Page 2  To the Editor [Labor Party]
Juliet Woodbury
Page 3  America is Not the Real World
Patricia McAvoy
Page 5  “Horses,” Sculpture in Limestone, 1947
Charlotte Rahm
Page 6  Untitled Photograph
Bob Saglyn
Untitled Photograph
Elie A. Schneor
Page 7  Two Poems by Deirdre O’Meara
Song of Opaque Trasparency
From Me
Page 8  Et Tu, Good Housekeeping
(The Terrifying Result of Reading an Entire Dollar
Reprint of S.J. Perelman in Ten Minutes Before Breakfast)
B.J.W.
To the Editor:

Is there a possibility of a third party's forming in this country -- especially a labor party? Although I question the absolute reliability of using the past to guide us in the future, I think that in this case, history has pointed out the impossibility of such an event. A labor party, it seems, will not succeed for just those reasons that Marx's theories never panned out in America. Labor, if we can class people as such, has never felt itself to be a class in this country, and in all probability, never will. The little man in labor is not conscious of his being in this particular political, economic group, and he doesn't want to be. It seems unlikely that labor conditions will ever regress so far as to necessitate a third party, any more than they would necessitate a proletarian revolution. Labor never has voted as a class. Even in the midst of the depression, they voted not as laborers, but as desperate people. As long as labor has some remaining hope of economic advancement, its ranks will not vote as laborers to such a degree that would put in a labor party.

Even if the unions had stuck with LaFollette, I doubt if the people would have put in a labor party, unless it had been the only alternative to the Hoover administration. Political parties in America succeed in gaining power through the failures of each other. By the time the second party has failed, the people have forgotten that the first party likewise failed. Which seems to indicate that even if a labor-progressive party were to include in its platform reforms other than those which would directly favor labor, (and consequently ceasing to be a labor party, really) it would not be successful. Only at such a time when neither of the major parties could produce leaders capable of righting nation-wide distress, could a third party succeed; at which time it would probably be a Communist or Socialist party.

Perhaps labor has no political home in either party, but never will it have a home of its own. As time goes on and we progress (??), the two major parties will see more and more the expediency of complying with, and accepting homogenously into its ranks, the strength of labor, the leaders of whom will find more and more that they represent not a socio-economic class, but just classless, unchannelized people.

Sincerely,

Juliet Woodbury
"America is not the New World" says Richard Wright

Richard Wright, a tall, comfortable-looking man, talked to us at his home on Charles Street in Greenwich Village two weeks after his return from France. When we saw him he was just getting settled in his new house. There was an unpacked suitcase in one corner of the freshly painted living room and a number of pictures stacked in the fireplace but with the exception of these evidences of a still unsettled household, the rest of the furniture was neatly arranged.

Wright, who looks like a college professor, was casually dressed in grey slacks, brown shirt, a tan sports jacket and a light-colored tie. He has an infectious laugh and a somewhat timid sense of humor. 'I'm not engaged in any aesthetic endeavors,' he told us, 'just busy unpacking barrels and cartons.

He had not intended to stay abroad so long, he said, but two months grew into eight. He went to France at the invitation of the French government, that is, he was all set to go when he received word from the Cultural section of the French Foreign Office that they would like to have him come as a guest of the government. Wright paid his own passage over and back and also his expenses while in France. 'I did not want to add to the already overburdened economic condition of France,' he explained. He stayed at a hotel in Paris for the first two months and then had the good fortune to sub-let a Sorbonne professor's apartment for the rest of his stay.

The government made it possible for Wright and his wife to meet and talk with writers, including Gertrude Stein, Andre Gide, Rene Marais, a French negro writer, as well as Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, the two guiding lights of Existentialism in France. Wright was very enthusiastic about Sartre's new play, 'La PuTain respectateuse,' which is based on one of the characters who figured in the infamous Scottsboro case here in America.

He spoke a little French, enough for everyday conversation, but when it came to discussing philosophical ideas his 'functional French' was woefully inadequate. 'Life is very simplified when you don't know a language,' he smiled shyly. 'I think we all talk too much anyway. We talk ourselves into trouble too often.'
success of a Paul Robeson or a Marion Anderson with regard to bringing about better relationships between blacks and whites in this country. Wright's voice trembled emotionally as he told us, 'Don't let anyone tell you that any Negro in America, no matter what success he attains, has gotten over the disabilities of being a Negro. The lives of all of them flow through banks and channels built for them by white Americans. Artists are accepted as artists, but not as human beings. They are accepted on the stage and concert halls, but not in the same apartment house. In spite of their wealth, they must live in Negro ghettos.'

'The Negro problem of America is not an American problem. It is a world problem of colonialism all over the world.' Wright went on to tell us how, while he and his wife were in Paris, they met a brilliant 28-year-old Negro writer, Pete Abrahams, from South Africa. This boy was the second Negro ever to graduate from the University of Johannesburg. Abrahams went through all his classes at the University screened off from the rest of the white students. In his book he describes the terrible conditions of racial minorities in South Africa. The natives have to carry at least twelve different passports -- one to show that he can read, one that testifies to his right to live in the city, one that he may stay on the streets till a certain time at night etc. Wright has brought back the manuscript of this book and intends to give it to his publisher.

Wright could not say enough about France as a country of freedom and civilized living. The question that occurred to us after hearing all this praise in favor of France was why, if this country was the perfect place for any member of an oppressed race, did he not stay there. Wright looked at us in hurt surprise and then said vehemently, 'I live here. The French are in France and the Americans in America. My work is here. My main job is in this country. I'd like to visit France often, but I belong here. No, I was fashioned in this peculiar kind of a hell.'

Patricia McAvoiy
"HORSES" - Sculpture in Limestone

By Charlotte Hahn ... ... 1947
Two Poems by Deirdre O'Meara

Song of Opaque Transparency

Empty and listless
I go now —
whisper and sigh,
sigh and whisper and whistle,
because now I am, am.
And yesterday will be was tomorrow.
This I know,
for yesterday I screamed
and tomorrow I will weep
from a thousand eyes.
They, my eyes — will cause laughter —
but today
I am
empty and listless.

FROM me

Lines, black lines
On green, going across.
On brown they are sticks
And start like a fan.
But
They go sideways and gather
At the end.
Velvet lines — falling upwards from me
Then down about my face,
Red and round — with black lines
Beside them.
Et Tu, Good Housekeeping
(The terrifying result of reading an entire dollar reprint of S.J. Perelman in ten minutes before breakfast.)

I was lolling in my foam bath the other afternoon, listlessly biting bubbles and pondering soapily on the futility of existence, when my attention was arrested by a magazine I happened to be reading. The magazine, is still haunting me -- a fact which will be corroborated by my wife who, when asked about it recently, declared, 'It is still haunting him.'

Honestly, I hate to sound like an alarmist (a statement which will be corroborated by my two-headed brother who, on the slightest provocation, will chant, 'He hates to sound like an alarmist' in the keys of B flat and C sharp, an accomplishment which eventually won him a cushy contract as understudy to the Moylan sisters) but something had better be done about the magazine Good Housekeeping, published by the Good Housekeeping people at Eighth Avenue and 57th Street, New York City.

Specifically, I am referring to an obscene little department of that periodical, sneakily entitled 'The Question Box.' The ghoul who conducts this nutritional chamber of horrors cravenly leaves himself nameless, but just don't let him think he can fool me. Come out from there, Raymond Massey, we all know you're Boris Karloff!

To give you an idea of the sadistic cynicism and cold contempt for human life exhibited by this Jack-the-Ripper of slick paperdom, here is a question from the September, 1945, issue:

Does coffee have any food value?
E.J.W.

Now there is a straightforward and on the whole rather charming query. Obviously, B.J.W. is a solid, respectable citizen in his middle forties, kind to children and animals and secretary of his local Elks chapter, who has been living for the past fifteen years on cups of black coffee. Lately, however, he has developed a regrettable tendency to embonpoint, and so trustingly takes pen in hand to inquire of 'The Question Box' whether this might not be due to the richness of his diet.

And what is the answer of our friend in editor's clothing? Does he suggest a tapering-off regimen of lemonade and Nodz tablets? Does he recommend alternating coffee with Postum? Well, I ask you, does he? No, listen to the slimy murderousness of his reply, a pronouncement which bears comparison with the most bloody edicts of Caligula and Professor Moriarty:

Coffee without sugar and cream has no caloric value. Recent studies show that an average cup of coffee contains about one milligram of the B vitamin niacin.

Can you imagine the effect on B.J.W.? Breathlessly, he turns to page 528 of Good Housekeeping and reads the answer to his question. Paling, he rapidly computes the caloric value of a milligram of niacin and with a soft sigh disintegrates into a mass of fifteen-year-old putrescence. Murdered, as surely as if 'The Question Box' had garrotted him with its own length of Manila hemp.

Maybe you don't believe that such a thing can happen. Well sir, I used to know a bartender on Third Avenue who from the age of eleven
months had subsisted solely on short beers. One day, a careless medical student in his cups let slip the fact that there was not enough nourishment in beer to sustain life. Before we knew it, that barkeep was nothing but a puddle of Pilsner's on the floor, leaving a child and fourteen hungry wives behind him. Which just goes to show you that careless drunks should never take up medicine.

I myself was so shaken by the fate of poor B.J.W. that I barricaded myself in the laundry hamper under a pile of porous-knit BVD's and Pepperell sheets, refusing to come out until teatime, despite the blandishments of my wife and children, one of whom was blandishing a Smith and Wesson 45 and mouthing some rather strenuous threats.

Finally my wife sent word that the Duke of Windsor and Greta Garbo had dropped in, looking for Gaylord Hauser, and I agreed to put in an appearance. Donning my paper dickey and neat nankeen britches, I strode out confidently to meet the company, though I can tell you I felt pretty sick inside. In fact, I was sick all over our best carpet, and Greta compassionately promised to have Gaylord make me up a bland diet guaranteed not to stain the most delicate oriental and domestic floor coverings.

Piqued by my faux-pas, I retired to the kitchen and lay sulking in the bread-box until suppertime. (I guess I’ve neglected to mention I am only eighteen inches high.)

At dinner, over a salad of grapefruit, soy beans, and marinated okra, my feeling had changed to one of resignation. I distinctly remem-

ber mentioning to my wife, ‘My feeling has changed to one of resignation, dear.’ By the end of the meal, I was on top of the world. After all, what care I if somewhere some ignorant coffee-fiend and writer-to-question-boxes had come to the crossing of the bar? Indeed, as I spooned greedily into a White Owl split with butternut sauce, washing down each mouthful with great gulps of hot, black Nescafe, the whole dismal affair was a matter of indifference to me. Suddenly, however, my wife whipped off her wig and false eyelashes, revealing herself to be none other than B.J.W. Horrified, I exclaimed, ‘Remember, dear, sixteen milligrams of niacin a day is not sufficient to sustain life!’ But I was too late... With a soft sigh she began to disintegrate and soon there was nothing left but a mournful mound of chocolate-coated guano. Squealing pitiously, the children gathered around me in a forlorn little group and whined, ‘Please, sir, our poor mother is dead. What kind soul will take care of us now?’ ‘Not me, by a long shot,’ I muttered sneeringly, and, kicking one of the little buggers out of my path, I made my way out into the great wide world, a broken man, caring not what Fate had in store for me.

Having arrived in Philadelphia, I was walking down Market Street when I met a boy with bread. On my inquiring where this commodity might be purchased he replied, ‘Where does thee think, in a smithy, yet?’ Ignoring this uncouth individual I entered a bakery and laying sixpence on the counter asked for three rolls. The baker pocketed my coin and leading me to the street gave me three huge rolls. In a twinkling, I was rolling down Market Street, gathering cobblestones as I went. That, child, is
ET TU, GOOD HOUSEKEEPING (Concluded)

how your daddy got to be the second-biggest crooked paving contractor in the East.

Little else remains to be told. Our hero, Pastrami Nogoodnick, is back once again as a paying guest in the proud old house on Elm Street, where he spends most of his time in the attic fussing over his daguerreotypes. Prudence Punup still sits at her old Aunt Hester's feet, embroidering a calico coverall to conceal the fact that she is now four-and-a-half months pregnant. As for old Aunt Hester, when asked how she feels about this sudden happy turn in their existence, she smiles, disclosing an abominable set of new wooden teeth, and says, 'Oy, is duss a leben!'

—B.J.W.
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