

## The U.S. of A.

**Our Bicentennial: Let's Be More Honest**

By PAUL F. MORRIS

An interesting paradox appears, as one observes the splashing blues and reds of the plastic pre-packaged 'Bicentennial' enterprises that are being organized all the way from the federal government to the New Jersey garden societies. For all the talk of a consciousness of history at Town Board meetings and the reconstruction of the most specific details about the nation's origins at the monthly gatherings of the local historical societies, one can't help but question if there is really anything historical about this frenzy of activity.

Rather than an introspective, balanced and critical appraisal of our past with its impact on contemporary events and its implications for America's future, many Americans prefer to recite old myths and tired platitudes.

We stay on the most elementary levels and reiterate simplistic interpretations that will cause no lingering doubts or need for further self-analysis. Nor will the entire exercise cause any embarrassment, much like a quiet formal afternoon gathering where all are properly attired and tea in delicate china cups is being served to guests. Social etiquette governs; any direct probing conversation produces consternation and ostracism from future guest lists.

Thus the Bicentennial for all its potential, seems to have taken on

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the characteristics of a select, carefully structured promotional campaign to merchandise a product only distantly related to our national purpose.

What is disturbing about the Bicentennial is the lack of a serious discussion of the nation's two hundred year history and the one-sided ethnocentric quality of the whole enterprise.

Except for a few superb media presentations on figures such as Lincoln and the Adams family, except for the publication of some interesting works that might not have seen print other than in the current setting, and except for the investigations that are being done in some of our educational institutions (I include my own College — for its recent series of presentations on the Bicentennial), there is really little debate or in-depth discussion. Outside of these enclaves most of what we are doing could go under the heading of "pomp and circumstance."

Certainly a genuine pride in the nation's achievement is not what is under indictment. America's ability to maintain her democratic experiment over two centuries is a remarkable feat that has taken courage and resolve. This accomplishment has been secured,

as with the nation's birth, by citizens who have exercised their rights, who have dissented and who have continuously criticized, refined and molded the rough marble that was carved into our most prized sculpture, the American Constitution.

Democracy succeeds only by maintaining its commitment to free debate on substantive issues by men of reason and good will. Yet the directors and organizers of our Bicentennial seem more attracted to image and to the choreography of a one dimensional view of America. Much like the half time activity of a football game, everything is in its place as sparkling uniforms, batons and a sea of flags glide across carefully vacuumed, artificial grass. The appeal is to emotion and to a sort of blind love of country.

What is lacking in the main orchestration of the Bicentennial is a counterpoint, the simultaneous expression of some of those disturbing chords that run through the American experience.

What the Bicentennial needs is to resurrect the critical eye in the manner of a DeTocqueville and to seek again a balanced view of America and its democracy — with its inclinations, its character, its prejudices, and its passions, in

order to learn what we have to fear or to hope from its progress." In some forums, expression must be given to those not-so-glorious times and deeds in our history: the religious, racial and class bigotry, the malignant jingoism and political demagoguery, the environmental destruction and waste, and the broken promises, the injustices and the violations of law. We must examine our folly as well as our strengths. We must give hearing to the work of colleagues in ethnic history and seriously consider issues like those raised by Richard Hofstadter in his documentary history on American violence. We must encourage longitudinal studies such as comparisons between the impact of America at its conception which stirred men's minds in the cafes of Paris, the snows of Russia and the heat of South America; and the impact now after two hundred years that the American creed has had on the world stage. In the light of recent scholarship we need to reassess the very reality of the American Revolution as a revolution and hear open minded new interpretations and irreverent questions.

Finally we must also explore future implications. A Bicentennial is not just a looking backward. It is a time of assessment and a time to probe a world of future shock and accelerating change. The titillating champagne party we are throwing in honor of the 1976 Bicentennial can thrive only when the guests

indulge in an unsettling but provoking chaser of draft beer.

Probably what is most disturbing to me is the way in which my own discipline, history, is often used.

History for all its strengths and importance is a rather vulnerable discipline. Like divine scripture, history can be exploited as sanctification for many diverse faiths and ideologies. Nations and governments have distorted the images of the past to justify their actions and to bolster their power. The appeal to history can be a strong force with which to contend, especially if it is constricted and contrived. Half-truths and apocryphal tales often slide unresisting into the popular version of the past. Dishonest myths are perpetuated and the value of history is undermined.

History can give way to fiction. It can become a bland pap on which the next generation is fed and an uncritical educational system can become wet nurse to a generation of intellectually malnourished citizens.

The study of the past is the major force in unlocking our understanding of the present; honest study of the past is an effective guide in avoiding familiar errors in the present and only the most rigorous standards in the study of history are acceptable from its practitioners.

**India State Formally Asks Compulsory Sterilization**

New Delhi [RNS] — The state government of Uttar Pradesh —

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's home state — has formally proposed compulsory sterilization, with prison terms for husbands who refuse to be sterilized after the birth of a third child.

Proposed legislation calls for imprisonment of up to two years for husbands refusing sterilization within a specified period after the birth. Authorities would then sterilize the recalcitrant husband in jail.

The Uttar Pradesh bill will go before the state legislature after the federal government gives its approval.

Recently, the New Delhi government unveiled a broad new birth control program, designed to give "top national priority" to slowing India's galloping population growth. The program gives the green light to individual states to enact compulsory sterilization legislation.

Several of India's 22 states are in the process of drafting such legislation.

India's Roman Catholic Church authorities have voiced strong opposition to all such proposed

**POOLS NEEDED**

The Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) plans to expand its outdoor program with the addition of more neighborhood private pools. Anyone interested in offering the use of their pool should contact the CYO, 50 Chestnut St., Rochester, 14604 or telephone 454-2030. The pool should be the in-ground type and large enough to accommodate 10 or 12 children. Swimming instructors are provided by the CYO.

**RESPIRATORY CARE**

Nurses, physicians and pulmonary therapists are invited to participate in a Respiratory Care Conference from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, April 30 at the Seneca Falls Country Club, Seneca Falls. For further information contact Mrs. Hazel Perrels, American Lung Association, 410 East Henrietta Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14620 (442-4260).

laws on the ground that they would constitute a denial of "a basic human right."

Meanwhile, the Washington, D.C. Post reported that 10 persons died in rioting that erupted in New Delhi on April 19 when officials bulldozing houses of squatters offered to relocate them only if they would be sterilized.

[The Post quoted witnesses as saying that the suggestion of sterilization in exchange for new housing enraged the residents of a heavily Muslim area.]

Leaders of India's large Muslim minority have protested government plans to encourage, let alone force, sterilization.

**M.E. Means Together**

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give their Marriage Encounter to one another. There are no group dynamic sessions of "sensitivity" meetings. It is a personal experience with one's spouse.

Marriage Encounter is not meant for people who are experiencing marital problems, but rather for those couples who have good marriages and want to make them better.

The weekend centers on a series of presentations followed by "dialogue" between husband and wife. These talks, usually given by the team couple, are geared to gradually intensify the listening couple's mutual trust and dependence.

The presentations follow four themes: the "I" phase concentrates on the individual. One must know oneself before one can know anyone else. The "we" phase looks at husband and wife as they interrelate. The third phase is the "We and God" phase. How does "our" relationship fit in with God's plan? Finally "We, God and the

World" how our relationship fits in with God's plan for the world.

Following each presentation, couples are encouraged to express feelings through a dialogue technique of "writing and sharing one's writing with the other."

In *The Marriage Encounter, As I Have Loved You*, Father Charles Gallagher, SJ states that, "In the beginning, at least, many object, sometimes strenuously, to the writing. The team has to work very hard at convincing all the couples of the absolute necessity of putting pen to paper. I believe with all my heart if it's tried it works every time for every couple." After each person reads what the other has to say a period of verbal dialogue is begun.

After the weekend each couple is urged to continue this dialogue and attend follow-up meetings that reinforce and strengthen the relationship developed in those 44 hours.

There are different expressions of

**Fisher Deacon-Intern To Be Ordained May 1**

The Rev. Mr. Ted Baenziger, CSB, deacon intern in the St. John Fisher College chaplain's office, will be ordained to the priesthood on Saturday, May 1, at St. Scholastica's Church in Detroit.

He will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving at the college at 6:30 p.m. Sunday, May 9.

Father Baenziger entered the Basilian order after graduation from Catholic Central High School, Detroit, in 1964. A 1969 graduate of Fisher with a B.A. in English, he taught English at Aquinas Institute in 1969-70. He received the Master of Divinity degree from St. Michael's College in Toronto and has taken graduate studies at Wayne State University, Detroit.



FR. BAENZIGER

AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL  
1776-1976  
**Your Heritage**

April 27, 1968. Death of Archbishop Hallinan of Atlanta, as American leader at the Second Vatican Council. A native of Ohio, Paul Hallinan was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland in 1937. He saw wide service: in a parish; as a World War II chaplain with the Engineers in the Pacific Campaign; as Catholic chaplain at Western Reserve University. In 1948 he was named bishop of Charleston, and in 1962 he was promoted to the post of first archbishop of Atlanta. As bishop of these southern sees he displayed sound pastoral judgment and innate leadership, particularly in matters of ecumenism and racial justice. In the Second Vatican Council his ecumenical and racial experiences made him a knowledgeable spokesman. He was especially influential, as a member of the Council's commission on liturgy, in the formulation of the important *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. Archbishop Hallinan's untimely death in 1968 deprived the American Church of one of its ablest and most highly respected prelates. — Rochester Catholic Bicentennial Commission.

Marriage Encounter including Jewish, United Protestant and Episcopalian expressions. There are two separate expressions which are based on Roman Catholic theology. National Marriage Encounter and World-Wide Marriage Encounter are very much alike. Both are recognized by the Church for what they try to achieve and both follow the Calvo guideline. These two expressions are not in competition with each other and both encourage people from all faiths to attend. There are, however, certain philosophical differences which will be explored next.

**FREE CLINIC**

The American Cancer Society will offer a free uterine cancer clinic for Monroe County women on Thursday May 6 at 909 W. Main St., adjacent to St. Mary's Hospital. Breast self-examination will also be taught at the clinic by volunteer nurses. Appointments for the clinic, aimed at women who have never had a pap test or haven't had one for three years, may be made by calling the American Cancer Society office, 461-3800.