

Alternative

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Statement of Purpose

WHEN the next to the last man drops the last atom bomb, he will probably repeat sadly: "This is for peace, freedom, and equality." *Alternative* is going to fight for peace, freedom, and equality, but it is going to fight as hard against all use of atom bombs or of any other form of violence. Today the human personality is warped and stunted, not only by the more obvious evils of war and insecurity, but also by a thousand little attitudes and customs which permeate our civilization. We will explore ideas and actions which free and strengthen the individual, and we will do so without respect for custom, law, or authority.

Anyone who speaks for these values as forcefully as we hope to can expect to be called many names. So let us declare from the first that we will not be pro-American any more than we will be pro-Russian, pro-British, or pro-Hottentot. In an age of atom bombs and preparations for bacteriological warfare, we cannot be the slave of any nationalism.

Alternative hopes to be dangerous. Dangerous to the economic and political systems which expect the majority of people to undergo inflation, depression, and World War I, inflation, depression, and World War II, inflation, depression, and World War III without revolting. Dangerous to the way of thinking which expects the educated members of the rising generation to take their privileged places as subservient managers, propagandists, and technicians for the existing system of inequality. Dangerous to the Communist mentality which thinks that the only forms of revolt are regimented and violent. Dangerous to all dictatorships, whether of the right or left.

We may be un-American and anti-Communist, but we think we will be expressing the yearnings of millions of persons in the United States, in Russia, and *(continued on page 2)*

WHAT ABOUT WALLACE?

WE HAVE all become so used to hearing Henry Wallace described as "muddle-headed" by the wrong people—that is, by the people who think it is "practical" to go on developing bigger and better atom bombs—that it comes as something of a shock to discover that he *is* in fact muddle-headed. This is a conclusion that is so unpleasant, and is likely to have so many unhappy implications this year, that we may expect that there are many who will go to almost any trouble to avoid giving up their illusions about Henry.

Yet the record is all too clear and if there were any doubt about it, Wallace's election year performance with the Communists would remove it, once and for all. Not only has Wallace, who has always been noted for inconsistency and changing his principles as rapidly as a weather cock, more than out-done himself this year, but he has shown an almost unbelievable obtuseness in regard to what the home-grown totalitarians are doing with him. His entire campaign is now lock, stock, and barrel in the hands of people whose ultimate loyalties are to the true church of Moscow, but Wallace has raised never a murmur against this situation.

It is evident that the Communists do not expect to elect Henry — somewhere between 2 and 5 million votes is the most they can possibly expect

for him. He is being used simply as a tool to hold over the head of Truman. Wallace in fact represents Truman's political death warrant—an ironic reversal of the 1940 election when Roosevelt kicked Wallace out as his running-mate. Wallace is getting back at Truman with a vengeance, and already some of the Democrats, seeing their jobs vanishing, are trying to woo back the erring Henry.

Other people beside the Communists, however, have a stake in this election. Gideon's Army may turn out to comprise a lot of ordinary folk who are fed up with American flag-waving and war-preparation and would elect anybody to put a stop to it. In this sense most of the vote for Wallace will be a measure of the isolationist and peace sentiment rather than of left-wing totalitarianism. What we have now is a repetition of the cynical American Peace Mobilization, with the Communists and isolationists in the same boat; only this time the Yanks are not coming—never.

Wallace is something of an enigma because he never learned to play the game of politics quite the way the rest of the boys do. In Washington he has always given the impression of a kind of teacher's pet who had to be humored in order to keep in good with the teacher. When the rest of the gang were playing poker or swapping coat room stories Henry was talking with the chaplain

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Alternative

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PEACE OF MIND (For Two Dollars and a Half)

THERE'S nothing like a good threat of disaster to make a man religious.

Modern religion, like a good drunk, is concerned mostly with making people believe that everything is going to be all right. Its world of make-believe is a world in which men are brothers and God is concerned with each of them. But the world in which we all live is one in which the churches collect rents on slum buildings, refuse to let Negroes sit with the whites, sell war bonds and glorify the soldier, put the wealthiest men on their boards of trustees, and promote ignorance by preaching puritanism or by opposing birth control. This nice adaptation of the churches to the real capitalist world allows them to exploit the yearning of men for brotherhood but to turn their yearning into harmless channels.

Minds in Pieces

It isn't very surprising, at a time when the number of psychiatric patients in this country has risen 25% in 5 years and the ratio of divorces to marriages has increased 75% in the same period, that individuals should be looking for peace of mind. Neither is it very surprising that a book called *Peace of Mind* should sell 2/3 of a million copies in 2 years and be a best-seller for 22 months. But it will be surprising if the number of psychiatric patients decreases or if the divorce rate begins to go down.

Mr. Liebman, the author, manages to get a few useful psychological and religious principles across in his 200 pages, but for the most part his book is as superficial as the religion you can have for a song in the churches. Presumably he realizes that it is difficult to have peace of mind when you're living with your mother-in-law, and perhaps with your sister-in-law and her husband in addition; he tries at the outset to make the record clear that he is a socialist of some sort and that he knows that nothing will really be right until we have "a more just social order." But he does not suggest that you can't have peace of mind as a member of an infantry battalion, and far less does he suggest that if your victims attain peace their widows may not. For during the war Mr. Liebman was a member of the Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities, directing the work of Jewish Chaplains.

The problem of war, like the problem of housing, is apparently a social problem for Mr. Liebman, to be eradicated when we have a more just society, but he doesn't suggest that we have any

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

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all over the world, who would like to live in peaceful, friendly relations with everyone else, but who have been convinced—or almost convinced—that it isn't practical. This is an age in which people have lost confidence in the practicality of their best instincts. Persons who hate to hear a child cry find themselves making atom bombs. Persons who would like to take pride in the useful work of their hands are madly turning out inferior gadgets which are to be sold, at inflated prices, to people who have been softened up by dishonest advertising. Men who would like to work in a cooperative atmosphere, where all the co-workers are friends and equals, find themselves taking orders—or giving them.

Alternative hopes to challenge this personal deterioration while it fights against war, capitalism, and totalitarianism. We hope to suggest some of the practical ways in which all of us can live our daily lives more in accord with the way we think human beings should live. And we plan to discuss some of the methods by which people can carry on a continual revolutionary battle, without becoming exhausted or bitter. In the pursuit of these aims, we will present at least a few news items which should appear in the newspapers but are excluded, distorted, or minimized by the kept press.

Articles Welcome

Sometimes magazines that are outspoken and radical are also narrow-minded and sectarian. They can only see one point of view and they attack minor differences of opinion or action with all the fury with which the church once attacked heretics. *Alternative* expects to wage an all-out war against the major values and practices of our society. It will give preference in its columns to sincerely expressed conviction rather than to the clever double-talk of intellectuals. We will always welcome letters and articles from those who are not sure of their exact position as well as from those who are. That is the only honest course in a time of disillusionment, doubt, confusion, and transition. All we ask is that the ideas or questions be expressed as clearly and simply as possible.

This is a magazine for those who have not had much schooling as well as for those who have. Our major interest is in writing and thinking that will lead to action—non-violent, direct action.

This is the first issue of *Alternative*, published monthly by a non-profit association of libertarian individuals, and supported solely by voluntary contributions.

If you want to continue receiving *Alternative*, let us know. Subscriptions are free on request. We will need contributions of approximately \$90 an issue to cover the costs of mailing and printing.

Please make money orders and checks payable to John Mack, treasurer, *Alternative*, Box 827, Church Street Station, New York 8, N. Y.

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PEACE OF MIND FOR \$2.50

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immediate personal responsibility for it. "Many men far wiser than I," he says, "are at work today planning social and economic change. For their creative labors, every thinking person must be grateful. We must join with them in the struggle to obtain a common victory for economic, industrial, and political democracy throughout the world. At the same time it should be recognized that the *healthier society must be built by healthier human beings!*" (Liebman's italics.)

The Real Secret

The whole secret that Mr. Liebman misses is the

secret of conscience—of individual responsibility above and beyond any authority. Our problems are problems that "men far wiser than we" cannot solve; they are problems we must solve ourselves. *We* and not the government, and not a political party or a church, are the ones to decide whether we are to be conscripted. *We*, not the government, must organize for better housing or for building our own houses. *We*, not the union bureaucracy, must defy the Taft-Hartley Act. The attaining of peace of mind may or may not be a religious problem, but it will not be achieved by leaving some of the major decisions of our lives to be made by custom, by law, or by "men far wiser than we."

WILLIAM KUENNING

WHAT ABOUT WALLACE?

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or studying up on plant lore or the old Testament. The over-all impression we get is of a man who has never found the line between the genuine and the phony. At 45 he was still fooling around with boomerangs and astrology, activities which in the American mind are nicely confused with "idealism" and "mysticism." The Communists are his latest hobby, but in the world today they are about as safe a hobby as dynamite (as Henry will doubtless discover sooner or later).

Amazing Naivete

Wallace's record (as revealed for example, in Dwight Macdonald's recent book about him) betrays an inability to stand on principle in show-downs and an extraordinary fuzziness about who are the friends and who the enemies of democracy. He is the crusader and the fervent preacher who has never found the cause that would give his evangelism broad enough scope. His speeches are full of colorful phrases and high vision, but they often betray a startling lack of clear thinking and even of elementary information. (He did not know recently that Roosevelt repudiated the Communists in the 1940 election or that Senator Carly Brooks of Illinois is a Chicago *Tribune* isolationist.) At times he seems like nothing so much as the Great American Goof, the boy from the prairies who has fallen into the hands of the slick city operators (Foster, Marcantonio and company) who will know how to fleece him if anyone does.

It is not impossible that Wallace is himself uneasy about what the Communists are making of him. There are rumors that he has offered to back out if the Democrats will get somebody else in place of Truman. But each day makes it harder for him to do this and tightens the shackles. Finally the point will be reached when backing out would mean too many embarrassing potential revelations. This does not however change the fact that Wallace's unreliability and mercurial temperament make him a poor candidate for anyone to rely on—even the Communists. If the "call of the Crusade" sounds louder from some other corner, or if the right kind of place for him can be found in another administration, he might change his mind again.

Other Candidates

On the other side Truman's incapacity is well-known to everybody now. Even those who can find something to praise in him know that it is not he but his advisors who are really pulling the strings. These advisors are for the most part the same clique of generals and financiers who came into power during the war and want to hang on to it. Truman seems to have a positive awe of uniforms and the Big Brass (he was a lesser officer in the Army once himself) and has loaded his administration with it. He is the front man now for a group of generals, with a sprinkling of "liberals" like Clark and Hannegan, so that his administration is full of inconsistencies and contradictions, and Truman himself seems like a piece of flotsam tossed on the stormy waters.

Among the Republicans the most popular candidate is Eisenhower, who, despite his carefully worded declarations (full of skillful loopholes) to the contrary, is very anxious to be drafted. Eisenhower has had no civil experience whatsoever, and it is said by those in the know that not he but General Walter Smith (now ambassador to Russia) deserves the "credit" for the administration of ETO during the war. When he says anything Eisenhower reveals the typical military mind: he believes that it will be 100 years before we get rid of war and that in the meantime the American frontier is on the Mediterranean. The Republican big shots have rejected Eisenhower and would only take him if forced to. They much prefer the mediocre Dewey, whose way of campaigning is to try to be on both sides of every issue and never to stick his neck out on anything, or the colorless Taft or egotistical Stassen, both of whom resemble Herbert Hoover in their economic philosophies.

This is the sorry, not to say sordid, choice the American people will have to make this election year. On the one hand Truman or any conceivable Republican, which is a vote for a continuation of war policies or for reaction, and on the other a protest vote for Wallace, which is a vote for Stalin. In such a situation it seems a mockery to go to the polls. There remain still the minority parties, but at this writing the Socialists do not know if they will run a candidate and the Socialist Laborites, even if we could accept their program, will be little more than a write-in alternative in most states. Wallace's pseudo third party has hurt the genuine minor parties, who might have been the base for a new party alignment, perhaps more than any others. In lining up with the Communists, welcoming their support, and openly supporting, not American, but Russian imperialism (which is certainly as bad) he has knifed the genuine socialists and all those who oppose dictatorship or totalitarianism in any form.

It becomes increasingly clear that the time has come when it is not possible to trust governments—or to expect that they will be able to do anything more than make the existing situation worse. All governments now are bent helter-skelter for war and only the united opposition which will refuse the alternatives of enslavement or slaughter and act on its own responsibility to achieve genuine peace and democracy can stop them.

ROY FINCH

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