

the charges against Protestant churchmen. Well, those charges were serious, and it is time for someone in a position to do so authoritatively to enlighten Mr. Sharp, and the public, as to the nature of the groups which have made it their business to perpetuate them, and whose efforts at disruption and defamation have been abetted by the controversy and by certain broadcasters who echo their line. Meanwhile, Francis Cardinal Spellman, "military vicar" to Catholics in the armed forces, has issued a statement expressing his admiration for the "dedicated and loyal" Protestant chaplains with whom he has been associated, and saying he would "deeply deplore" any reflection "on their loyalty to our country or on the loyalty of the general body of the ministers whom they represent."

Smear Fails in New Hampshire

† **PROMPT REPUDIATION** by Vice-President Nixon of the charge by Republican Governor Wesley Powell of New Hampshire that Senator John Kennedy is "soft on communism," followed by a Kennedy sweep of Democratic votes, should dispose of smear campaigning for this election. The Massachusetts senator made a good primary showing in Republican New Hampshire, but his was not an overwhelming victory, and in no way points to a landslide. Kennedy campaigned vigorously, using his substantial resources to full advantage, and captured 40 per cent of the vote. Nixon did not campaign, and received 60 per cent of the vote. The fact that the governor's charge, leveled at almost the last minute, failed to affect the voters of the state that holds Willard Uphaus in jail on a mccarthyite charge, is good news. And the disavowal by the prospective beneficiary of that charge is also good news. Mr. Nixon has learned.

Richard L. Neuberger: Man of Integrity

† "WHY NOT err—if err we must—on the side of husbanding human life?" Senator Richard L. Neuberger wrote in these pages in 1957, explaining his support for Albert Schweitzer's Declaration of Conscience against hydrogen bomb testing, and his objection to price supports for tobacco in the face of medical evidence that cigarette smoking can produce cancer. The fostering of means to husband human life, and the natural resources that sustain human life, was a major preoccupation of the Oregon senator, whose death March 9 put an untimely end to a notable political career. That career was distinguished not only by measures for conservation but by a too seldom encountered concern for moral and ethical principles in government. The senator's concern was evident, readers will recall, in the subject matter of the articles—sometimes solicited, sometimes modestly proposed on his own—which he wrote for the Century after he went to Washington five years ago. One, for instance, dealt with his conviction that in matters affecting the public welfare, principles outweigh

party. Another contended that moral considerations make a national lottery, or any lottery for that matter, indefensible and unthinkable. Still another appealed for adoption of Theodore Roosevelt's proposal that congressional appropriations replace private candidate-binding contributions as means of financing national political campaigns. It is encouraging evidence of improving political health that Oregon voters of both parties approved Richard Neuberger's independence and his courage in standing by his convictions; so obvious was their approval that the Republicans had not bothered to groom a formidable opponent to face him in next fall's election. The situation calls to mind a similar one in Nebraska a generation ago, a situation reflected in former journalist Neuberger's second published book: *Integrity: The Life of George W. Norris*. There are too few men of Richard Neuberger's like in public life; Oregon, Congress and the nation could ill afford to lose one who still had many years to give to the husbanding of human life.

Editorial Correspondence

The Lawson-Vanderbilt Story

Nashville, Tennessee, March 11.

† **EVENTS** surrounding the expulsion of James M. Lawson, Jr., a Negro student, from the Vanderbilt University divinity school developed with such bewildering rapidity that even the participants are uncertain as to what happened, why it happened, and who caused it to happen. Out of the fog of testimony, often more protective than condemnatory, certain facts emerge.

One: James Lawson, a 31-year-old ordained Methodist minister, was expelled from the divinity school three months before his scheduled graduation because of his participation in the "sit-ins" by Negroes in downtown Nashville restaurants and his refusal to sign a statement indicating his willingness to desist from such activities in the future. The administrative head of the university, Chancellor Harvie Branscomb, sent the following message to Lawson: "Your strong commitment to a planned campaign of civil disobedience, as expressed in your signed statement of today, compels the executive committee of the Board of Trust to ask you to withdraw from the university."

Two: The role of Lawson in the "sit-ins" was not that of a leader or agitator, as the local papers declared in their attempts to defame his character and destroy his effectiveness, but rather that of a counselor teaching the demonstrating Negro students the techniques of passive resistance and nonviolence. The fact that none of the Negro students retaliated in kind or went to the defense of their companions when they were physically and verbally abused by white hoodlums is evidence not only of thorough coaching by

Lawson but also of an extraordinary Christian spirit and discipline on the part of those whom he advised.

Three: The role of Lawson in the "sit-ins" cannot be dissociated from his duty as a Methodist minister to seek social justice for the people and to do so, at whatever peril to himself, in the spirit of nonviolent love. In his reply to the ultimatum put to him, James Lawson said: "I have consciously sought to do this in such a fashion as would keep me only a pastor—preaching, counseling, teaching—and not deeming to become a leader of any endeavor." The white people of Nashville and of the whole south have not in the main understood that the "sit-ins" are part of a genuine Christian movement.

Four: Despite the scurrilous and vitriolic attacks by the local press, the character and integrity of James Lawson are unassailable. The faculty, students, and administrative officer of the divinity school—those who know him personally and know him best—give him an unqualified endorsement as an able student and a good man beloved and respected by the seminary community. The invitations which have been issued to him by Chicago, Drew and Eden seminaries and Yale University divinity school are similar evidences of the high regard in which he is held by the faculty of the Vanderbilt divinity school. He was dismissed, not because of any question of faith or morality, academic deficiency or poor judgment, but because his "controversial position" and his refusal to retreat from that position were embarrassing to the administrative officers of Vanderbilt University. Those officers hastily concluded that their only option was to expel him and wash their hands of the whole affair. They discarded, evidently after some deliberation, the possibility of sustaining Lawson as a member of the university community in good standing on the basis of his excellent record while simultaneously letting him take—as he was willing to do—the consequences of civil disobedience.

Five: The line of authority by which James Lawson was expelled was direct but omitted one important link. Upon Dean J. Robert Nelson, as administrative officer of the divinity school, descended the painful and humiliating duty of issuing to one of his respected students an ultimatum which did not originate with him but for which his office required him to be the courier. Above the dean was the chancellor of the university and above him was the executive committee of the Board of Trust of Vanderbilt University. Perhaps it is no coincidence that one of the members of this committee is James G. Stahlman, social and economic leader of Nashville and editor and publisher of the *Nashville Banner*, a local paper which attacked Lawson with inflammatory editorials. Another member is John Sloan, owner of Nashville's Cain-Sloan department store.

Missing from this line of authority is a link always essential to the just and wise handling of matters which pertain to the discipline of students: the advisory committee on student affairs. Action was taken against Lawson before the dean had an opportunity to consult his faculty and its committees. When the

chancellor of the university met with the faculty of the divinity school, he presented to them an accomplished fact: Lawson had already been asked to withdraw. There seems to have been no precedent at Vanderbilt for such a direct and summary intervention by the Board of Trust or its committees in the affairs of students or for the bypassing of responsible faculty members and committees. The executive committee of the Board of Trust has the legal power to act as it did. But the wisdom and the justice of such action is highly questionable.

Six: The precipitous speed with which events moved toward their culmination in the expulsion of this student and in his subsequent arrest raises serious questions also about the soundness and the justice of administrative acts and decisions. On February 29 James M. Lawson, Jr., was a respected student of Vanderbilt divinity school, pursuing his studies with honor and his Christian witness in the community in the spirit of reconciliation. On March 1 he was excoriated in the lead editorial of the *Nashville Banner*. (Above the slanderous, false and irresponsible language of the editorial was printed the Bible thought for the day: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.") On March 2 Lawson received from Dean Nelson the executive committee's ultimatum requiring an answer by 9 A.M. of the following day. On March 3 the chancellor of the university told the student body of the divinity school that James Lawson had been expelled. In three days the character of a man was defamed by the press and his academic career was interrupted on the eve of its fruition. Such alacrity indicates the heated concern for the preservation of the institution and its reputation; it reveals also a cold disregard for the personality of the man who had become an embarrassment to the institution.

What the administrative officers of the university do not seem to realize—or perhaps they do—is that this is not an episode, not an instance of the frolic and frivolity of an immature student who can be indulged for a time and then restrained with an autocratic hand. Rather it is a probing and dynamic event which is testing the character of the seminary and putting the hitherto excellent reputation of the university in serious jeopardy.

Perhaps this is a fitting time to ask whether a university is the handmaid of the culture in which it finds itself or the champion of an ethos in which men may seek and find and live by the truth.

KYLE HASELDEN.

Hawk of Death

† NATIONS have millions for bomb and rocket-thrust,

For new inventions to grind their foes to dust
While children are chalk-faced and hunger-thinned
And the hawk of death rides high on every wind!

LUCIA TRENT.



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