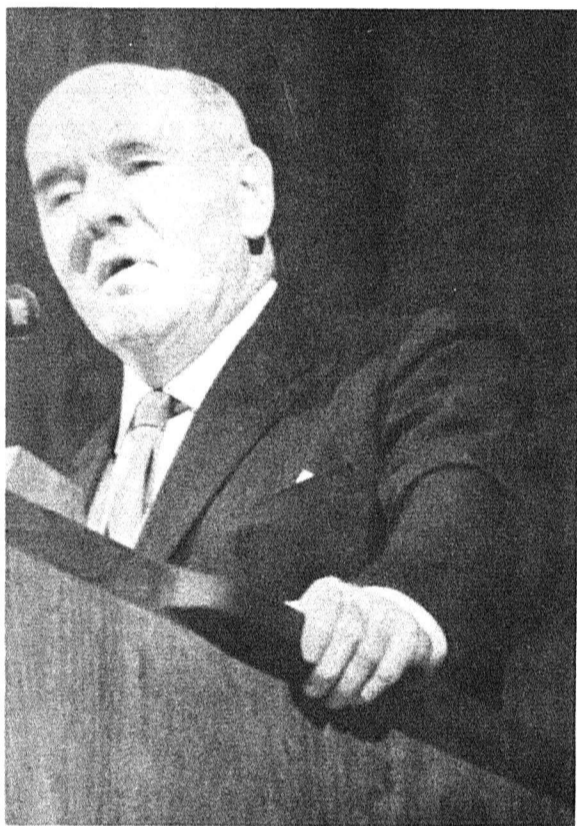


PARKINSON:

C. Northcote Parkinson, internationally known enemy of bureaucracy and super-efficiency, delivered the 1963 Dr. Henry Marshall Tory lectures this week. The lectures, free to the public, are sponsored by the Friends of the University as a memorial to the U of A's first president.

Dr. Parkinson chose as his topics, "East and West," and "Parkinson's Laws."

Gateway News Editor John J. Barr interviewed Dr. Parkinson on the eve of his first lecture.



C. NORTHCOTE PARKINSON

By John Barr

Cyril Northcote Parkinson, the world's most famous critic of Bloated Bureaucracy, looks just like a bureaucrat.

That was the first thought that struck me when he opened the door to his Macdonald Hotel suite and asked me in.

He politely asked me to sit down. His voice had the soft, cultured timbre of a Cambridge don—which, incidentally, he is.

Intent Visage

He is a shortish, rather stocky man, going bald on top and grey on the sides. Only two things really distinguish his face: a small, twisted, unpredictable mouth, and his bright deep-set, hazel eyes. His eyes stop you—they have a piercing, intent look about them.

We surveyed each other rather warily, and exchanged small talk.

I knew I confronted a shrewd and even brilliant thinker—he knew only that he was about to be quizzed by an unknown campus reporter. Have a good trip? I inquired. Yes, he said, and aren't you having a lovely late fall!

I remembered that he is the author of three best-selling books, each of them a model of devastating satire, eloquent argumentation, and gut-splitting wit.

"What kind of a person are you?" I asked. "Are you basically a serious man delivering a serious message gilded with an overlay of humor?—or are you basically a humorist dealing with sober issues?"

Serious Humorist

"Oh, I'm serious," he said, smiling. "It just happens that my method of writing is the best way of reaching an audience effectively."

He chuckled.

"My writing reaches a wider audience, and it makes me very difficult to attack. People just tell my critics they have no sense of humor!"

"You know," he said, "my influence appears to be greatest among businessmen. Civil servants, I suspect, only keep my books on their shelves to show how broad-minded they are!"

"Dry" Best-Seller

Parkinson's Law, his first and most successful book, sold some 250,000 copies in England and North America alone, and was translated into 14 languages! When one considers its subject—the rather dry question of how bureaucracy proliferates—its sales are all the more incredible. They point to a certain kind of mind.

"I was talking to a prominent Chicago bookseller after Parkinson's Law was published," he said.

"He told me he had problems merchandising the book. Junior clerks filed it under 'law.' Intermediate clerks filed it under

'humor.' Senior clerks finally filed it under 'business.'"

(I couldn't help myself: "Did anyone ever file it under 'medicine'?" I asked . . . he just laughed.)

Malaysian Crisis

We turned to world affairs. Parkinson was a professor at the University of Malaya from 1950 to 1958. We plunged into the subject of the Malaysia crisis, precipitated by Indonesia's demagogic strongman, Sukarno.

"What are the prospects for Malaysia?" I asked.

"They were never better," he said. "The price of tin, one of Malaysia's biggest exports, is up. Sukarno's guerilla warfare against the federation in Sarawak is a threat but his military strength isn't as overwhelming as it might seem."

"The quality of his large army and navy is extremely doubtful."

Sukarno's ambitions for southeast Asia represent nothing more or less than "Javanese imperialism," the Professor said.

Aggressive Colonies

"Every country under colonial domination builds up a form of resistance to the colonial power," he explained. "When the colonial power withdraws, the previously colonized territory has a surplus of developed energy to divert to other channels—like aggression."

We turned to the prospects for a free Southeast Asia. How long, I asked, can the non-Communist countries in that part of the world hope to hold out against Chinese-inspired subversion and aggression?

He didn't seem optimistic.

"Chinese pressure there will be very difficult to resist in the long run," he said.

Chinese Problem

"China has 600 million people, an exploding population, very limited territory. To her south, you have Australia, practically empty and uninhabited, and Southeast Asia, bulging with land, rice, oil, tin, and rubber."

What motives lie behind the

A Bit Of Wit

—from C. Northcote Parkinson

On Juvenile Delinquency:

"Much has been written . . . about the adolescents of today; about teen-age delinquents, switchblade knives, and bloodshed. But of one thing we can be certain; these are the first products of the Welfare State. Theirs is not a background of illiteracy, unemployment, sweated labor and want. They are children who, by comparison with earlier generations, have been given everything except a purpose in life . . . the world they are offered is unbearably tedious. Having no struggle for survival and being thoroughly bored with their surroundings, the young invent a world of their own; and very repulsive it is."

From *The Law and the Profits*, page 239.

On The Failings Of The Bureaucrats:

" . . . the possible failings of the bureaucrat are the least of the dangers in bureaucracy. The greatest danger arises specifically from the bureaucrat's success. The more implicitly we rely upon

his honesty and intelligence, the less we rely on ourselves. Instead of calling forth the energies of the people, an entrenched bureaucracy offers its own energy as a substitute."

From *The Law and the Profits*, page 223.

On Britain Near The Brink:

" . . . we have good reason to believe that Britain is very near the brink. The danger signs appear in this order: First, it becomes apparent that the government is absorbing too great a share of available talent and energy; there is a decline therefore, in individual initiative and the spirit of inertia takes its possessive place. Second, there is a decline in the sense of property, and the spirit of envy takes its possessive place. Third, there is a decline of freedom, and the spirit of dependence takes its place. Fourth, there is a decline in the sense of purpose and the spirit of rebellion takes its place. All this adds up to a decline in the sense of individual responsibility, and so to a decline of individuality itself."

From *The Law and the Profits*, page 221.