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BUNDLE RATES ON APPLICATION

Born Enslaved, Accepting Their Chains

Professor Allan Nevins of Lehigh University is representative of the breed of angry men of our times. In his address to the graduating class of 1960, the Pulitzer Prize historian certainly went as far as he could be expected to go in laying bare the evils of the social system which await the recruitment of college graduates as executives in industry. It is too much to expect of a university professor, even an angry one, that he call for the abolition of the society he decries and the introduction of a system of production for use — a sane social order. Nevertheless, we must commend Professor Nevins for much of what he did say, words which at least expose in all of its callousness, the sham and hypocricy of capitalism today in this so-called land of the free.

The Lehigh Alumni Bulletin for July, 1960 carried the entire speech entitled: "Born Free, But Accepting Chains." After decrying what he termed "the reawakening of American chauvinism and jingoism" in the wake of the debacle of the Paris Summit Conference last May the Professor warned the graduating class that "they go out into a world which makes a fetish of conformity. . . "

. . . "A majority of college graduates today," he continued, "and a great majority of graduates in technology, go into the employ of large business corporations. **All** college graduates must look forward to entering an American civilization which is dominated by big business. It is true that we have in the United States about 4,250,000 businesses big and small, the big majority of course being small. It is true that a creditable proportion of the graduates of M. I. T., of Cal. Tech, and no doubt of Lehigh, become heads of their own enterprises. But the statement that large business units dominate the American scene remains true. Some of them like General Motors, Ford, General Electric, and Du Pont are colossal."

And Professor Nevins went on to document this claim:

. . . "When the United Press not long ago made a survey, it found that 78 American corporations had assets in excess of one billion dollars each. A study by the magazine Fortune showed that in 1955 the 50 largest manufacturing companies made between a quarter and a third of all the sales by American manufacturers; that the 50 largest insurance companies possessed nine-tenths of the assets of all insurance business, and that the 50 largest corporations in all fields made combined sales of 86 billions, or about 28 per cent of the gross national product of the nation. Concentration continues to advance. It is now fast changing the aspect of book publishing. Mergers in the banking field have taken place on an increasingly grandiose scale, so that eastern colossi like the Chase-Manhattan, the National City, and the Chemical Corn Exchange Banks approach the fabulous size of California's Bank of America."

But it is not so much in its bigness that Big Business poses a threat in these times, according to the Professor. He seems to believe that Big Government with its "watch-dog" agencies such as the Justice Dept., the F. T. C. and S. E. C.; together with "Big Labor" and "Big Agriculture" act as a sort of brake on the worst of the intrusions of Big Business into government. Be this as it may, and certainly it is of no great consequence to the majority of the population, the working class, if it is so, Professor Nevins does recognize a more basic threat. He sees the regimentation of the population into a sort of "uniformity and conformity, of passivity and conservatism . . . " and an enlargement of "the role of authoritarianism." In other words, he sees the very conditions the foes of socialism keep forever warning the population will be our lot under a socialist system of society. The "individualism" of capitalism, so frequently flaunted in our faces by our opponents, is shown in this address to be a hollow mockery. This regimentation of minds is brought about, "not in one way but in many."

Through its control of the mass media, radio and television programs and newspaper editorial policies with "conservative outlook, timid voice, and often gray morals, standardization of thought and conformity is brought into being. "Through schools of business administration and sometimes departments of economics, large-scale business ceaselessly colors the ideas of teachers and students, and through them the intellectual climate of our time." Whether one reads Fortune or Business Week, or the financial columns of the newspapers one feels "the same pervasive influence."

And in order to maintain this brainwashed management, Big Business as the Professor sees it, annually recruits on the campuses of U. S. colleges the technicians and executives which they must have. These are the people why "by day (will) transact business at their desks, or attend conferences; at night (will) carry home briefcases with material for memoranda they must write, or reports written by others which they must read." This section of the working class, the managers of industry, "have much the discipline and unity of an army." Upon graduation it matters little whether they enter the armed forces, the church or the big business enterprises, "they become cogs in some intricate organization" and the object of this organizational life is to promote "idolatry of the system, and of science to promote its objects."

And alas for individualism in ideas! Any young man with such theories, especially if they be at all radical or just humanitarian, is quickly suppressed. What is wanted is the man who will work with the group. General Electric, it seems, issued a training pamphlet which instructed its ambitious personnel on the fine points of attaining managership. "Never say anything controversial," was one of the rules. The DuPont Company, in its managerial training program, explained how to "detect any bad guidance from union and political leaders, and even from educational and spiritual leaders." And so on.

But let us pick up where the professor leaves off. He calls for a spirit of non-conformity, not "for its own sake" but to provide the country with "intellectual leadership . . . outside the herd." As a university professor, Mr. Nevins cannot go quite far enough, even if he wished to. Not at any rate with impunity. We, on the other hand, have no consequences to fear, no economic status at stake, and so we can sum up more scientifically. Professor Nevins calls for men:

"Who will revolt actively as they think how many of our people live in the pitiful hovels of Negroes and sharecroppers in the South, or the fetid, verminous slums of migrants in New York and Chicago; how poor are the schools in many areas; how ugly a race discrimination we tolerate; how many people, and not merely aged, lack due medical