world anyway, that most of them have always gone hungry, that mass poverty and ill health are not of our making, and that only crack pots are interested in such things. This kind of cynical, bankrupt thinking has already held up two million tons of grain for the famine-ridden sections of India.

BUT a positive economic program, based on simple democratic principles will receive powerful support from the millions who still believe that human beings, black, brown, yellow or white, are important in their own right, that the American Dream is not just a concept of fuzzy-

minded do-gooders, and that with military power must go moral responsibility. Instinctively they know that in our dealings with each other and with people across the sea there must be something more than bombs and tanks and planes, something dynamic, bold and worthy of our American democratic traditions.

The stakes are no less than the future of the democratic ideal in America and throughout the world. If this ideal is to grow and expand, we must face up honestly to the weaknesses in our own democracy. We must offer vigorous assistance to other less fortunate peoples in the development of their economies. We must reject the isolationist concept of military power as an end in itself.

IF we fail, the ultimate hopes of the free world die with us. In the grim cycle of Professor Toynbee, America will take its place among other once great nations which placed their sole faith in militarism and materialism, and so finally died of moral dry rot.

Stephen Vincent Benét expressed it eloquently in "Nightmare at Noon":

*There are certain words,
 Our own and others, we're
 used to—words we've used,
 Heard, had to recite, forgotten,
 * * **

*Liberty, equality, fraternity.
 * * **

*To none will we sell, refuse or
 deny, right or justice.
 We hold these truths to be
 self-evident,
 I am merely saying—what if
 these words pass?
 What if they pass and are
 gone and are no more,
 * * *?*

*They were bought with belief
 and passion, at great cost.
 They were bought with the
 bitter and anonymous
 blood
 Of farmers, teachers, shoe-
 makers and fools
 Who broke the old rule and
 the pride of kings. * * **

*It took a long time to buy
 these words.
 It took a long time to buy
 them and much pain.*

These words add up to the American Dream. An idea infinitely more powerful than the narrow doctrines of Soviet communism. We must not delay much longer in putting it to work.

What is the essence of our society, of our civilization? The question arises naturally as we think about Premier Khrushchev's scheduled visit here next month and the hopes that have been expressed that this visit might correct the Premier's obviously great misconceptions about our nation.

Those who express such hopes usually imply that they think the essence of America is its material wealth and the widespread distribution of that wealth among our people. Put most crudely, the argument seems to be that if only Khrushchev can see with his own eyes the throng of automobiles on every factory parking lot, the abundance of goods in our supermarkets and the like, he will immediately realize the error of his ways and radically alter the picture of our nation in his mind. Hopes based on this kind of reasoning are, we suspect, an illusion and an insult to Premier Khrushchev's intelligence. There is every reason to suppose that he knows even better than the average American the number of automobiles, television sets and perhaps even dishwashers produced here annually. If he prefers to talk about our unemployed and our slums, that is because he is first and foremost a skilled propagandist mindful of his propaganda obligations every time he opens his mouth.

But the essence of America is not its wealth. We were far poorer than we are today in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, yet increasing millions flocked here from foreign soil. There was not an automobile or a television set or a refrigerator in our entire land when Emma Lazarus, seventy-six years ago, captured some of the essence of our nation in her immortal lines for the Statue of Liberty: "Give me your tired, your poor, / Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, / The wretched refuse of your teeming shore."

America is a nation of men and women who yearn "to breathe free." If he could only understand this, Premier Khrushchev would know more about the essence of America than all the physical evidence of our wealth could ever tell him. From pioneer days the American dream has always been of a nation whose members decide their own fates and who are subject to no arbitrary power that stands higher than the law or public opinion. It is no accident that our Constitution provides for a government of checks and balances, that our corporations are hemmed in by anti-trust laws, and that a struggle now rages about what limitations should be placed on the leaders of our powerful labor unions.

Frankly, we don't expect Premier Khrushchev to grasp this essence of America while he is here. His mind is too cluttered up by the Marxist fairy tales about how the capitalist state is the dictatorship of the rich to understand the complex reality that will unfold before his eyes while he is here. But at least let's try our best to give him some inkling of what democracy at work is really like. After all, it's our freedom and democracy that make our way of life better than his, not our automobiles and our television sets.

The American Dream



Debater Baldwin at Cambridge: "Does one civilization have a right to subjugate—in fact, to destroy—another?"

In a setting modeled after England's House of Commons, the Cambridge Union Society of Cambridge University meets to debate great issues of the day. A "finishing school" for future British politicians, prelates and jurists (past presidents include the Lords Keynes, Butler, Caradon), the society has argued motions on subjects ranging from the Corn Laws to the Common Market, from the Irish Question to whether, on the eve of the U.S. Civil War, "this House sees no cause for regret in the probable separation of the United States" (the motion carried).

On the anniversary of its founding 150 years ago last month, the society invited two U.S. visitors to join two undergraduates in debating the motion: "The American Dream is at the expense of the American Negro." Speaking for the proposition was novelist and essayist James Baldwin; opposing it was William F. Buckley Jr., editor of *The National Review*. More than 700 students crowded the high-ceilinged debating chamber and 500 others packed the bar, the library and other rooms to watch over closed-circuit TV. A transcript, slightly condensed, of the Baldwin-Buckley arguments follows.

James Baldwin:

I FIND myself, not for the first time, in the position of a kind of Jeremiah. It would seem to me that the question before the house is a proposition horribly loaded, that one's response to that question depends on where you find yourself in the world, what your sense of reality is. That is, it depends on assumptions

we hold so deeply as to be scarcely aware of them.

The white South African or Mississippi sharecropper or Alabama sheriff has at bottom a system of reality which compels them really to believe when they face the Negro that this woman, this man, this child must be insane to attack the system to which he owes his entire identity. For such a person, the proposition which we

are trying to discuss here does not exist.

On the other hand, I have to speak as one of the people who have been most attacked by the Western system of reality. It comes from Europe. That is how it got to America. It raises the question of whether or not civilizations can be considered equal, or whether one civilization has a right to subjugate—in fact, to destroy—another.

Now, leaving aside all the physical factors one can quote—leaving aside the rape or murder, leaving aside the bloody catalogue of oppression which we are too familiar with anyway—what the system does to the subjugated is to destroy his sense of reality. It destroys his father's authority over him. His father can no longer tell him anything because his past has disappeared.

In the case of the American Negro, from the moment you are born every stick and stone, every face, is white. Since you have not yet seen a mirror, you suppose you are, too. It comes as a great shock around the age of 5, 6 or 7 to discover that the flag to which

you have pledged allegiance, along with everybody else, has not pledged allegiance to you. It comes as a great shock to see Gary Cooper killing off the Indians and, although you are rooting for Gary Cooper, that the Indians are you.

It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and identity has not, in its whole system of reality, evolved any place for you. The disaffection and the gap between people, only on the basis of their skins, begins there and accelerates throughout your whole lifetime. You realize that you are 30 and you are having a terrible time. You have been through a certain kind of mill and the most serious effect is again not the catalogue of disaster—the policeman, the taxi driver, the waiters, the landlady, the banks, the insurance companies, the millions of details 24 hours of every day which spell out to you that you are a worthless human being. It is not that. By that time you have begun to see it happening in your daughter, your son or your niece or your nephew. You are 30 by

and the American Negro



Debater Buckley: "In no other civilization is the minority a subject of as much dramatic concern as in the U.S."

now and nothing you have done has helped you to escape the trap. But what is worse is that nothing you have done, and as far as you can tell nothing you *can* do, will save your son or your daughter from having the same disaster and from coming to the same end.

WE speak about expense. There are several ways of addressing oneself to some attempt to find out what that word means here. From a very literal point of view, the harbors and the ports and the railroads of the country—the economy, especially in the South—could not conceivably be what they are if it had not been (and this is still so) for cheap labor. I am speaking very seriously, and this is not an overstatement: I picked cotton, I carried it to the market, I built the railroads under someone else's whip for nothing. For nothing.

The Southern oligarchy which has still today so very much power in Washington, and therefore some power in the world, was created by my labor and my sweat and the violation of my women and the murder of my children. This in the land of the free,

the home of the brave. None can challenge that statement. It is a matter of historical record.

In the Deep South you are dealing with a sheriff or a landlord or a landlady or the girl at the Western Union desk. She doesn't know quite whom she is dealing with—by which I mean, if you are not part of a town and if you are a Northern nigger, it shows in millions of ways. She simply knows that it is an unknown quantity and she wants to have nothing to do with it. You have to wait a while to get your telegram. We have all been through it. By the time you get to be a man it is fairly easy to deal with.

But what happens to the poor white man's, the poor white woman's, mind? It is this: they have been raised to believe, and by now they helplessly believe, that no matter how terrible some of their lives may be and no matter what disaster overtakes them, there is one consolation like a heavenly revelation—at least they are not black. I suggest that of all the terrible things that could happen to a human being that is one of the worst. I suggest that what

has happened to the white Southerner is in some ways much worse than what has happened to the Negroes there.

Sheriff Clark in Selma, Ala., cannot be dismissed as a total monster; I am sure he loves his wife and children and likes to get drunk. One has to assume that he is a man like me. But he does not know what drives him to use the club, to menace with the gun and to use the cattle prod. Something awful must have happened to a human being to be able to put a cattle prod against a woman's breasts. What happens to the woman is ghastly. What happens to the man who does it is in some ways much, much worse. Their moral lives have been destroyed by the plague called color.

This is not being done 100 years ago, but in 1965 and in a country which is pleased with what we call prosperity, with a certain amount of social coherence, which calls itself a civilized nation and which espouses the notion of freedom in the world. If it were white people being murdered, the Government would find some way of doing something about it. We have a civil rights bill now.

We had the 15th Amendment nearly 100 years ago. If it was not honored then, I have no reason to believe that the civil rights bill will be honored now.

The American soil is full of the corpses of my ancestors, through 400 years and at least three wars. Why don't know about me. They were not trying to be nasty to the French girl, rude to the French waiter. They did not know that they hurt their feelings; they didn't have any sense that this particular man and woman were human beings. They walked over them with the same sort of bland ignorance and condescension, the charm and cheerfulness, with which they had patted me on the head and which made them upset when I was upset.

IT seems to me when I watch Americans in Europe that what they don't know about Europeans is what they don't know about me. They were not trying to be nasty to the French girl, rude to the French waiter. They did not know that they hurt their feelings; they didn't have any sense that this particular man and woman were human beings. They walked over them with the same sort of bland ignorance and condescension, the charm and cheerfulness, with which they had patted me on the head and which made them upset when I was upset.

When I was brought up I was taught in (Continued on Page 87)

The American Dream

(Continued from Page 33)

American history books that Africa had no history and that neither had I. I was a savage about whom the least said the better, who had been saved by Europe and who had been brought to America. Of course, I believed it. I didn't have much choice. These were the only books there were. Everyone else seemed to agree. If you went out of Harlem the whole world agreed. What you saw was much bigger, whiter, cleaner, safer. The garbage was collected, the children were happy. You would go back home and it would seem, of course, that this was an act of God. You belonged where white people put you.

It is only since World War II that there has been a counter-image in the world. That image has not come about because of any legislation by any American Government, but because Africa was suddenly on the stage of the world and Africans

had to be dealt with in a way they had never been dealt with before. This gave the American Negro, for the first time, a sense of himself not as a savage. It has created and will create a great many conundrums.

ONE of the things the white world does not know, but I think I know, is that black people are just like everybody else. We are also mercenaries, dictators, murderers, liars. We are human, too. Unless we can establish some kind of dialogue between those people who enjoy the American dream and those other people who have not achieved it, we will be in terrible trouble. This is what concerns me most. We are sitting in this room and we are all civilized; we can talk to each other, at least on certain levels, so that we can walk out of here assuming that the measure of our politeness has some effect on the world.



Sheriff Jim Clark grabs a civil-rights demonstrator in Selma, Ala. Baldwin says: "What happens is ghastly. What happens to the man who does it is much, much worse."

I remember when the ex-Attorney General, Mr. Robert Kennedy, said it was conceivable that in 40 years in Amer-

ica we might have a Negro President. That sounded like a very emancipated statement to white people. They were not

in Harlem when this statement was first heard. They did not hear the laughter and bitterness and scorn with which this statement was greeted. From the point of view of the man in the Harlem barber shop, Bobby Kennedy only got here yesterday and now he is already on his way to the Presidency. We were here for 400 years and now he tells us that maybe in 40 years, if you are good, we may let you become President.

Perhaps I can be reasoned with, but I don't know—neither does Martin Luther King—none of us knows how to deal with people whom the white world has so long ignored, who don't believe anything the white world says and don't entirely believe anything I or Martin say. You can't blame them.

It seems to me that the City of New York has had, for example, Negroes in it for a very long time. The City of New York was able in the last 15 years to reconstruct itself, to tear down buildings and raise great new ones and has done

(Continued on Following Page)

The New York Times

Published: March 7, 1965

Copyright © The New York Times

(Continued from Preceding Page), nothing whatever except build housing projects, mainly in the ghettos, for the Negroes. And of course the Negroes hate it. The children can't bear it. They want to move out of the ghettos. If American pretensions were based on more honest assessments of life, it would not mean for Negroes that when someone says "urban renewal" some Negroes are going to be thrown out into the streets, which is what it means now.

It is a terrible thing for an entire people to surrender to the notion that one-ninth of its population is beneath them. Until the moment comes when we, the Americans, are able to accept the fact that my ancestors are both black and white, that on that continent we are trying to forge a new identity, that we need each other, that I am not a ward of America, I am not an object of missionary charity, I am one of the people who built the country—until this moment comes there is scarcely any hope for the American dream. If the people are denied participation in it, by their very presence they will wreck it. And if that happens it is a very grave moment for the West.

William Buckley:

IT seems to me that of all the indictments Mr. Baldwin has made of America here tonight, and in his copious literature of protest, the one that is most striking involves, in effect, the refusal of the American community to treat him other than as a Negro. The American community has refused to do this. The American community, almost everywhere he goes, treats him with the kind of unctious, with the kind of satisfaction that a posturing hero gets for his flagellations of our civilization, so that he quite properly commands the contempt he so eloquently showers upon us.

It is quite impossible in my judgment to deal with the indictments of Mr. Baldwin unless one is prepared to deal

with him as a white man, unless one is prepared to say to him that the fact that your skin is black is utterly irrelevant to the arguments you raise. The fact that you sit here, carrying the entire weight of the Negro ordeal on your own shoulders, is irrelevant to the argument we are here to discuss.

I am treating you as a fellow American, as a man whose indictments of our civilization are unjustified, as an American who—if his counsels were listened to—would be cursed by all his grandchildren's grandchildren.

About 125 years ago this house was bitterly divided over the question of whether or not some people in England who practiced the faith of Erasmus, your most distinguished lecturer, should be allowed to vote. By a slim margin it was decided that they ought to be allowed to do so. We know that there was more blood shed trying to emancipate the Irish here in the British Isles than has been shed by 10 times the number of people who have been lynched as a result of the delirium of race consciousness, race supremacy, in the United States. Shall we devote the night to these luridities? Shall we devote the evening to examining the sociological facts of human nature? Shall we discuss these class antagonisms in terms of race, in terms of economic standing? Shall we discuss the existential dilemma of humankind?

It is a fact that the position in America is as it is, that the situation in Africa is as it is. The question before the house is not whether we should have purchased slaves generations ago, or ought the blacks to have sold us those slaves. The question, rather, is this: Is there anything in the American dream which intrinsically argues against some kind of deliverance from the system that we all recognize as evil? What shall we do about it? What shall we in America do to eliminate these psychic humiliations which I join Mr. Baldwin in believing are the



Whites take part with Negroes in the 1963 March on Washington. "The fundamental trend in the U.S. is to decency," says Buckley.

very worst aspects of this discrimination?

It is the case that sevenths of the average white's income in the United States is equal to the entire income of the average Negro. But my great-grandparents worked hard. I do not know of anything which has ever been created without the expense of something. We have a dastardly situation. But I am going to ask you not to make politics as the crow flies.

What is it that we Americans ought to do? I wonder. What is it we should do, for instance, to avoid the humiliations mentioned by Mr. Baldwin as having been part of his own experiences? At the age of 12 he trespassed outside the ghetto of Harlem and was taken by the scruff of his neck by a policeman on 42d Street and Madison Avenue and told, "Here, you nigger, go back to where you belong." Fifteen to 20 years later he asks for a Scotch whisky in Chicago and is told by the white barman that he is obviously under age and under the circumstances cannot be served. I know from your faces that you share with me a feeling of compassion and a feeling of outrage that this kind of thing should have happened. How are we going to avoid the kind of humiliations which are visited perpetually upon members of the minority race?

OBVIOUSLY, the first element is concern. We have got to care that it happens. We have got to do what we can to change the warp and woof of moral feelings and society to make it happen less and less.

The proposition before us tonight as elaborated by Mr. Baldwin is that we ought precisely to recognize that the American civilization, and indeed the Western civilization,

has failed him and his people, that we ought to throw it over. He tells us that our civilization rests on the rantings of the Hebrew, sunbaked fanatic called Jesus—not, says he, truly the founder of the Christian religion. The founder of the Christian religion was actually Paul, whom he describes as a merciless fanatic. And as a result of these teachings of Jesus and Paul, we have Dachau.

If we assume that Dachau was the natural consequence of the teachings of St. Paul and Jesus, what shall we do with the library around here? Shall we descend on it and uproot all the literature that depends in any way on the teachings of Plato and Aristotle because they justified slavery? The primary question before the house is whether or not our civilization has shown itself so flawed as the result of the failure of its response to the Negro problem of the United States that it ought to be jettisoned.

Now I suggest that anyone who argued that English civilization ought to have been jettisoned because Catholics were not allowed to vote in England as late as 1829 and Jews not until 1832 should consider the other possibility. Precisely the reason they did get the vote was because English civilization was not jettisoned. The whole point of our philosophical concern ought never to make that terrible fault made so frequently by the positivists, that we should rush forward and overthrow our civilization because we don't live up to our high ideals.

IT may be that there has been some sort of sunburst of moral enlightenment that has hit this community so as to make it predictable that if you were the governors of the United States the situation

would change overnight. The engines of concern in the United States are working. The presence of Mr. Baldwin here is, in part, a reflection of that concern.

You cannot go to any university in the United States in which practically every other problem of public policy is not pre-empted by the primary concern for the Negro. I challenge you to name me another civilization in the history of the world in which the problems of the minority, which have been showing considerable material and political advancement, are as much a subject of dramatic concern as in the United States.

Americans are not willing, as a result of Mr. Baldwin's aspirations, to say that the whole American proposition was an unfortunate experiment. They are not willing to say that because we have not accelerated Negro progress faster, we are going to desert the constitutional system, the idea of the rule of law, the idea of individual rights of the American citizen, that we are going to burn all the Bibles, burn our books, that we want to reject our entire Judaeo-Christian civilization because of the continued persistence of the kind of evil that has been so eloquently described by Mr. Baldwin.

There is no instant cure for the race problem in America. Anyone who tells you that there is a quick solution is a charlatan and ultimately a boring man—a boring man because he is then speaking in the kind of abstractions which do not relate to human experience. The Negro problem is a very complicated one. I urge those of you who have an actual interest in the problem to read "Beyond the Melting Pot," by Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan. They say that in 1900 there were 3,500 Negro doctors in America. In 1960 there were 3,900, an increase of 400. Is this because there were no opportunities? No, they say. There are a great many medical schools which by no means practice discrimination. It is because the Negro's particular energy is not directed toward that goal.

What should James Baldwin be doing other than telling us to renounce our civilization? He should be addressing his own people and urging them to take advantage of those opportunities which do exist. And urging us to make those opportunities wider.

Where Negroes are concerned, the danger, as far as I can see at this moment, is that they will seek to reach out for some sort of radical solutions, on the basis of which the true problem is obscured. They have done a great deal to focus on the facts of white discrimination against Negroes. They have done a great deal to agitate a moral concern. But

where in fact do they go now? They seem to be slipping into some sort of Procrustean formulation which ends up by urging the advancement of the Negro less than the regression of white people.

[Interjection from an American undergraduate: "Mr. Buckley, one thing you can do is to let them vote in Mississippi."]

[Buckley: "I agree. Except, lest I appear too ingratiating, I think actually what is wrong in Mississippi is not that not enough Negroes have the vote but that too many white people are voting."]

WHAT we need is a considerable amount of frankness that acknowledges there are two sets of difficulties. We must recognize the difficulty that brown people, white people, black people have all over the world to protect their own vested interests. They suffer from a kind of racial narcissism which tends always to convert every contingency in such a way as to maximize their own power. We must acknowledge that problem, but we must also reach through to the Negro people and tell them that their best chances are in a mobile society and the most mobile society in the world today is in the United States.

It is precisely that mobility which can give opportunities to the Negroes, which they must be encouraged to take. But they must not be encouraged to adopt the kind of cynicism, the kind of despair, the kind of iconoclasm that is urged by Mr. Baldwin.

For one thing I believe—that the fundamental trend in the United States is to the good nature, the generosity and good wishes, the decency that do lie in the spirit of the American people. These qualities must not be laughed at, and under no circumstances must America be told that the only alternative is the overthrow of that civilization which we consider to be the faith of our fathers, the faith of your fathers.

If it finally does come to a confrontation between giving up the best features of the American way of life and fighting for them, then we will fight the issue. We will fight the issue not only in the Cambridge Union, but we will fight as you were once asked to fight—on the beaches, in the hills, in the mountains. And just as you waged war to save civilization, you also waged war for the benefit of the Germans, your enemies. We, too, are convinced that if it should ever come to that kind of confrontation, then our determination will be to wage war not only for the whites, but also for the Negroes.

[The motion supported by Mr. Baldwin was carried overwhelmingly. The vote: 544 for the motion, 164 against.]



Steve Schapiro
COUNTER-CEREMONY: Yippies and other self-styled young "revolutionaries" marched in Washington last week in a "counter-inaugural parade" to dramatize their opposition to the American political system as symbolized by the inauguration of President Nixon. Despite some violence, the protest fizzled and left many questions about the future of The Movement.

They Didn't Advance Their Cause at the Inaugural

WASHINGTON — America's young militants have made more of a mark than most of their elders are aware of, or anyway are willing to admit. For different reasons, at least four Americans over 30—Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert H. Humphrey, Senator Eugene J. McCarthy and Mayor Richard J. Daley of Chicago—can testify to that.

Last week the young militants had their initial brush with Richard M. Nixon—and left the new President unscathed.

Behind the esoteric dialectic there are worthy, even noble, yearnings in the idealism and the disgust of the militant generation with much of American society, particularly the middle class suburban society from which much of the generation springs. At the counter-inaugural peace demonstration mounted here last week by the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam—"the Mobe" of Pentagon and Chicago fame—there were some evidences of

what is eating "those kids."

But without the presence of a single identifiable hero of dissent who retains credibility in "straight" society—a Dr. Benjamin Spock, for example, or the list of celebrities from the rock, folk, literary and black militant scenes whose names were on the mimeographed counter-inaugural program but who simply didn't appear—the underground's pearls were cast literally, before the swine. The contemptuous "innoigration" of a pig as youth's Counter-President became the main event and left a city-full of Republicans neither moved nor amused.

Feelings Dissipated

One of the chants in the youthful counter-inaugural parade was "work, study, get ahead—kill." If that is what young people—feel just some young people—feel about the American dream and the world the adults made for them, the country should know it. Unfortunately,

the shower of deep feelings of dissent were dissipated last week in more bizarre behavior against the Republicans as they assumed power.

At the inauguration of President Nixon—a target the Movement largely ignored during the 1968 campaign because, as one demonstrator put it here last week, "we don't relate to the Republicans"—"those kids" certainly did nothing to advance whatever potential they may have for influencing the Republicans during the next four years.

The Movement's hard core pointed commands of the young left, armed with firecrackers, smoke bombs, sticks, stones, beer cans, bottles, and a catalogue of obscenities—chose to confront the new President and his Cabinet by pelting their limousines during Monday's official inaugural parade with missiles and four-letter epithets.

It was a tactical blunder that

even the Mobe's radical leadership disavowed. Not content with that, the Yippies careened around downtown Washington after the parade, smashing a church window and the plate glass of banks, the National Geographic Society, and the National Association of Home Builders.

Police Kept Cool

But in Washington — unlike Mayor Daley's Chicago — the police kept their cool. And more than one observer of both skirmishes began to have second, kinder thoughts about the police after witnessing the provocative tactics employed by the children here.

The spit of a sweet-faced girl ran down a policeman's jacket. Endless insults and burning American flags — tiny banners distributed by Boy Scouts at a counter-counter-inaugural demonstration—were thrown at the police along the parade route. A few of the police retaliated

with clubs and fists. But there was no general skull cracking, and only 85 demonstrators were arrested. Their average age was 20. The hometowns on the police blotter were middle class and suburban — Charlottesville, Va.; Darlington, S.C.; Bethesda and Chevy Chase, Md.; Madison, Wis.; Bayshore, N.Y.

In the name of the Revolution, the "crazies," and the Mobe's unwillingness or inability to control them, had marred the dignity of Presidential tradition by creating a situation for the first time in the 180 years of the American Presidency, in which the new Chief Executive required the protection of combat-equipped troops at his inauguration. Troops were deployed on the double along Pennsylvania Avenue just before Monday's parade. But the question that will pursue the militants is what else they achieved.

—BENJ. A. FRANKLIN

Pre-Election Mood: 'There's No Time for Dreams'

By JAMES T. WOOTEN

Special to The New York Times

DETROIT — There was a time in his life when Dewey, David Burton chased the American dream.

"I wanted to be somebody," he remembers. "It wasn't the money so much as that I just wanted to have some kind of recognition; you know, to be more tomorrow than I was yesterday, and that's what I was working for."

Today, however, the 28-year-old auto worker has all but given up on his dreams

Mood of the Voters

and given himself over almost entirely to matters of day-to-day economic survival.

"It's the money thing," he said one evening this week in his home on the fringes of this city. "It takes so much to just make it that there's no time for dreams and no energy for making them come true—and I'm not sure any more that it's ever going to get any better."

It is with this rather essential pessimism that Mr. Burton, a Democrat, approaches the elections here next month, and it is a view echoed by a majority of Americans surveyed in a Gallup poll whose results were released today.

Dejected Conclusion

Whatever prognoses the various candidates may be offering in their campaigns here and elsewhere in the country, Mr. Burton and most of those consulted in the poll have already come to a decidedly dejected conclusion about America's economic future.

Like Mr. Burton, 7 out of 10 held little hope for any immediate improvements, and like him, more than half said that a severe depression seems altogether imminent.

That such a gloomy consensus should emerge from a national fabric shredded by inflation and unemployment is not surprising; but that Mr. Burton, a man of generally optimistic, almost joyful instincts, should concur seems especially significant.

If the press of the American economy has not raised his cost of living but lowered his long-term aspirations as well, it may be that politicians in and out of office are ignoring one of inflation's most debilitating and dangerous effects: the wounding of the human spirit.

"I think that's true," he agreed. "Something's happening to people like me—working stiffs, as they say—and it isn't just that we have to pay more for this or that or that we're having to do without this or make do with a little less of that."

Hopes Left Behind

"It's deeper, and harder to explain, but it's like more and more of us are sort of leaving all our hopes outside in the rain and coming into the house and just locking the door—you know, just turning the key and 'click,' that's it for what we always thought we could be."

This "despondency," as he described it later in the evening, translates politically into a kind of hopelessness about the processes and the system.

"Not that I've given up on it," Mr. Burton said, "it's just that I've come to understand it more, and I understand that not much is going to improve for me as a result of it."

Still, it has been the Republicans presiding over the



The New York Times/Andrew Sacks

Dewey David Burton, an auto worker, during interview

death of his dreams, and he seems inclined to vote Democratic this year—though not with any great enthusiasm.

Born in 1948 in Southern Illinois, Mr. Burton came here after graduating from high school seeking a place in Detroit's massive automobile industry.

He got a job with the Ford Motor Company, married and settled down. His son, David John, was born in 1967, the year after the Burtons bought a house and the year before Mr. Burton began to chip away at nights on the college degree that was to become an overriding passion in his life.

"He drove himself," his wife, Ilona, said. "He'd work all day and study all night and then take his books with him to work and read on his breaks."

In the spring of 1972, Mr. and Mrs. Burton were the subjects of two articles in The New York Times in which they were portrayed as people driven by the pressures of that electoral year to vote for George C. Wallace in the Michigan Presidential primary.

In the general election, however, they succumbed to their Democratic heritage and chose George McGovern over Richard M. Nixon as

"the lesser, but not much, of the evils."

By then, his wife had gone to work to improve and, eventually, to simply maintain their standard of living. She developed an ulcer, although she was only 24 years old, and he was plagued by arthritic gout, a condition aggravated by his long hours of standing on the assembly line as a spray-painter.

"But it was beginning to happen to me back then," Mr. Burton remembered. "It was a gradual thing, no big explosion. I realized I was killing myself and that there wasn't going to be any reward for my suicide."

He had been passed over for promotions at the plant, a small business he had formed on the side was losing money, and so, one day in 1973, he closed it and quit school.

"I realized that with prices going up the way they were, I was just getting farther behind all the time," he said. "The overtime, Ilona's earnings, all of it was being eaten away by taxes and inflation—and the days were flying by."

"I wouldn't see my boy for days and then I'd be so dead on the day off—when I got one—that it wouldn't be any fun for him anyway, so I decided one day to stop dreaming and just concentrate on today."

"I work just as hard now, but I'm relaxed. No more pushing, sweating and worrying. All I care about now is my family and my hobbies. I do my job only because it pays me enough money so that I can have a house and food."

"I guess you could say that's what inflation and all the rest has done to me."

He was staring at nothing by then, and he punctuated his monologue with a short sigh and a long drag on his unfiltered cigarette. Finally he spoke again.

"You can't blame it all on the politicians," he said, "but I wish just for once that one of them would say, 'now folks, I swear to God, if you'll elect me I won't do a damn thing.' That's the fellow I'd vote for. Somebody who'd just let us alone."

THE LOOMING 80'S

The "no-fault" attitudes of the past decades, says the author, must yield to a new era in which Americans will rediscover "personal guilt" — the acceptance of individual responsibility, shaping and forcing meaning on our actions and recognizing our great dependence upon one another.

By Eugene Kennedy

The future, for Americans, is the perennial frontier, the renewable magic mountains that rise every morning with the same promise that the Rockies held for the pioneers. And more than that, the future is also religion and commerce, and a disiac. and a Ben-

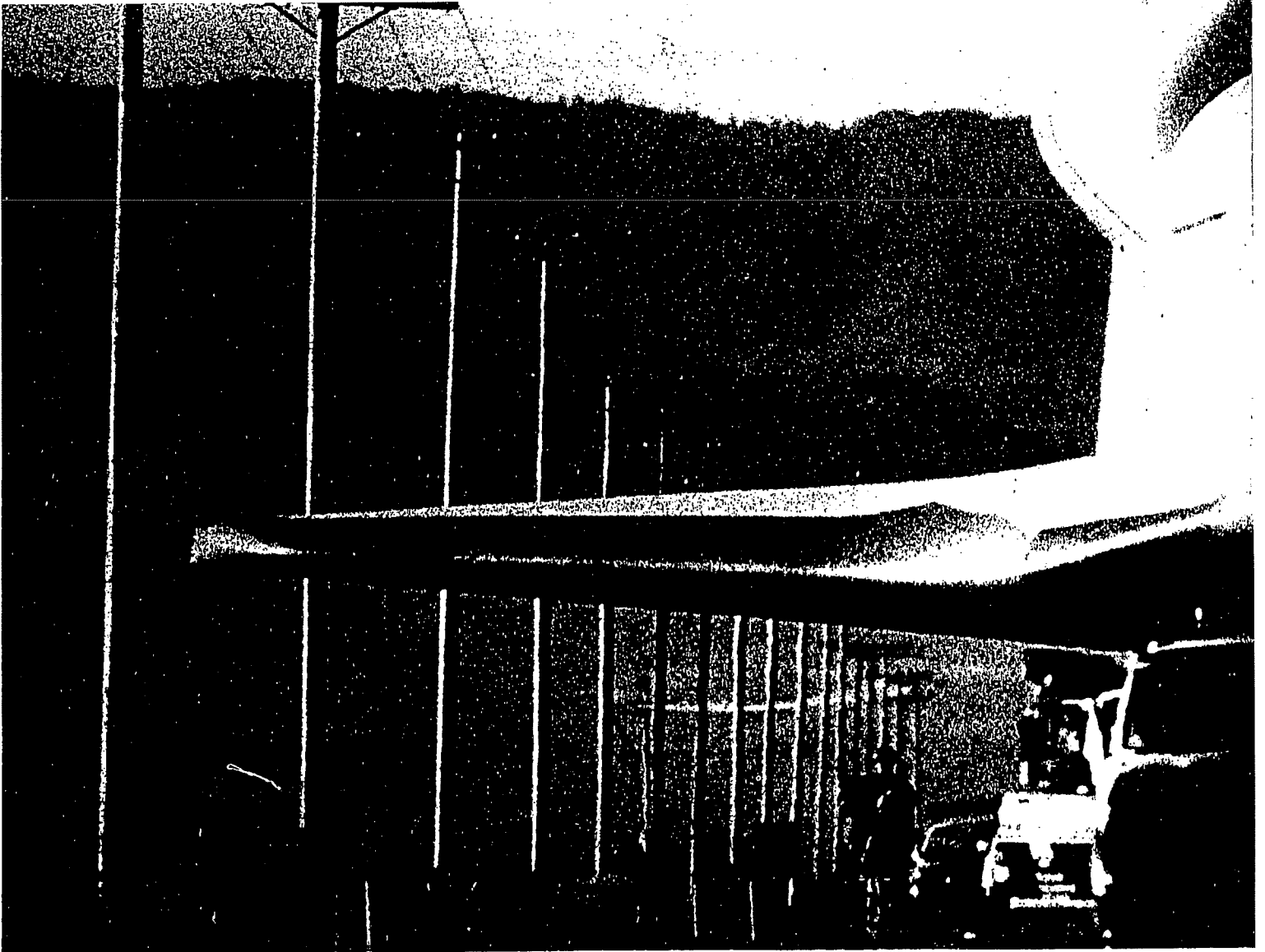
drine, a mother of mysterious comfort and a mistress of familiar ravishments ever on the verge of embracing or destroying us. We not only romanticize the future, we have also made it into a growth industry, a parlor game and a disaster movie all at the same time. We believe in it with the faith we once had in progress, the kind of faith we invest in weathermen, as much for what is

promised as for what is finally delivered. And as the 80's make ready to hit the straightaway after their long drop from the darkened hills, we squint expectantly forward, wondering what surprises, grim or joyful, those years will carry for each of us. Staring into the night, we feel that a tortured prologue is coming to an end. We rush to the edge of the platform, relieved as

never before, glad to be rid of the over-staying guests of the 70's, and eager to embrace the arriving 80's. For, if the future is something out there, risen like the firmament off some mysterious and terrible void of history, we would like it to arrive in something as comfortably old-fashioned as a brightly lighted train pulled by a steam locomotive. Why else would men in Los Angeles and New York be wearing boots and cowboy hats, not to mention handlebar mustaches, to work these days?

The 80's aren't out there. They lie within us and our present experience, and they will issue from us instead of happening to us. Nor is there a starting line, such as that of the Oklahoma land rush, across which the restless visitors of the next decade, some thieves and some wise men, will suddenly charge toward us. They are already among us, and they share a family resemblance, for they are all related to the nature

Eugene Kennedy is a writer and a professor of psychology at Loyola University of Chicago.



and place of authority in our personal and national life. Individualism shoulders against the common good, and guilt raises its hand once more while the law and a sense of responsibility for ourselves clamor for attention. And there is leadership itself, trailing the faded aura of charisma and wondering what we will make of it in the 80's. We must shake ourselves loose from the visions and images of the pop sociologists' future if we are to recognize it as already present in the midst of ordinary experience.

Perhaps the most striking symbol of the way the future is generated by and lives intimately with us was the first homely journey of the space shuttle, that stunted airplanelike ship destined to bear varied cargoes into orbit and to return to earth. It had to be transported

from the Rockwell International Corporation factory across Southern California on a flatbed truck to the Air Force base of its first test flight. There it was looming above the gas station and hamburger signs, moving as solemnly as a riderless horse of mourning down the Main Street that leads straight across America, the future being hauled through numb towns in which business went on as usual and some people were too busy to look.

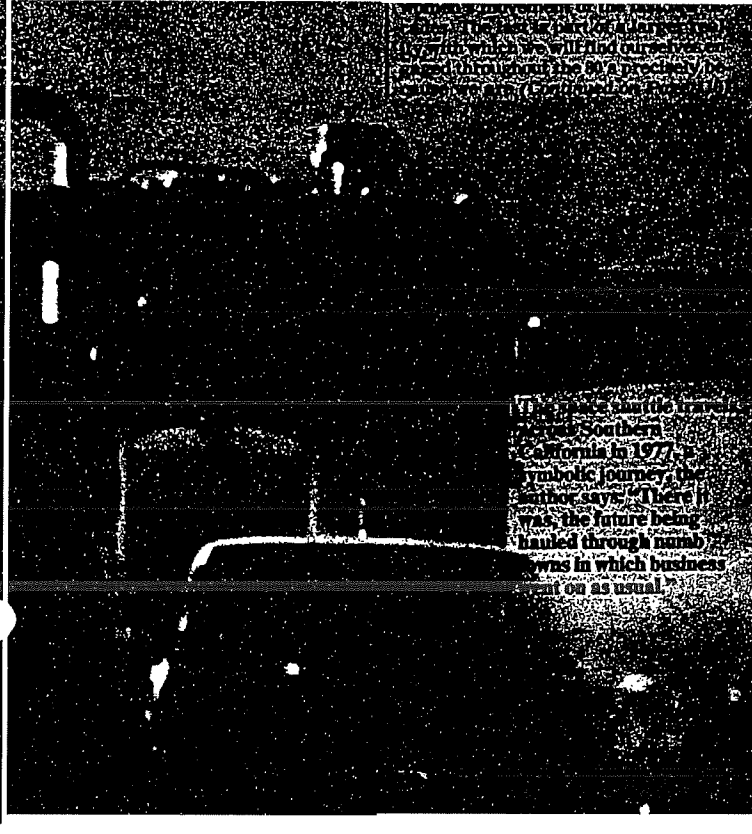
Indeed, most individuals do not recognize how much they already understand about the future. People need fewer mathematical graphs and curves and more assistance in interpreting the things they have already seen and heard which announce the future as already present. For example, one could not walk through the Smithsonian Insti-

tution in 1876 without recognizing the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition without noticing how much of the 20th century had already been on display a generation before it actually began. The first mature harvest of the Industrial Revolution was openly exhibited. The inventions and machines that would shape life for decades to come with prophecies of mass production for industry, the increased speed of communication by telegraph and telephone for everyone, entertainment in the home, the turbines and engines for expanded transportation, and the brutally enlarged firepower of the cannon that would become the guns of a still distant August. It was a celebration of the arrival of modern times, the effects of which we are still working out. Indeed, the much heralded shifts of the electronic revolution that is already upon us began in the wonders on display in Philadelphia in 1876.

The future looks strange but it is always there, embedded in the present and available for inspection by those who have eyes to see. Selective perception sometimes allows us to screen out the discordant signals about changes that have already taken place as the products of, rather than as alien gifts to, civilization. Some suggest that we tend to interpret the present in terms of the past, that we take the contemporary painting and place it in an ornate frame out of sifted historical remembrance. As has often been observed, the first names for things that are truly new are frequently negative renderings of the familiar. So, for example, the steam locomotive was more really recognized as the "iron horse," the inven-

tion of television became the "viewing machine" and the automobile the "horseless carriage." But it was, in every instance, something fresh, something from human minds and hands, an invention with a well-established history of development proclaiming again that what we call the future is always on view in the present. Even old movies—flickering storehouses of the past—we have learned to love—even these old friends can betray us with the truths of the still-far-off future that may be found in them. We may be startled, for example, to view the 47-year-old Marx Brothers movie "Horse Feathers," and discover the tubular furniture in a later scene that would still be called modern. Its presence constitutes a startling signal about the way the future is always gleaming at us in the present, especially since a grainy projection of today may be inspected in a Depression-era movie that is otherwise inhabited with the shadows of dead performers. Artists and poets are always telling us about the future because, as Marshall McLuhan has observed, they are intensely engaged in writing a history of the present. The signs of the times, like the biblical poor, are always with us. Can we, like the poets, read them for ourselves?

What are the veins of the future that have been glinting at us from the cracked stone surface of the 70's? Not just the developing catch phrases like "burnout" and "the right stuff," but the face of Richard Nixon, riding his pitted moon above the 50's, and even the larger and more complex truths such as the increased economic growth of the 60's and the 70's, and the



The space shuttle travels from the Rockwell International Corporation factory across Southern California in 1977, a symbolic journey, the author says. "There was the future being hauled through numb towns in which business went on as usual."

Christopher Springmann/Black Star

'Ego,'
Norman Mailer
wrote
prophetically
in 1971, 'is
the word of the
century.'

In the very midst of it now. There was no shortage of prophecy about the general nature of the problem. In the later 60's and early 70's, for example, the human-potential movement, exuberant stage mother of so many woeful children, developed a symbol for the national difficulty. In the same way in which the witless and the horseless carriage had been named, the phenomenon was defined in a negative manner. "Leaderless" groups appeared as the signs of our long-term struggle with the notion of authority, the refinement on an intellectual level of what was being acted out in the streets and on the campuses of America. The last generation of our national experience has been an effort, both explosive and wounding, to work out the place of authority in our lives and our institutions. The hollow spirit of "leaderless" groups sputtered uncertainly in the national administrations of the 70's, which, intimidated by the voters' ambivalence, governed by following the results of polls rather than by their heroic instincts.

A "crisis of authority" was a misnomer; for, if we lived through a period of antitheses and antiestablishment sentiments, these were indications of a crisis of authoritarianism, a quite different concept. A review of social-science research carried out over the last two decades, for example, reveals that, while authority has hardly been studied at all, authoritarianism had been investigated hundreds of times. Indeed, authoritarianism, a distortion of the use of authority, came to be accepted without question as an adverse experimental condition in social psychology. This preoccupation with the evils of authoritarianism . . . Franklin

Roosevelt once unsuccessfully suggested that World War II be called the "War of the Tyrants"—although very democratic and surely as American as Abbie Hoffman, masked our failure to plumb the healthy meaning of authority as a necessary and indispensable element in life. At its root, "authority" does not mean to control but to make able to grow, suggesting the positive relationship which parents have with their children, and the special responsibility which authors have for their words, and authorities for their judgments.

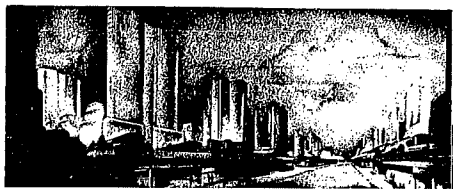
The age of leaderless groups, that haunting but telling concept, blossomed in the attacks that multiplied against deans' offices and government agencies, and against the very notion of professionalism itself. The idea that anybody, no matter how well-trained or experienced, should occupy a position of expertise and inevitable privilege was assailed not only by therapists caught up in the romantic notion that patients could treat themselves better than the doctors, but in the rejection or ridicule of the judgments and opinions of the highly educated in a variety of callings from the medical to the ecclesiastical. Psychotherapy, riding point on this movement, became distinguished by the disappearance of any symbols or practices that might make the expert look like one; Carl Rogers, pioneer of the prophetically named "client-centered therapy," advocated, in an address to the American Psychological Association, that its members abandon their goal of professional status through seeking licensure by state authorities. Popular culture was saturated with renewed visions of human beings as "noble savages" whose innocence and purity were corrupted only by civilization and its institutions; we were not so startled after a while by the notion that only the insane were well-adjusted in a thrice-mad world.

Yet another side to this same general problem was revealed in the expansion of individual claims, of Everyman's and Everywoman's—demanding their rights boldly and unequivocally, regarding the old notion of the Common Good as a fiction or a shadowy adversary to be ignored or conquered. The age of the pursuit of civil rights for those cruelly denied them opened onto a period of almost ruthless

insistence on rights that could hardly be guaranteed or delivered, in the amount and variety in which they were sought, in the fairest utopia. The period that came to be known as the "Me Decade" or the "Age of Narcissism" may be better understood as a time of exponential individualism, the half vision, half nightmare of an ideal of the democratic tradition out of control, of persons struggling against recognizing the need of limitation and compromise, of people angry at the basic conditions of life imposed upon them by time and distance and human relationships, of people terminally out of sorts with the human condition.

It was not only Watergate that led to massive distrust of politicians; it was a generalized distrust of the professional class born of confusion about authority that was focused on politicians, whose essential task was to find a way to compromise, if not completely harmonize, conflicting interests. But people were in no mood for compromise in the era of "nonnegotiable" demands. Single-issue politics and a distortion of the revival of ethnic pride have also been prominent features of the country's agonized search for greater national maturity over the last decade. We, who lived with the comforting dream of endless frontiers and ever-expanding human possibilities, raged against our collision with limitations in spheres that ranged from producing energy to making love. The "do your own thing" imperative, like a romantic psychopath set against society, lost its charm slowly and only after enormous disappointment and disillusionment with trying to live by its dictates. America's gradual and grudging acceptance of a sense of national and individual limits during the 80's may arise not so much from a sense of renewed virtue as from exhaustion and desperation at discovering that, although learning to make sacrifices may be unpleasant, trying to be happy without giving something up for others is impossible.

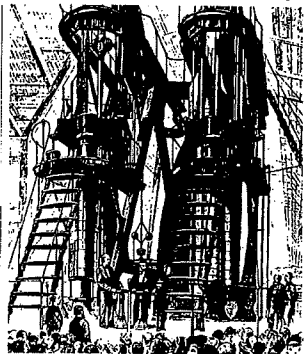
The 70's may have witnessed our last pounding of our heads on the crib slats, our last lingering insistence on individualism at all costs. "Ego," Norman Mailer wrote prophetically in 1971, "is the word of the century." And so it has been, not so much because we lived out the Narcissus legend by gazing at our image in the



A 1937 vision of the year 2000. "The future is always embedded in the present," the author says.

placid waters as because we thrashed about so violently in trying to come to terms with our adolescence. It was the age of a great failed experiment, the effort to preserve adolescence, like the stream of an infirmus, throughout the adult years. It was a painful failure.

In the 80's we can expect not something new but something that flows from, and is consistent with, what we have known so intimately in our national and personal experience during the last decade. One could observe, for example, that, as an aspect of the rampant individualism of the time, marked shifts occurred in the psychological mechanisms of our national adjustment. The transformation was related to our unsettled relationship to authority. The obsessive-compulsive conflict was once thought to be the typical American neurosis, the cleft in which so many people felt caught between rebelling or conforming, with guilt handled by compliance with the wishes of authority. Such was the motivation for workaholics and for people who always had to go back to make sure that the stove had been turned off; it was the psychic foundation for the Protestant ethic and the Catholic conscience. In the 70's, however, this device yielded its pre-eminence to the defenses of displacement and projection. In other words, driven to assert individual claims, and unsure about the notion of authority, Americans shifted from a readiness to accept blame for their actions; they moved it outward onto somebody or something else. Anxious to rid ourselves of the devouring neurotic guilt, which had been so much a part of our lives, we scrubbed ourselves clean of all guilts. Small wonder that we entertained again the notion of possession by evil spirits as an explanation for our problems. Some-



The 1918 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. "Much of the 20th century had been on display a generation before it began."

body, the devil or our neighbor, was to blame as we established a no-fault society, a guilt-free age, an achievement that is crumbling, but which has been monumental in its presence and its effects on Americans.

Not only was it an age of no-fault insurance for cars and no-fault divorce for battling spouses, but it was also a hang-up-free period for every personal and sexual relationship, a great high noon for moral decisions made on the vague basis that they were acceptable "as long as nobody else was hurt." Even the confessionals in Catholic churches were suddenly empty, a phenomenon that puzzled bishops and pastors but which had a simple explanation: people did not feel so guilty anymore. If the generation was relieved to be cured of the virus of neurotic guilt, it was not fully pre-

pared to lose touch with guilt as a personal inner resonance about the effects of one's actions in the lives of other persons and on the Common Good itself.

A grotesque symbol of the shell game we played with guilt lay in the manner in which Gerald Ford pardoned Richard Nixon for guilt that had never been admitted about crimes that had not yet been clearly specified. Nixon's acceptance of the pardon as though it were an Academy Award, with no admission that he ever did anything wrong, completed the picture of the no-fault society closing like a tomb on itself. At some level, however, it helped trigger a national resolution with a world in which things always seemed to happen in slow motion in a vacuum with no clear moral referent, without any consequences and, therefore,

without any personal meaning.

Displacement became the psychological mechanism of choice as blame was continually beamed outward. People wondered, along with Karl Menninger, about whatever happened to sin. The world has been deprived of its tragic sense by the eager optimism of the human potential and other kindred movements and, through the vehicle of displacement, found its expression in the epidemic recourse to litigation. The courts, as perhaps the last institutions with authority intact, became the instruments for displacing blame, some real and some imagined, onto third parties. The staggering increase in malpractice suits, most notably against physicians but also against parents, individual teachers and school systems, was a major indication that people wanted somebody to pay when things did not work out evenly or fairly in their lives. Many social critics have noted with alarm the tendency to use the courts excessively, with judges now running prisons, hospitals and school systems; their decisions replace those of physicians in assaying diagnosis and treatment; they signal if the ball game may be played, if the strike can be held, if the child may receive a certain medical treatment. Then, hundreds of other issues became the courts' business as the nation lost faith in other forms of negotiation and gave the courts power they did not seek, without any guarantee that they could exercise it prudently or effectively over a long period of time. The 70's were the setting for bringing down on the nation the old Mexican curse, "May your life be filled with lawyers." Active movements toward sunset laws and increasing deregulation of American life and business tell us of the growing uneasiness with life by legal prescription and court orders that will mark the next decade.

People feel mixed in conflicts that are regularly made worse by contracting the rights of the individual against those of the group, the institution, the government, or, in the case of marriage, the relationship which is in essence. Legal efforts to anticipate the inevitable snarls in human relationships footnote the way in which many hope that something outside them can solve their problems in living. Thus attempts to remove the slings

and pains out of human relationships by drawing up detailed marriage contracts that specified rights and duties in advance manifest yet another aspect of the pervasive no-fault idea, another sign of some people's willingness to surrender authority over themselves to an agency outside themselves.

The 70's were, after all, the decade in which the sexual revolution simmered along like an indelicate border war while Americans, caught up in the no-fault rush of the decade, decided to tame love and death. The period began with the fatuous "Love Story" idea, later a popular song, that "love means you never have to say you're sorry," a glossy reflection of the urge to be free of guilt and responsibility to anyone outside the self. Couples wanted to avoid more than guilt, of course, as they pursued relationships that would gratify them while factoring out the degree of risk or potential hurt that might be involved. Indeed, by the end of the decade, students would be heard to demand a "risk-free" education and management consultants would be discussing "stress-free" work environments, each of these a cousin to R. M. Haldeman's "zero-defect" administrative procedures in the White House under President Nixon. If that brought about the great passionless crimes of Watergate as well as a curiously unnamed tragedy to Nixon and his associates, the demands for love without hurt, education without pain, and work without tension have generated frustration and disillusionment for those who have ardently pursued them. Some who had grown fond of saying to challengers of their viewpoint or their work, "That's your problem," have begun to wonder if it is not their own problem after all.

The attempt to homogenize death, to make the last frontier a friendly and manageable experience, occurred during the decade that saw real advances in understanding bereavement. It also witnessed such excesses as high-school courses in many of them superficially drawn exercises in which students designed their own funeral services—and an insurance industry report that foresaw the day when the moribund could plan "adventure deaths" through travel to exotic places of earthly farewell. John Cheever asked the question, "Aren't they at the

Blocked due to copyright.
See full page image or
microfilm.

Confusion about the nature and place of authority has been very much a feature of recent decades; here, Werner Erhard exhorts participants at the San Francisco Cow Palace in 1976.

root of most of our troubles, with their claim that death is a violet-flavored kiss? How can a people who do not mean to understand death hope to understand love, and who will sound the alarm?"

The failure of these bold and romantic assaults on the impenetrable mysteries of love and death will be more clearly

reasons in the 80's, was not seen new will, in reality, be our continuing efforts to deal with our problems in living the American dream of an unending frontier, and of the illusion of limitlessness in appetite and acquisition, of our confusion about the nature and place of authority which have been so much a part of our

growing up as a country. Americans are not suffering from a malaise as much as from exhaustion in their efforts to pursue life, liberty and happiness as though, in perfect form, these were rights guaranteed in full measure to all.

The 80's will pivot on our coming to terms with the bil-

terweave truth, wrested from a thousand disappointments, that nobody can have it all in life. And the problems which the great writers have been exploring prophetically for years — relationships of love and sex and faithfulness, of good and evil and the possibility of our mutual redemption in a thoroughly faulted world — remain the urgent challenges for everyone. The energy problem will provide the frame for a host of confrontations with ourselves about the limits within which we taste these experiences that deliver to us a sense of our human significance. There may, in fact, be a strong reaction in the direction of strictness and no-nonsense child-rearing on the part of many adults who grew up in the 60's and 70's. Many of them suffered from iconoclastic parenting because of the excessive and erratic individualism and vague authority that marked the time of their own development.

This will be part of a return, however doggedly carried out and poorly motivated, to traditional concepts of duty and morality, as well as a willingness to accept the notion of personal guilt, if only because it forces a shape and a meaning on our actions which they otherwise do not possess. If this leads to a rediscovered sense of sin, it need not necessarily be in the terrifying, hell-fire tradition of old, but in the acknowledgment of the fact that limited human beings cannot flourish without each other, and that, despite their filtration with projection and displacement, they are makers of their own worlds with all too real power to hurt and betray as well as to love and entangle one another.

The 80's will find us at least partially rediscovering the existential consequences of our relationships with each other, and of placing new value on the family as that unique structure in which occur essential and irreplaceable experiences that shape a sense of human identity and significance. Liberated women will not abandon their careers, much less their crusade for full societal rights, but there will be new seriousness about the way husband and wife

share parental authority and responsibility. This will not turn every family into the Watsons, but it will tend to emphasize anew the critical nature of family experience. The search for the stable characteristics in human relationships in a limited world need not be sentimental, although some will attempt to glaze it with a sticky-sweet mixture of sentimental failures and shortcomings as while others will trumpet a we-told-you-so fundamentalism. The 80's will see movement forward in a struggle toward a more seasoned consciousness of human needs and possibilities. The answers we will grope for in the next decade will be efforts to answer the questions that were raised the last one.

body and whether and how much authority church or state has over personal questions of conscience. If colleges have almost completely abandoned their role in loco parentis, what is the nature and responsibility of school or teacher? If the movement for children's rights, patients' rights and consumers' rights articulates failures and shortcomings in the family and other institutions, do they also deliver ever more decisive authority into the judicial system? And how swollen with the displaced decisionmaking of all of life can courts become before they stagger and fall of their own weight? In the willingness of many groups to ignore court injunctions a prophetic sign that the authority of the courts is already seriously eroding?

These discomfiting issues will press upon Americans in the next decade, not because they are out there waiting for us, but because we will drag them over the threshold of the years ahead. These questions have already been placed in a dozen ways in half again as many areas of life. We debate whether a woman has authority over her own

government will have over our lives, or in how big government can be and still remain beautiful, but pre-eminently in the nature of the leadership we choose. The late 70's talk of our lack of heroes and leaders was but a superficial reflection of the more profound conflict we have experienced about authority and its exer-

herotically solve them are already the foundations of the 1980 Presidential campaign. So Howard Baker runs as a man who senses that people are once more ready to accept politicians as honorable experts in government. If he runs like a professional politician, Jerry Brown runs like a prophet in disguise, offering a



Not-tubbing it in the great California backyard: In the pleasure-seeking 70's, many nourished futile beliefs in the possibility of risk-free relationships in a stress-free society, the author says.



Self-improvement in California: The "Me Decade" made "romantic assaults on the implacable mysteries of love and death."

last we get a good look into the triumphs and disappointments of the generation that, played out in exhaustion, has brought us to 1980. It is the meeting, the nightfall that had to occur, over the issue of leadership in its style and its exercise, the collision of the professional politician in whose troubled dreams the White House has expanded and contracted like a symbol in a Dali painting, and the man who won the title of the Presidency as a nonprofessional, an outsider like the rest of us, who once bannished "Hail to the Chief" and carried his own suit bag, the man who brought the trappings of the ordinary to the Presidency. Here is one man who believes in the magic of great leadership. In the imperatives of destiny, and in forcing Americans finally to choose him or not, take the risk of letting him lead. And here is the quiet man who is hard to find in a crowd, the believer in the plain virtues of study, management and saying his prayers, the man who relies on goodness more than on a claim to greatness. It is, in fact, the myth of the 70's hovering just above the past we must all cross in January, a contest about heroism and duty, the question that is, in fact, the question of the 80's. What kind of leadership do we want, what kind of authority will we grant to our President? And how does any man prove to us that he has a right to it? Here at

STYLE

Testing the Resonance of the American Dream

By LENA WILLIAMS JUNE 23, 1996

What's that I smell in the air? The American dream. Sweet as a new millionaire, The American dream. Live like you haven't a care, The American dream. All yours for 10 percent down, The American dream.

From "The American Dream," in "Miss Saigon."

In the 1950's, owning a house with a white picket fence and a car embodied the American dream. As depicted in film, on television and in books, this Norman Rockwell view of America represented happiness and the fulfillment of the hopes of millions of ordinary people, regardless of race, region or stature in life.

Even now, four decades later, the prospect of owning a freestanding home remains an enduring element in Americans' aspirations. Spiraling economy, downsizing and the ever-changing nuclear family have not deterred the dream. Yet, more and more people seem to feel their dreams are becoming harder to realize.

The term "American dream" was first attributed to the historian James Truslow Adams, who in 1931 wrote a treatise called "The Epic of America." In it he said, "The dream is not of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which every individual shall be able to attain the fullest stature of which they are capable and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstance of birth."

But was it ever all that? Will it ever be?

For more than a year, Linda Schaffer, a film maker, traveled the country, with camera and microphone in hand, talking with Americans about the so-called dream. The fruit of her labor is "American Dreamers," a 90-minute television special that will have its premiere at 8 tonight on Turner Network Television and will be repeated periodically over the next four weeks.

The program examines what it means to "make it" in America today, using comments from a cross section of celebrities, like Michael Jordan, Mel Brooks, Gloria Steinem and Maya Angelou, and ordinary people. Ms. Schaffer said in an interview that she was surprised to learn that "nobody really feels that they've made it yet." Clips from movies that helped to shape the nation's dream illuminate many of the observations in the program.

Although Ms. Schaffer finds many people who have become disillusioned, there are many more who still see the United States, in spite of its social and economic problems, as the land of opportunity where dreams can come true.

There are, for example, members of the 20-something generation who share their grandparents' vision of the dream -- a house, a family, good health -- and others who speak of being "rich and famous" as the dream comes true.

There are optimists, like Trinh Pham, a high school student in Sacramento, Calif., whose family escaped Vietnam for what he calls "a safe haven" in America and found that and much more.

And there are pessimists, like Alden Naranjo, a Native American whose tribe, the Utes, is based outside Durango, Colo. He says he sees the dream as a kind of "pie in the sky" ideal. "If this is the American dream, then I'm in the wrong place," he tells the film maker.

Ms. Schaffer became intrigued with the notion of the American dream after hearing the term bandied about with seemingly little thought given to its meaning. "What surprised me is that among the young people we talked to, the conventional domestic dream -- a plot of land, a house, a family that's healthy -- is still alive and well," Ms. Schaffer said.

Like life itself, the American dream has changed with each generation. Not satisfied with the house and car, those born in a desegregated America of equal opportunity dreamed of a college education and an income that would meet the monthly payments for the median-price house.

Their children are dreaming large: making it means not one, but two homes; not a station wagon, but a BMW, and vacations in the Caribbean.

Tyrone Belke, 22, a resident of Washington, who described himself as a "young, gifted and out-of-work" architect, said in a recent phone interview, "It's only natural to want to do better than your parents."

Mr. Belke, who is not part of the television program, continued: "I'm not saying I won't get the house and the car and the prom queen. It's just that I didn't think I'd have to work twice as hard as my parents to get it. They always told me that they worked twice as hard to get half as far so I wouldn't have to do the same."

Mario M. Cuomo, the former Governor of New York, who appears in Ms. Schaffer's program, said in an interview that Mr. Belke's ambition is "very much the characteristic of most Americans."

"The more you have, the more you aspire to," Mr. Cuomo said. "For today's generation, economic ascendency is not assured as it was for us. If you worked hard, you would make it. That is no longer true. It's not as easy to go up."

But Dr. John Roth, a professor of philosophy at Claremont McKenna College in Claremont, Calif., who teaches a course on the American dream, believes that the dream is necessary for the future of the country.

"Dreaming of a better life has kept this country together," Dr. Roth said in an interview. "If we reach the point where Americans begin to doubt that, then the potential for unraveling American life increases."

N.Y. / REGION

Our Towns; A Chance to Live, and Then Describe, Her Own American Dream

By MATTHEW PURDY JUNE 24, 2001

WHEN Dewan Kazi Fahima was named her eighth-grade valedictorian in 1997, her family had been in this country only five years and her parents didn't know what the word meant.

"My father called up one of his friends and said, 'My daughter's valedictorian,' " she recalled. "And he said, 'For real?' "

She had landed in America from Bangladesh at age 8 knowing two English words, "hello" and "Coca-Cola," and was ribbed for her halting English and out-of-style dress. Perhaps not suprisingly, her valedictorian speech was about the pain of prejudice.

Thursday night, 18-year-old Kazi stood on the 50-yard line of the John F. Kennedy High School football field as valedictorian of the class of 2001, and her speech, like her life, had a new theme. "The American dream, you see, holds me in its grasp because I have been blessed to live my own version of it," she declared.

Poor and worn, Paterson might not fit many people's idea of a dream. But for Kazi and other strivers in her multiethnic class, it's America, with just enough of the stuff that dreams are made of.

The Dewans came to America seeking a better education for their children. They wound up in Paterson, where the troubled schools are run by the state and where Kazi's father was minister at a mosque until 1996. Kazi's family, including four younger siblings, her mother, who is a seamstress, and her father, live in a neat but crowded four-room apartment.

Kazi sees possibility everywhere.

"We have a great view from the balcony," she said buoyantly from the wooden perch off the family's kitchen. She pointed to buildings downtown and to a distant mountain, ignoring the ragged neighborhood below, except to single out one meticulous garden.

Lanky, with long hair and an easy smile, she glided around her aging school with similar cheer. "It's not the best lab in the world," she said of a faded chemistry room. "Not all the sinks work. But we learn."

Jane Silverstein, who runs an honors program for about 240 of Kennedy's 2,200 students, fantasizes about loading her students on a flatbed truck and taking them to the suburbs as an argument "not to give up on urban education." She produces first-in-their-family college students and turns immigrants into all-Americans.

They define the emerging America of the 2000 Census.

"I'm known as a minority when I write my college applications, but in my school I don't think there's minority or majority," Kazi said, rattling off her classmates' nationalities.

Kazi is still as much Bengali as American. In her devout Muslim family, hanging out with friends -- particularly at the mall -- is forbidden. "I've basically never chilled," she said. This was the first year she wore American teenage garb to school instead of Muslim dress. Until recently, the family had no television. Kazi, who will be pre-med at Rutgers, spends weekends volunteering at a hospital.

Kazi's fellow explorer in this new world is her 15-year-old sister, Farhana. They share a room and are study mates, since their parents understand little English. As young girls, they went to the library daily to polish their English. They also learned

their first sport, tennis, but play in sweat pants to adhere to Muslim rules of modesty. They have a wall of academic awards but "no Backstreet Boys or 'N Sync posters," Kazi said.

FARHANA worries that assimilation equals laziness. "A lot of people who are from here take a lot of things for granted," she said. "I guess we feel fortunate to be here." On Wednesday night, Farhana coached her sister in delivering her American dream speech: "Say it with passion!"

Kazi did. This time, her family was certain what a valedictorian was. Her father sat high in the bleachers wearing Muslim clothes and holding a bouquet of shiny balloons inscribed "Congrats Class of 2001. You Did It!" He didn't understand all her words, but his daughter's voice was sweet music.

"I braved the uncertainties of a complex, new environment," Kazi told the crowd. Thursday night, it was no longer complex or new. She had made it her own. She praised Allah, quoted the Rev. Jesse Jackson and thanked teachers and parents in English, Bengali and Spanish, a flourish that ignited the crowd. "Whatever your American dream may be," she said with passion, "hold on to it and don't lose sight of it."

The New York Times |

BUSINESS DAY | BASIC INSTINCTS

You Really Can't Be Too Rich

By MP DUNLEAVEY MAY 21, 2005

WAS there always this much pressure to get rich? Achieving wealth has long been part of the American dream, but now you're expected to want to marry a millionaire, be a "Survivor," win "American Idol" -- or at least look as if you know people who know Paris Hilton. Even personal finance books, which once just explained how to manage money, now insist that you do whatever it takes to get rich.

Suze Orman urges readers to find "The Courage to Be Rich." David Bach cautions that only "Smart Couples Finish Rich." Robert Kiyosaki's "Rich Dad, Poor Dad" series is about facing up to your parental influences so you can be rich. And just last week I saw yet another book: "Nice Girls Don't Get Rich." Oh, well.

I'm not rich, in case you were wondering. I'm not even a taxi ride away from rich. My husband and I rent our apartment in Brooklyn. We suffer through endless repairs on our Catskill fixer-upper and our aging Subaru. While I'd love to snag a windfall as much as anyone else, I'm exhausted by all this emphasis on wealth. It's like some National Geographic special: RICH -- The Ultimate Destination.

Besides, the danger in buying into the idea is that you're going to be rich is that you'll spend accordingly -- regardless of the impact on your personal financial health. Consider the following:

Personal savings rates are the lowest they've been since the Federal Reserve started tracking this data in 1946.

Consumer debt has reached a high of \$2.1 trillion (and that doesn't include mortgages).

From 2001 to 2003 Americans cashed out \$333 billion worth of equity from their homes (and spent 51 percent of that paying down other debts.)

The trouble comes not just from wanting to be rich, but feeling entitled to it. A 2003 Gallup poll found that about a third of Americans said they expected to be rich some day -- and 51 percent of those with incomes of \$75,000-plus felt that way. A recent New York Times poll had slightly different results, with just over half of respondents saying it was unlikely they would get rich, while 45 percent thought it was very or somewhat likely.

What's interesting, according to Thomas A. DiPrete, a professor of sociology at Columbia University, is that most people don't have a realistic idea of what "rich" means. For example, in that Gallup poll, only 8 percent of people said that they would need an income of \$1 million a year to be rich. The median response was \$122,000. That's a lot more than the average American makes, but it won't even cover the cost of owning a small private jet.

Professor DiPrete analyzed income data going back to 1968 to gauge whether people at various income levels were likely to become rich. I'll spare you the standard deviations, but basically, it's really unlikely that even the above-average Jack or Jill will ever hit that million-dollar-a-year threshold. Someone earning \$120,000 today, in fact, has only a 19 percent chance of making \$340,000 within the next 15 years.

The rest of us are left holding our lottery tickets -- and then going shopping. Why not buy something expensive? You can't be overextended if you're going to win big one day.

While Professor DiPrete hesitated to link expectations of wealth and levels of consumption, he said that when people believe they'll be able to afford their current purchases in their (richer) future, "that makes it safer to go into debt."

Sadly, I know the havoc that results when you think outside your wallet. My credit cards could tell you all about it. So here's one solution: forget rich. It would free up so much time and energy if "Get rich" got crossed off everyone's to-do list. Trying to live a sane, productive financial life is hard enough. I'm sure most people would rather hear their odds of getting rich are great. I'd love to believe it myself. But accepting that you aren't going to be snuggling into the lap of luxury anytime soon can be a blessing.

Smart people may finish rich, but they probably won't. How about a book called: "Smart People Finish Just Fine, Thanks." It may never be a best seller, but downshifting from a focus on wealth could do more to enhance your bottom line than you ever dreamed.

BASIC INSTINCTS MP Dunleavy writes about personal finance for MSN Money.

NAME _____ DATE _____

American Dreaming

Directions: Answer the following questions using the archival Times article that your group has been assigned.

1. What events, people, movements, ideas, norms and/or perceptions does this article mention that were important during the time period in which the article was written?

2. How is the American Dream defined and/or described in this article? How does this definition reflect the historical context in which the article was written?

3. What quotes from the article best illustrate the article's "take" on the concept of the American Dream? Do you agree with the image of America that these quotes present? Why or why not?

4. Compare and contrast the article's presentation of the American Dream with contemporary conceptions of concept. What about the representation of the American Dream has stayed the same through time and what, if anything, has changed?

