

minutes after his Democratic nomination in 1960, Kennedy was consulting him in a San Francisco hotel room. J. Edgar Hoover is a close friend and ally and of an equally distorted and dangerous mind when it comes to wielding power over the affairs of men.

Anyway, from the meshes of Baluchistan where, Hunt lectures us, the native Hunzacs have no cats, dogs, rats, mice, crime, jails, or police (they're nomads, to tell the truth), and flu recipes and communist Austria where Badgastein possesses the best baths in the world, and portents of doom that America could well have died as a republic by 1972, and eulogies to aloe, it takes time and patience to guide Hunt back to his dark revelations about the Vatican.

But when you've blown away the wholemeal germ of the health kick and God and freedom and assorted lettuce leaves from the shorthand mountain you've constructed after going round the mind of Mr. Hunt in two hours you can dig out the nuggets that do add up to a serious conspiracy of futility between the American reactionary right and the Catholic Church.

In their discussions the Vatican envoys thought around 100 of Hunt's speakers aged 15 to 23, trained, tested, and put into Latin America, would be a good start. Seven girls were selected as the initial-task force, Hunt says.

"They talked about me being a director of the project but I said it wasn't very logical as I was a Baptist.

"Then they talked about making Dallas a headquarters and I said I didn't think that would be practical because there isn't any Spanish population. For a while I sold them on the idea actually of the same kind of movement in the United States that they were thinking of in the Latin American countries, but they thought that would bug the CIA and the State Department."

It was envisaged that the young crusading Americans, backed by executive organizing powers but nevertheless expected to act a good deal of the time on their own initiative, would make friends with as many young Latin Americans as possible and insinuate themselves into group activities, schools, colleges—into any area, in fact, where they might hope to influence youth and even their parents. Hunt said that Texas was among the states from which possible "missionaries" have already been selected and prepared.

SO WHEN does the Children's Crusade start? Hunt doesn't know. In fact he hasn't been in the forefront of activity in the papal concern about its greatest dominion for a long time. Delay in "getting the word" has sent Hunt back almost full-time to his interests in oil and holy-rolling in books and radio shows. He says the project is now very much in the hands of a division of the Asian Speakers Bureau

on Riverside Drive in New York. A Rev. Felix A. Morlion in that city appears to be a key figure in whatever is now going on.

"They're not toying with the idea," Hunt stresses. "Cardinal Morella is likely to be the next Secretary of State for the Vatican, I understand. I will move, I'll organize the young people whenever the Vatican moves. We're waiting."

Students from all over the world enrolled in the Catholic Prodeo University in Viale Pola in Rome were being trained specifically for this kind of work, Hunt claimed.

"Indoctrinated if you like," he wasn't reluctant to admit.

"Look — this is a movement that could save the Free World," he emphasized, tortoise-shell face as impassive as ever. And the old boy believed it.

Pressing a button he then produced one of his Freedom Speakers—nice checkered trousers, Texan high heels, wafting aftershave and two cold showers a day to douse down evil thought, the type of earnest young man who would certainly be honored to be sent on a mission into South America, and no, he'd have no worries about his personal safety, you see, he just loved to travel.

Dave Hickey's Column

Frivolity Defended

Austin

This column should have come first but, letting my vanity triumph over my better judgment, I assumed that my intentions would be clear. Certainly, I thought, they will not take these pranks seriously. What writer of even moderate discretion would try to bring one more coil of glowing moral seriousness to the Newcastle of *The Texas Observer*? And what observer of the *Observer* would expect me to execute "The Last Judgment" here on the wall of the smoke-filled room. As it turns out, quite a few.

This being the case, let me disclaim retroactively any pretense to being right, or true, or just about the books and events I comment upon. As I understand the organization of this publication, righteousness is the publisher's department, truth the editor's, and justice the associate editor's.

All I really wish to do is be amusing and irritating, and perhaps brighten the pages by observing phenomena of more existential interest than the Texas Legislature—an aggregation of men whose dullness and deviousness could be matched only by a convention of corrupt scoutmasters. But however modest these intentions might be, I can assure you that I find their execution difficult.

Any writing which is genuinely amusing must somehow be frivolous without being trivial, and any writing which is authentically irritating must state half-truths so

The lad then launched into one of the movement's pat 180-second spiels ("They're three minutes so that if anybody who calls on them like TV then knows the duration of it and know how long they're in for," Hunt had burred earlier), choreographing it with little gestures of the hands and darts of the head to such perfected style that one looked around at his back to see what vast clockwork key controlled this Southern, Methodist revolutionary.

"More than any other generation we care about the inadequacies of the world today. We want to do something to make this right, but do it in a constructive way so that we can make our generation be a generation of the future that will lead the world to a better world. . . ."

Whether such rhetoric will set South America alight with anti-communist fervor only the Vatican and H. L. Hunt could know or could have the temerity to invest in it, when eleven million dollars a year would provide new schools for at least a hundred thousand children in Brazil, for instance, and help bring about the kind of major educational reform which the Catholic Church from Mexico south has so conspicuously failed to support throughout its long control of that continent. □

elegantly that the reader knows the statement is outrageous but is momentarily at a loss to say just why. Simply, I would rather be a comedian than a magician, since the magician delights by deception and the comedian delights by giving his tricks away. Whenever you notice a writer trying to hide his mirrors and the false bottom in his hat, you can be sure he is about to tell you how to live.

It is only by being obviously artificial that a writer like myself can remain a writer and avoid becoming an author. So, since I enjoy writing and detest authority, artifice is very attractive to me, and the informal criticism which I have been writing offers a most attractive form. No one believes it, and only bumpkins take it seriously.

Unfortunately, literary bumpkinhood seems to be one of the by-products of political sophistication in the state of Texas. And Texas intellectuals, having rejected the crudity and vulgarity of the frontier ethos, have formed a kind of literary Sierra Club dedicated to preserving the wilderness of local prose; from the axes of any critic—even local ones. Rather than liberating the community from the past, most of that literature seems dedicated to sublimating it. By some strange transvaluation literature is touted around the state as having just about the same virtues that the frontier evangelist attributed to the Bible. It is necessary for everyday

existence; it is serious business—you can learn about life from it; it is inspired, and it offers to the faithful some revelation of truth.

GIVEN A sales talk like this from the first grade on, it is no wonder that most people educated in this state avoid literature like the plague. If literature is necessary, then it is work; if it is useful then it is school; if it is inspired then it cannot be understood and if it is true then it cannot be questioned. Presented with a choice between work, school, intellectual subjugation, and water skiing, what sane man wouldn't head for the lake? So the Philistines have gone to the lake, freeing themselves simultaneously from culture and puritanism, while the intellectual community languishes in earnestness, continually asserting that the two are the same thing.

Since the local puritans read books because they feel obligated, they have no taste; nor do they really care about individual books; they care about "literature."

When I slight a particular work, they don't defend it; they attack me for somehow violating the sanctity of "literature." It has become impossible to like something unless it is "significant," or "representative." Or to dislike something which is "serious." Previously, it was only status literature which was endowed with this pall of significance, and only adults were being robbed of the pleasures of inconsequent activity and gratuitous judgment, but with the advent of pop culture and Marshall McLuhan (whose relation to media theory is roughly that of Norman Vincent Peale to theology) even the children are being robbed of their songs. Any child knows that fun is fun, but here comes Marshall fresh from Victorian literature, to tell them that fun is good for you and for the community and for the Kingdom of God. Isn't that fun? If art began when some decadent Neanderthal made a toy from a tool, it will probably end with some puritanical modern making all the toys back into tools.

ANYWAY, HERE is my plan.

While all the media buffs and cinematic camp counselors are trying to make John Lennon as serious and significant as James Joyce, I want to step lightly back and make James Joyce as frivolous and delightful as John Lennon used to be, on the assumption that frivolity is more fun than idolatry, and a little more honest in the presence of a story-book. If it turns out that I am wrong, and that literature is really "serious" and that it "offers a new path to a healthy and happy life," I will flip a coin to see whether I will start recruiting for the Red Guard or Merrill Lynch — these being the alternatives in an age in which books and politicians are admired because they "capture the imagination" with their special "magic."

But for the time being I would like to keep my imagination out of captivity, and although I may be out of step with the times, let me assure you that I am not marching to a different drummer. In fact, I am not marching at all. Boop Boop Bee Do. □

Observations

Subscriptions Near 10,000

Austin
The *Observer's* paid subscriptions now total 9,163. Our total paid readership the Feb. 21 issue was 9,700, and the way things are going, we should have more than 10,000 pretty soon. This is more readers than we have ever had before by several thousand. In fact, it's an increase of 2,655, or 38%, from a year ago, and it's an increase of 3,645, or 60%, from the same time of year in 1965, four years ago.

Yet we have been on the verge of raising subscription rates. We have fought off the logic of it, because projecting this present subscription level through to the end of the year, we might be in the black by then. We do not want the *Observer* to be any more expensive than it has to be.

Last year, our income was \$51,655 and our expenses were \$56,275, for a loss of \$4,620. Our income was 92% of our expense. Our working capital moved from a plus to a minus position. The *Observer* is

a financially sound enterprise, we are paying our own bills out of our earned income, and obviously we are growing where it matters most to grow, in circulation and editorial impact. But we have not made financial gains proportional to editorial gains because of rising fixed costs and the costs of growing.

Our loss in 1968 would not have occurred if we had not increased our spending for promotional spending \$4,000; but neither would much of our growth. Our rent has doubled since 1966. Postage, a big item for a newspaper, is up a fourth over last year.

The people who put out the *Observer* are doing work they believe in. By Texas standards they are fairly well paid; by decent standards they are underpaid. The

editor has not had a raise since 1958 (this has held true through three editors, me, Willie Morris, and Greg Olds). They work long hours and expect more of themselves than most other people do. The reservoir of neglected subjects of the *Observer* kind bears heavily, as it has always borne heavily, on Greg and on Kaye Northcott, the two-person full-time editorial staff. Cliff Olofson, the business manager, often works

April 11, 1969

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MEETINGS

THE THURSDAY CLUB of Dallas meets each Thursday noon for lunch (cafeteria style) at the Downtown YMCA, 605 No. Ervay St., Dallas. Good discussion. You're welcome. Informal, no dues.

CENTRAL TEXAS ACLU luncheon meeting. Spanish Village. 2nd Friday every month. From noon. All welcome.

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