

# THE "NEW" POLITICS

VOLUME 11, NO. 3 MARCH 1968

WORLDVIEW is published monthly [except for a combined July-August issue] by the Council on Religion and International Affairs. Subscription \$4.00 for one year; \$7.00 for two years; \$9.00 for three years.

Address: 170 East 54th Street, New York, New York 10021. TE 8-4120

## EDITORIAL BOARD

James Finn, Editor

John R. Inman

A. William Loos

William J. Cook

Editorial Assistant, Susan Woolfson

## CONTENTS

In the Magazines	2
The "New" Politics	3
Resistance	
Generations of Students	
Editorials	
Current Reading	5
Churches in Foreign Policy Debates	6
James R. Jennings	
Ethical Rhetoric and Ethical Reality:	
Vietnam and the Middle East	8
Thomas Siegar Derr	
For God or Country?	13
Paul Bock	
BOOKS	
Moral Earnestness, Political Prudence	
and the Church	16
Edward Duff, S.J.	

Readers are reminded that *Worldview* welcomes correspondence. Letters may be specific comments on articles in general, issues or general criticisms. For publication, they must be signed and return to the Editor.

Opinions expressed in *Worldview* are those of the authors and not necessarily of the Council on Religion and International Affairs. Copyright © 1968 Council on Religion and International Affairs.

Can American politics survive both its critics and its supposed friends? At some of the darkest moments in our present national life, the answer seems in doubt. There are all too many people willing to say that American politics has already failed, that the evidence is strewn in the ruins around us, and that only a deliberate, almost self-willed blindness prevents the rest of us from seeing it. And the ruins they point to are plentiful and depressing. These critics are actually supported by those who, in their zeal to defend the system, deny that the country is in serious trouble.

Our country is divided as it has not been for a hundred years. The war in Vietnam is, of course, the source and focus of the most bitter debate. But even without that conflict the divisions would run deep. In the January issue of *Worldview*, Jerald Brauer expressed one towering fact of our national life in this way:

"The heart of the American experience is being questioned, and the American people cannot ignore the challenge. It is the most severe test of 'the lively experiment' since the Civil War. At stake is the American concept of democracy. The heart of the challenge is the ability of American society to include its Negro citizens as fully and completely as any other citizen. To date, the United States has demonstrated its inability to do this."

Since that statement was written the Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders has been published. That Report was prepared by moderate, responsible members of our society—the kinds of persons whose attitudes and opinions are almost automatically rejected by militants, white and black—and it lends massive support to Dear Brauer's judgments. It is a valuable document that should be part of our national debate for many months to come. While it has been given a generally favorable reception, it has encountered resistance. As the *New York Times* noted editorially, "President Johnson and Richard M. Nixon, the leading Republican contender, have in different ways turned aside from the challenge of the report. Their evasion of responsibility is profoundly important. . . ."

Considering only these two areas where our national will and purpose are seriously divided, the critics of our political system have much ammunition. And their stand is only strengthened by those who, upholding the system itself, minimize the deficiencies, the inadequacies, the overt and brutal injustices that exist within our society. If present critics of our political system fail to grasp not only the value and flexibility but also the inherent limitations of the system, they will be doomed to constant disappointment. For expecting it to accomplish more than it can, they will exaggerate the already significant gap between the possible and the actual, between political goals and political accomplishment.

March 1968 3

If the perception of that gap should not be unrealistically exaggerated, neither should it be minimized. It does exist. And if our political system is not designed to do everything, yet it can be expected to do much. Much more than it is currently doing. It is this perception, acutely felt, that provides the motivation and driving force behind many of those activities—some only dubiously to be termed political—which are disturbing the present political scene and our recent political certainties.

If the recent talk about a “new politics” means anything it means that *within* the system there is taking place another historic realignment of forces. The realignment is not to be grasped, however, by the concepts we have employed for decades. If it takes place—and this is still speculative—we will have to find new concepts to fit the new reality. But that new wine, however heady, will still be poured into the familiar bottles of our present political system.

J. F.

judgment. By means that are sometimes questionable and sometimes clearly illegal, they intend to obstruct the policies that have been decided upon and implemented by a duly constituted government. There are many things that can be said about such activities, among them that they are likely to be self-defeating. More important here, those who engage in such a political strategy can hardly expect the churches to support it, even by indirection.

Those clergymen who are sympathetic to the troubled draft resister, the person who conscientiously objects to participation in this war, have a particular obligation to draw the distinction between conscientious objection and a strategy of political obstruction. Such an educational endeavor might not change the decision of the draft resister but it would ensure that the decision was made with greater understanding, and therefore greater freedom.

## RESISTANCE

Many young men who are resisting the draft look to the churches for support. Some of them deserve the support they request—and some do not. Unfortunately the line of distinction has been unnecessarily blurred, and a number of ministering clerics are making what might charitably be called reckless statements of general support.

The basis on which a draft resister has a right to appeal to the church is the traditional Christian teaching that in a conflict between individual conscience and the State one must follow his conscience. The difficulty, of course, is that the person may be acting out of an uninformed and errant conscience. It is the function of one who would minister to such a person to see that, to the extent possible, he develop an informed conscience. If that person feels that he must still oppose the State—and whether or not his conscience is errant—he has a right to look to his church for moral support. Given present conditions he will not always receive such support, but at least the tradition supports his appeal.

But there is a group of young men who are resisting the draft as a matter of political strategy. They intend to assert not only the primacy of their consciences but of their political insight and

## GENERATIONS OF STUDENTS

The voice of the student is heard in the land. And it is listened to, in this country as in countries around the world. But we Americans have a superior talent for attaching ready-fix, easy-switch labels, and in the United States “generations” of students arrive, develop and fade with dazzling rapidity. We have not yet found the appropriate label for the young activists who, plunging into the traditional political system, have dispossessed the hippies as the objects of our national attention—but we will.

When the Russian poet Yevtushenko visited the United States in 1966 he commented on the general tendency to idealize the upcoming generations. Recalling Trotsky's statement that “students are the barometers of revolution,” he called it an empty phrase. He then added that there are fine people and scoundrels among the young and the old but “Young scoundrels are more dangerous because they live longer.” And not long before he died, Konrad Adenauer spoke of those young people who are “not sufficiently tied to history's permanent threads or to the bitter lessons of experience.” These cautions are not recalled to slur our present generation of students but to dampen slightly the imagination of the phrase makers.