

# On Nixon, justice, power, forgiveness and love

"Surely," I thought, "this will be worth writing an article about."

Mr. Belding in the SUB Smoke Shoppe and I were looking at the paperbacks, and like a sore thumb there was a smiling photo of Richard Milhous Nixon. The Wit and Humor of Richard Nixon is a short paperback by Bill Adler, author of such classics as The Johnson Humor and Dear Smokey Bear.

I thought, "This will be interesting." I was sure that Mr. Nixon must have said something funny in his long but bumpy political career.

Perhaps I now think, after reading the book, Bill Adler hates Nixon. He says, however, that "as a United States Senator, Vice President, and President, Richard Nixon has displayed a delightful sense of humor, a sharp wit and a unique ability to bring laughter to audiences and friends." It must all be in the delivery, or perhaps Adler accidentally omitted all the funny parts when he edited his book to 107 pages. (The book actually has 128 pages, starting with the front piece. Twelve of the 128 are blank. Five are chapter titles only. The actual text begins on page 11, and there are two or three short items on each printed page.) This tribute to a new President will have to be included among the most boring books of the year. The only redeeming factor is that it might have been even longer.

The funny parts are what are supposed to be serious parts. In his acceptance speech, at the nominating convention in Miami, Nixon said, "Let us always respect, as I do, our courts and those who serve on them, but let us also recognize that some of our courts in their decisions have gone too far in weakening the peace forces as against the criminal forces in this country."

This strange contradiction seems to reveal the same old Nixon from his debating days in 1960.

In New Brunswick: this

remark would probably have given Nixon a contempt conviction. But in Miami it helped to give him the presidency.

An amusing item, true in a way different from what Nixon thought, is his reply to a question asked in 1960. He was asked in what ways he was different from Kennedy. His reply was, "How much time do I have?"

And to impress a college audience he said, "I always like to see college kids. I'm trying to get into college this year myself - the electoral college."

The back cover of this paperback, published by the Popular Library (New York), bills the book as follows: "But almost nobody knows Dick Nixon of the keen wit - the man who can be a humorist in the genuine American grain."

We are well aware, of course, that the "genuine American grain" is corn. But even that knowledge does not redeem this book. We still don't know the keen-witted Dick Nixon not even half as well as we hoped.

## Traditional Power, and the Power to Forgive

As I become more and more interested in the case of Dr. Norman Strax, and in the complicated problems which have arisen as a result of the University's suspension of him, several thoughts have come to my mind. One is the idea of revenge, of forgiveness, of justice, and of the power to decide justice. These are tied together in the Strax case, which is only one recent example among many in North America of people being punished for acting according to their conscience. Dr. Spock, Rev. Coffin and others have been taken to court for doing so. Prof. Marcuse may lose his job as a result of his mentorship of the New Left movement. Dr. Strax has not been as influential as any of these men, but he has suffered similar punishment to all of

them. The question in my mind is whether he should be forgiven, for the benefit not only of himself, but also of all of us, who are collectively affected by the consequences of censure, and who shall be faced with the prospect of a guilty conscience if he is ever vindicated.

Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law, but the revenge of that wrong putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior; for it is a prince's part to pardon. And Salomon, I am sure, saith: 'It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence.' That which is past is gone, and irrevocable; and wise men have enough to do with things present and to come: therefore they do not trifle with themselves, that labour in past matters. (By Sir Francis Bacon, from *Of Revenge*.)

The reason I think it is possible that justice in the long run may not be done, is that the power in the University has existed here in fundamentally the same form for many years, and it is couched in the history of New Brunswick, an area which is not noted for its ability to absorb new ideas or to welcome change. Perhaps in the next decade, or in the next century, changes will take place which will revolutionize New Brunswickers' ways of thinking. Perhaps it will not result in the revolution some hope for, but it is likely that modern communications media, especially television, will bring a new awareness to our citizens which might, in a nonviolent sense, overthrow our traditional way of thinking.

Traditional power has on its side the force of habit; it does not have to justify itself at every moment, nor to prove continually that no opposition is strong enough to overthrow it. Moreover it is almost

invariably associated with religious or quasi-religious beliefs purporting to show that resistance is wicked. It can, accordingly, rely upon public opinion to a much greater degree than is possible for revolutionary or usurped power. This has two more or less opposite consequences: on the one hand, traditional power, since it feels secure, is not on the look-out for traitors, and is likely to avoid much active political tyranny; on the other hand, where ancient institutions persist, the injustices to which holders of power are always prone have the sanction of immemorial custom, and can therefore be more glaring than would be possible under a new form of government which hoped to win popular support. (From *POWER*, by Bertrand Russell, Copyright 1938.)

It appears that any action which is taken by the University now will be the wrong one. But it is possible, it seems to me, that there is an act which can be done which in the long run can bring unity and positive action to the University. If we can unite diverse factions, especially the supposedly separated arts and technology groups, then perhaps some of the changes advocated by the one can be enacted quickly, without hurting the feeling of security of the other.

But what we cannot afford is a continuing battle between faculties and factions, between 'right' and 'left'. Unless there can be found some way of ending the circuitous attacks within this educational community, there can be no united assault on our terrible common enemy, ignorance.

The discoverer of the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs was Jesus of Nazareth. The fact that he made this discovery in a religious context and articulated it in religious language is no reason to take it less seriously in a strictly secular sense. . . . It is decisive

in our context that Jesus maintains against the "scribes and pharisees" first that it is not true that only God has the power to forgive, and second that this power does not derive from God - as though God, not men, would forgive through the medium of human beings - but on the contrary must be mobilized by men toward each other before they can hope to be forgiven by God also. Jesus' formulation is even more radical. Man in the gospel is not supposed to forgive because God forgives and he must do "likewise", but "if ye from your hearts forgive," God shall do "likewise." . . . The freedom contained in Jesus' teaching of forgiveness is the freedom from vengeance, which encloses both doer and sufferer in the relentless automatism of the action process, which by itself need never come to an end.

The alternative to forgiveness, but by no means its opposite, is punishment, and both have in common that they attempt to put an end to something that without interference could go on endlessly. . . . Forgiving and the relationship it establishes is always an eminently personal (though not necessarily individual or private) affair in which what was done is forgiven for the sake of who did it. This, too, is clearly recognized by Jesus. . . . and it is the reason for the current conviction that only love has the rarest occurrences in human lives, indeed possesses an unequalled power of self-revelation and an unequalled clarity of vision. . . . Love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others. (From *The Human Condition*, by Hannah Arendt, Copyright 1958.)

by Ip Se Dixit  
(Gary Davis)

by ben hong

## VIEWPOINT

### How do you like the new SUB?



nora ramsay  
arts 2

"I would like the lounge best. The coffee shop needs air-conditioning to clear out some of the smoke."



barb hughes  
arts 4

"I like the ballroom best. But the jukebox in the coffeeshop is too loud."



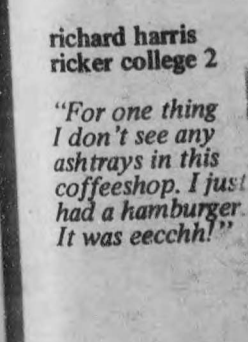
kathy o'donnell  
stu 1

"It provides wonderful student facilities. I do have a complaint against people abusing our equipment, for example kicking the jukebox."



paul campbell  
chemical 2

"I like the architecture and the color schemes. The cans have no signs. It's embarrassing to walk into the ladies' john and catch somebody unawares (snicker)."



richard harris  
ricker college 2

"For one thing I don't see any ashtrays in this coffeeshop. I just had a hamburger. It was eecchh!"



bob poore  
arts 2

"I like the building. Everything is great. There must be a way to keep things cleaner."



debbie scott  
arts 3

"There are a lot of useful facilities but I don't think the coffeeshop is large enough."



michael churchill-smith  
arts 1

"The place has created a new character for the whole university. It's a novelty in itself"

