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Editorials

SHALL TEACHERS "ENTER POLITICS"?

In the November issue of the Journal of the National Education Association appears an article entitled "Shall we enter politics?" The author is Dr. John K. Norton, Chairman of the Association's Joint Committee on the Emergency in Education.

Dr. Norton would have us believe that the idea of the teachers' entering politics is an entirely new one. When it is remembered that he has been a strong advocate for the Department of Education Bill for the past ten years, the political field would not appear to be entirely virgin soil to him.

He claims that teachers are justified in using "the power of professional organization in dealing with political issues affecting education." In support of his claim, he advances the following arguments:

"The welfare of schools and children can best be advanced if teachers are articulate on issues which have large educational significance."
"It is the right and duty of teachers as citizens of a democratic nation to make themselves heard."

"The trend of governmental development and procedure makes it imperative that teachers should use organized methods in the realm of politics."

"The fact of social change requires a continual revision of educational procedures."

On the first reading, these arguments may not seem unsound. But the assumption is implied that teachers, or rather teachers organized under the National Education Association, are chiefly responsible for the educational policies of the nation, and that they alone are able to judge what is best for the schools. One need not be a prophet to conclude that the contemplated political action is expected to serve the aims of the National Education Association.

It is the old cry for nationally controlled education. Just where do Dr. Norton's arguments lead? To the subtle suggestion that political pressure on Congressmen and Senators might bring about the establishment of a Federal Education Department, with a Secretary in the President's Cabinet.

The Chamber of Commerce of the United States, in 1926, repudiated the activities of the National Education Association which initiated and continued to fight for the bill. Regarding the movement itself, the report of the Chamber reads: "For a decade, and with special vehemence since the war, a nation-wide propaganda has been carried on, looking toward the gradual transfer of responsibility for the support and control of our public schools from the state and local unit within the state, to the Federal Government at Washington." Those in opposition to the bill consider the proposal to be fraught with grave menace to the freedom of education, and to the preservation of State sovereignty and local autonomy.

Naturally, the right of teachers to engage collectively in political action cannot be denied. But the prudence of the course suggested may be seriously questioned.

New York State has always had high educational standards. The present system would not be improved by removing its control to Washington. Nor would the additional tax that an entirely new Federal department would entail be particularly appealing to the already burdened taxpayer. The most serious danger to be avoided, however, is the introduction of education into the political arena. The ways of politicians have ever been dubious. We are not pessimistic when we discuss the possibility of a Utopian State wherein political machinations will not exist. And to subordinate the welfare of our schools and our children to the whims of political parties is not to be considered.

During the long campaign waged for the Department of Education, the officials of the National Education Association insisted that "education should not be thrown into politics" if the department were established. Now Dr. Norton, one of the proponents of the bill, and a leader of the Association, would encourage the vast body of school teachers to have recourse to party politics to effect legislation, the benefit of which is hardly demonstrable. Teachers will do well to heed the words of the late Dr. Norton's advice. They owe no loyalty to an organization that advocates such a doubtful objective.

There are two kinds of discontent in the world; one that is constructive and the other that is destructive. The first kind is that which is based on the fact that things are not as they should be. The second kind is that which is based on the fact that things are not as they are. The first kind leads to progress; the second kind leads to stagnation.

A TRIBUTE TO THE WHITE FATHERS

As against the tendency to decry the efforts of missionaries to convert heathens to the Christian religion, and belittlement of the results of missionary labors, there is noticeable the evident admiration of open-minded explorers and travelers for the achievements of those who spend their lives propagating the faith among savages or at least people of pagan culture.

Although William Seabrook's latest book, "The White Monk of Timbuctoo," is devoted to an apostate, a rare figure among missionaries, the author finds room for praise for that heroic band known as "the White Fathers," so intimately connected with the memory of Cardinal Lavergie. Their work, he writes, has been magnificent, not only in the Sahara and the Niger regions, but in the region of the great lakes, i. e., Victoria and Albert Nyanza, Tanganyika, etc., and the mere data of their results are spectacular. They have Christianized, it seems, about four percent of the entire non-European (in origin) population of the continent. In 1930, more than 600,000 persons of both sexes and all ages had been baptized, and there were from 200,000 to 300,000 catechumens.

Mr. Seabrook even expresses the conviction that the White Fathers' work shows it to be of the kind which endures. "Remembering the wholesale baptisms of the Mexican Indians in the days of Cortez," he writes, "it is possible to be skeptical about the 605,486 baptized converts of the Peres Blancs. However, these conscientious workers require four years' preparation for baptism. If a black, of whatever degree of civilization, doesn't 'revert' during those four years, he is ready. The White Fathers are good psychologists."

While brief, the praise bestowed by the author upon the character and services of Cardinal Archbishop Lavergie constitutes a sufficient answer to all those who would belittle the cultural influence of the missionary.

"On the 27th of March, 1882, Lavergie was made a Cardinal. Ten years were before him, during which he had the joy of seeing the work of the White Fathers and White Sisters crowned with success. Aligned with his work of conversion were his efforts to secure the freedom of the slaves throughout Africa, and the later years of his life were marked primarily by his struggles for the blacks. He had been the first to respond to Leo XIII's Encyclical against slavery, and he was the moving spirit behind the Brussels Conference and the Congress de Paris (1890). Furthermore, he traveled throughout Europe in the cause of liberation, and this arduous activity at his age shattered his health. . . . He was a great churchman, and a great man."

Current Comment

WHY NEWS STORIES?

Some uninformed Catholics at times question the necessity for Catholic papers. Some cynics inquire about the need for the report of news in the columns of such papers, when we have the great dailies throughout the country. Others, who approve of Catholic papers, but would have them contain nothing except educational and apologetic articles, ask the why and wherefore of Catholic news stories. The answer to these queries is simple and convincing.

As to the need for Catholic papers, this has been often explained and more clearly and convincingly than we could ever attempt and by so many high authorities that we deem it useless to attempt to add another word on the subject. But the point of Catholic news is another matter, though part of the same subject. Catholic papers supply "Catholic news." Very often, the secular press fails to carry a great deal that is important news to Catholic readers, either through lack of space, through policy or through failure to have the incident covered or reported. Again, such papers often fail to catch the Catholic viewpoint or spirit or statements that are of deep interest to the faithful, or at times these are so garbed through lack of sympathetic understanding that they fail to carry the message intended.

To supply all that is lacking, to tell correctly of Catholic persons and events and to give the maximum of Catholic news—these are some of the purposes of the news stories in Catholic papers. But more—there is dissemination of such Catholic news to keep us informed as to what is occurring in Catholic circles in other parts of the country and of the world; to encourage and edify the faithful by example of virtue, self-sacrifice and display of courageous faith elsewhere; to remind us of our suffering brethren in other less fortunate lands; to show how problems of other sections have been met and solved, and to post us on coming Catholic events.

Again, Catholic news stories help to keep the record straight for us. The erroneous reports given in a rush of the moment, the distorted incidents, the propaganda stories accepted in haste as genuine news, false statements of the antireligious and anticlerical made at some public meeting—all of these are sifted, investigated and corrected in the Catholic news stories. It would be enlightening to many persons to take up a Catholic paper and note the number of such corrections and explanations that are carried on secular news agency reports, especially those of foreign origin.

Catholic news stories have a definite and valuable role in the Catholic papers. The old sayings that half the world doesn't know how the other half lives, and that there is another side to every story, are eminently true of our own selves and also as regards charges and attacks and stories on Catholic persons and events in the secular press. The truth of the Catholic side will always be found in the news stories of the Catholic paper. —Catholic Action of the South.

"This longed for social reconstruction must be preceded by a profound renewal of the Christian spirit, from which multitudes engaged in industry in every country have unhappily departed. . . . Then only will it be possible to unite all in harmonious striving for the common good, when all sections of society have the intimate conviction that they are members of a single family and children of the same Heavenly Father, and further, that they are 'one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another.' —Encyclical on Reconstructing the Social Order."

Diocesan Recordings

William Shakespeare by his prowess for Notre Dame University on the football gridiron, Saturday, focused more attention in one day upon the illustrious name he bears, than all lovers of Shakespeare have been able to do down through the years since the Bard of Avon left off writing. If such publicity has the effect of making one person "reach for a copy of Shakespeare" it will be an influence for culture football has brought about that even the Carnegie Foundation cannot gainsay.

Someone may now well write a book on "The Mexican Tragedy." In N. C. W. C. News Service dispatches from Charles Betio, Mexican City Correspondent, just received, there is an account of the "crime" of two girls, Luz Carrasco and Maria Guadalupe Sanchez in the town of Tetelpan, belonging to the San Angel section of the Federal District. These two young women have been charged with the "heinous" offense of teaching Christian Doctrine within their homes. Not even the parents of these girls have been allowed to talk with them and fines of 50 pesos each have been assessed against them. While leaders of youth in the United States are urging the necessity of religious training of youth and many deplore the recent court trial in the United States that has been styled an "American Tragedy" because it emphasized the shocking so-called freedom of youth in the States, Mexican leaders are arresting and fining their children for trying to impart religious training. The "tragedy" in Mexico seems not that the children are wayward but that they are religious.

Many Catholics were elected to office in the recent elections but so many were named in the State of Massachusetts that we cannot but notice the list and ponder a bit on it. In the Bay State the following, members of the Knights of Columbus, were elected by the majority vote: David I. Walsh, United States Senator; James M. Curley, Governor; Joseph L. Hurley, Lieutenant Governor; Thomas H. Buckley, State Auditor; Charles F. Hurley, State Treasurer; Paul A. Dever, Attorney General. Such a representation indicates that the people of Massachusetts do not have time for bigotry in selecting men for public office. So many Catholic men directing the affairs of the commonwealth of Massachusetts puts them "on the spot." They carry a great responsibility as do Catholic men in public office everywhere. If they do not set a high standard for conduct in public office the reflection will not only be on them but upon the Church of which they are members.

Every so often members of an organization become excited about some particular issue and take action that later thought results in "red faces" and public withdrawal. Innocent members of such organizations must also become involved much to their discomfort. The most recent example was a recommendation made by the Committee on the Under Privileged Child of Kiwanis International that club members interest themselves in the proposal to sterilize unfit persons. Learning that this recommendation was one of a considerable number of projects contained in the program drawn up by the committee for Kiwanis Clubs in 1935 was of a controversial character, the proposal was dropped entirely from the Committee's program. Interest in this project was recommended for the "prevention of the ever-increasing onrush of an army of underprivileged and dependent children." In Ohio, one of the "innocent members" upon hearing of the recommendation wrote to the President of the Kiwanis International, copy of letter appearing in the Catholic Universe-Bulletin of Cleveland, stating that: "As a Kiwanian and a member of the Catholic Church, may I register an opinion that the committee is engaging with a subject which is to many of us odious and immoral. Being a subject that is of itself a delicate one to handle by an organization such as ours, with thousands of laymen and clergymen of my conviction within its ranks, shall we risk the controversies that may arise over the handling of matters of this type?" It was a courageous thing for the writer of the letter to do and an example of Catholic Action. It was also commendably brave of Kiwanis International to drop the subject. All organization leaders should give thought to this occurrence and ponder deeply before rushing into print about matters that accomplish no purpose and stir up ill-feeling in the ranks of the organization.

First, as to Humanism, the philosophical phase of the Renaissance. College and university professors who merely repeat the hundredth repetition of the history books all say that Humanism was the revival of classical literature and art. "Revival" is the wrong word; you cannot revive what is already living, and the knowledge and love of the classics was strong in the Middle Ages. It is closer to the facts to speak of the Renaissance as extending this knowledge of the classics to the field of the ancient Greek authors, whom the medieval readers knew comparatively less than the Latin, and as raising this love of the classics to such a pitch of idolatry that the ideal life came to be looked upon as possible only when modelled upon the patterns of classical and pagan antiquity.

It was this lavish love and slavish imitation of classical antiquity which led the men of the Renaissance to accept the ideal of the pagan man, self-sufficient and autonomous. This movement is misunderstood by the British Encyclopaedia, which defines Humanism as the effort of free man to rediscover himself and to liberate himself from dogma with the help of the Greek and Latin classics. Free man had long before discovered himself in the earlier ages of Christianity: all Scholastic philosophy had insisted upon the freedom of man. Nor is it very clear how a reading of the Greek and Latin classics can induce an attitude of independence toward religion and dogma; anyone who reads the classics with one eye open will find them full of religion, and will discover that an-

STRANGE BUT TRUE
Catholic Facts But Little Known

By M. J. MURRAY

A Franciscan priest, FATHER BARTL
conducts an orchestra organized by him from amongst Turolese men, and gives appreciated concerts in various parts of GERMANY.

Gandy
The towns with the shortest names are undoubtedly "O" and "Y" in the Somme district of FRANCE.
"O" HAS A CHATEAU DATING BACK THREE HUNDRED YEARS, OWNED BY A FRANCIS D'O

Progress is being made in the cause of Guy de Fontgalland
a Parisian boy who died in 1925.
His short "life" of twelve years has been published in SIX LANGUAGES!

SAINTS MARY MAGDALEN, MARTHA and LAZARUS — THE FRIENDS OF JESUS —
are specially honored in Provence, Southern France, to this day.
IT IS THE STRONG TRADITION THAT THEY CAME TO PROVENCE AFTER OUR LORD'S DEATH AND SUCCESSFULLY PREACHED THE GOSPEL THERE.
It is believed that SAINT MARTHA is buried beneath the little church in TARASCON.

THE LIBRARY SIGN POST

(The following is a digest of the second lecture, "Scholastic Philosophy and the Renaissance," given by Dr. Etienne Gilson at Nazareth College on November 16th.)

The Renaissance reached its zenith in the sixteenth century and brought human thought to an other perilous crisis, from which it could be saved, and was partially saved, only by the sanity of Scholastic philosophy.

The usual history-book chapters on the Renaissance are glowing panegyrics on its advancement of human culture. On its philosophical side as Humanism, it is supposed to have discovered the essential goodness of human nature; on its religious side as the Reformation, it is supposed to have discovered the essential freedom of the human mind. Both suppositions are wrong.

First, as to Humanism, the philosophical phase of the Renaissance. College and university professors who merely repeat the hundredth repetition of the history books all say that Humanism was the revival of classical literature and art. "Revival" is the wrong word; you cannot revive what is already living, and the knowledge and love of the classics was strong in the Middle Ages. It is closer to the facts to speak of the Renaissance as extending this knowledge of the classics to the field of the ancient Greek authors, whom the medieval readers knew comparatively less than the Latin, and as raising this love of the classics to such a pitch of idolatry that the ideal life came to be looked upon as possible only when modelled upon the patterns of classical and pagan antiquity.

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cient pagan life was restored with supernatural "Yes man of Athens." St. Paul said to the Greeks, "I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious."

No, the Renaissance Humanism did not discover man, or his dignity, or his freedom. But it did liberate its followers from religion, because it simply forgot God, and that was nothing new either. It was the critical conclusion of a very old line of thought, which had faded with paganism, but had come to light and had been gathering strength since the thirteenth century: now in the sixteenth century it flaunts itself in the open. It is pagan naturalism restored to life.

Parallel with Humanism in the age of the Renaissance was the Protestant Reformation, which the copybook historians love to pair with it as a companion piece, saying that the Reformation gave the same freedom to religion as Humanism did to philosophy. If the two are twins, they are strangely different, like Esau and Jacob. For the fact of the matter is that the Reformation went in exactly the opposite direction from Humanism: it minimized man's part in his salvation. The Humanists forgot original sin and insisted upon nature's intrinsic goodness and soundness; the Reformers so stressed original sin as to insist that human nature was fundamentally bad and unsound, and could never be healed even by God Himself. Combining Humanism and the Reformation as two expressions of the same spirit is like trying to combine fire and water.

Again Christian thought was at the crossroads: the balance was lost between Humanism and the Reformation. Christian truth had again to meet the issue. For the Humanists it had to emphasize the place of grace in nature; for the Reformers it had to emphasize the place of nature in grace. The crisis was met most prominently

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by the Franciscan and Jesuit theologians

The Franciscan Cardinal Cajetan and the Jesuit Suarez, were for most in resting for their Renaissance contemporaries the Scholastic philosophy and theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomistic thought was again called upon to tell what man can do for his healthy operation of nature without grace; human nature is good, as the Humanists say, but not all good, because it has been wounded and weakened by original sin, and so, for its healthy operation, needs the divine help of grace. Thomistic thought was again called upon to tell that, while human nature needs grace, as the Reformers said, grace does not do it all, since grace presupposes nature, neither destroying it nor taking away the need for it, but healing it of its original sin, strengthening it, and cooperating with it in the divine plan of salvation.

The Protestant reformers taught that the leprosy of original sin was incurable; but the Church reminded them of Christ's "Now, you are clean." The Humanists regarded human nature as essentially self-sufficient and intrinsically healthy; the Church reminded them that this optimistic sunlight was one day darkened when one who was God died on a cross to restore insufficient man and to heal his wounded nature.

What would we not give to have been able to go over to Bethlehem with the shepherds on the first Christmas night! But the Babe of Bethlehem waits for us in Holy Communion.

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