Magazine editors are beginning to know the meaning of total war.

Government reorganization of housing agencies delays a manuscript and strikes a blow at our pride in meeting a deadline. Events of yesterday are ancient history today. Paper stock is more costly and inferior to that of a few brief months ago. There is less variety in the choice of colored inks. Housewives, motorists or editors—we are all in the same boat, sailing an uncharted sea, with the compass set for victory.

*Social Action* has no income from advertisements; no assets but the good will of its readers. We do not want to follow the policy of *The Saturday Evening Post* (we never did), and we hope not to raise our subscription price (we promise not to double it in the foreseeable future).

The descriptive phrase, "Program for Victory," might be applied to the magazine *Social Action*. For, although we do not hesitate to point out difficulties and weaknesses and social sins, we plan for victory—for the final triumph of justice over evil, of good will over hatred, of courage over cowardice.

Scan your more recent issues: "I See America Preparing," "The Struggle for World Order," "Faith for Reconstruction," "Discrimination Incorporated," "The Family—Covenant with Posterity." If every American could read the series and act upon the basis of the information he thus received, the ultimate victory would be the one desired by all men and women of good will.

Through arrangements being made with the Foreign Policy Association, we expect to provide you with two larger issues on world affairs each year. This improved service can be continued with no change in price only if we increase the number of regular subscribers. If you believe that social action begins at home, persuade at least one of your friends to subscribe at once. (We have no objection to your giving a subscription to any number of your friends.) You can see how quickly this would double our circulation.

**Forthcoming Issues:**

April: "Words and Prejudice," by Irving J. Lee

May: "Social Action in Congregationalism,"
     by C. Howard Hopkins

June: "World Organization," by Robert L. Calhoun

*April 15, 1942*
SOCIAL ACTION
(A MAGAZINE OF FACT)
Published by the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches
289 Fourth Avenue New York City

April 15, 1942
ALFRED W. SWAN, Chairman
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In time of war, prejudices flourish and spread like dank and bitter weeds, and the soil of our common life produces the blossoms from which lethal poisons can be brewed.

But war may also bring forth good fruit and intensify noble emotions. It is the task of the church in time of war to help people to understand and thus control ignoble thoughts and to nourish all life-giving emotions. Words become weapons—of death or life.

It was Carl Sandburg who wrote:

   Look out how you use proud words,
   When you let proud words go, it is not easy to call them back.
   They wear long boots, hard boots. . .
   Look out how you use proud words. 1

A Way With Prejudice is the work of a man who has spent years in research in speech habits and their influence upon behavior. Professor Lee's approach is fresh and interesting. Use the antiseptic index and protect yourself against the ravages of intolerance and ignorance.

On pages 34-37 of this issue, Mr. McCulloch gives us some particular information about two questions of major importance to us today—namely, labor relations and taxation. The phrase, "forty-hour week," is fast becoming a deadly weapon. What do we know about it?

What is your reaction when you hear the phrase, "general sales tax?" Here are two problems about which we must know some facts if we are to take part in the discussion of them.

What has all this to do with the church? Do we care about what happens to individuals? Then we must know about their every day problems and be willing to act upon that knowledge.

"Look out how you use proud words."

---E.G.W.

1. From Slabs of the Sunburnt West, by Carl Sandburg, copyright, 1922, by Harcourt, Brace and Co., Inc.
A WAY WITH PREJUDICE

BY IRVING J. LEE

FROM THESE SEEDS

It is hardly necessary to prove the existence of prejudices in our time. In their wake hundreds of thousands of men, women and children have been destroyed and other hundreds of thousands are finding that life holds little hope and much suffering. When prejudices are expressed in cries of hate, fear and discord are generated. And people become consumed in the process.

When this happens in less critical times, one may isolate himself with small twinges of conscience. He may deplore the bigotry and the tragedy while he buttons tight his coat and moves on. For after all, the agonies are far away and there is no reason to believe they will be repeated close by, is there? Brutality in distant lands, like the falling tree in a distant forest, affects few of us directly.

Why bother with this phenomenon now? What has it to do with us here and with a war to win? Have we not in the United States long been visited with exclusion covenants, lynchings, Jim Crowism, class distinctions, racial segregation, and a host of other manifestations of intolerance?

For those who would shun the harsh necessities, who can easily explain away what they do not wish to see, there is still, perhaps, small reason for concern. But for those who would extend the finest of our traditions, who would listen to the promptings of our moral codes, who would seek the extension of decency, it is always advisable to open up and attack the sources of inhumanity. As long as the peace of men is disturbed by harshness and ignorance, just so long will the peace that lasts be unattainable. When respect for human existence begins to be lost elsewhere, wise men know well that there is small guarantee that it can be preserved anywhere.

SOCIAL ACTION

For those who make selfishness a virtue, and who find that its workings cannot be effaced, we have some good words. No more are the selfish ones to be the outcasts, the despised among men. On the contrary, with enthusiasm we urge them to come to ply their faith. Quite freely do we grant that selfishness is a feature of human behavior. But we would have them learn a larger, unrestrained selfishness. We would urge a selfishness so thoroughgoing that, to protect themselves and for their own survival, they will seek with us to eliminate whatever might affect the sweet quiet of their lives. We welcome them eagerly to a higher selfishness which, seeking the dissolution of prejudice in others, may well produce the selfishness that good men want anyway. Let the selfish be so selfish that they take the offensive against the encroaching selfishness of others.

Our concern with those who insist that in each of us there is a "reservoir of hate" is much the same. These "psychologists" argue that hating is something too old and too fundamental in the experience of the race either to be uprooted or exorcised. Very well, then, we say, in the attack on prejudices you will be useful allies. We call on your deep springs of hate to help cleanse the hate-breeders, those who would poison the healthy relationship between different human beings. If hate is so much a part of your make-up, that will be good, for then you can, with us, powerfully and unremittingly hate the hate that may engulf you even as it threatens the rest of us.

We should not outlaw Spengler's advice to the young Nazis, "We have learned something ... the ability to hate. Whoever cannot hate is not a man, and history is made by men." And even more lasting history will be made by those men who, in our time, learn how to hate the narrow, sniveling, dwarfed, Spenglerian variety. Let us, indeed, capture that ability so we may then turn it back, tormenting the preacher with his own preaching.

Our goal is not the elimination of these strong impulses, but
their rerouting. We would use such endless energies, now untamed and too circumscribed, right alongside their positive counterparts in the quest for decency.

This is written in a country at war. There is talk of "cooperation," "unity," and "national harmony" as the essential ingredients of any total effort. The President has just said,

In this critical hour in our own and the world's history we Americans need more than armaments and armies to make safe our democracy. We need a secure bond of understanding among all citizens . . . of every creed and racial origin.

We have been told of the strategies used to undermine the will to action in Europe. We know the Hitler game of "psychological decomposition" by which suspicion and mistrust are sown between group and group. We have seen how bitter controversy between Catholic and Protestant, white and Negro, Jew and Gentile creates dissensions that already have begun the "psychological civil war" which the enemy will try to exploit by every means within his power.

It was the arch-divider Goebbels who, in 1936, said that America will never again be a danger to us. Nothing will be easier than to produce a bloody revolution in the United States. No other country has so many social and racial tensions. We shall be able to play on many strings there.

The comfortably protected may not have heard the twanging of those strings, but the melody is being played. It is audible to those Negroes whose free offering of blood has been denied; whose hope of employment in certain defense industries has been scotched; whose enlistment in some branches of our armed forces has been refused. It is audible to those Jews who have walked near Christian Frontiers; who have held posts in the government; who have sought to participate in community organizations for defense. It is to be heard in the shrill screams of some three hundred newspapers and periodicals throughout the country, creating overtones of ever-increasing discord. Its undertone is heard in the bickering and the arguments which would splinter a nation into segments; with each man finding in the other the image of the enemy, while the effort to deal with the enemy lags behind because precious energy has been wasted in the diversion.

If we weary ourselves on disputes magnified by ancient disaffections, we shall not be ready for the exhausting months of work and sacrifice ahead. We are only now beginning to feel the demands that will be made on us, physically and spiritually. We have just begun to know about privations and discomforts.

As the months of war begin to add up and the hurts become intensified, we may be enveloped by a weariness for the whole business. We may wonder why we should be so plagued. Some will ask, "Is the game worth the playing?" And in such a mood of despondency and diminished loyalty are small scale partisan conflicts reborn. It is so easy when fighting big foes to wish that they were smaller. If, by chance, then, there should be easier game right at home, the urge for victory will find an outlet.

Why not deal with those here we never liked anyway? In this temper scapegoats are manufactured, and on them the full fury of frustrations may be directed. Such a transfer of attention will be facilitated if there exist in our people any appreciable well-settled prejudices. The time to dissolve them is before the war-eariness has taken hold—for then it is too late. If we would protect ourselves from the future ravages of old feuds and predispositions, we must seek to deal with them now.

GETTING DIRECTION

By what routes can we proceed against ingrained attitudes and points of view? At the outset it has to be clear that prejudices are not physical obstacles which can be torn down or blown up. They are habitual ways of thinking and seeing (in-
side human skins) which are distorted, partial, and false to fact. Any program, to be significant today in reshaping the attitudes of people toward other people, ought to be directed at a basic reorientation, and not at any mere surface concern with those views.

There is an attack on prejudices which would not deal with them directly, but rather with the spiritual resolves of their holders. This approach is not intended to deal vigorously or combatively with the views of people, but simply and kindly with their “best selves.” We are all men, heir in common to the magnificent legacies of this earth, the argument runs. We are the recipients of the labor and experience of countless generations of those who have gone before. To impoverish ourselves by vain antagonism in the face of tradition is somehow too degrading, too mean for the extraordinary creation that is man. To live in friendly fashion is but small compensation for our very existence. The spirit of civilized peoples will be nourished and buttressed when every citizen becomes the champion of tolerance and humaneness and the foe of unintelligent animosities. This is the message of the great religious doctrines, however translated and decorated.

The work of refashioning human tempers by exhortation and pleading goes on. If it seems to go slowly, this cannot be reason for anything but more of it.

Publicists and public relations men, when faced with the redirection of opinions, have a standard pattern. They would substitute a new version of things for the old one. If men have a distorted picture of Negroes, they would seek to replace it with one in focus. Or if a man has been presented to the public eye as a cheat and a swindler, they would try to cover it up, to superimpose on it a view more positive and generous. But this method has become suspect. “Mere propaganda” is the cry, provoked, perhaps, by the fact that in the past twenty-five years so much “replacement” consisted in the easy exchange of new distortions for the old. It was as if the new descriptions merely whitewashed the old, thereby covering up what we should want to see.

Closely allied is the attempt to meet falsification with statements of fact. When it is said that “the Jews own the banks,” that is countered by the correct assertion that only six hundred of the ninety-three thousand bankers in this country are Jews, that is, but one half of one per cent. When men insist that “the Negroes are incapable of achievements in things cultural,” it is not difficult to show that the Robeson, Cullens, Johnsons, etc. have been more than capable. In this direction there has been much progress, but much more needs to be done. The history of these efforts has, however, revealed the complexity of the task. When the hate-breeders are under way spreading their lies, the fact-finders seem always one step behind in their cleaning up. It is so easy to manufacture duplicities and so hard to keep up with them. Nevertheless, the truth-telling must go on, no matter how slow or difficult.

Then again, we are told by the educators and social scientists that the way to group amity is through the continuing processes of education and the ever-increasing knowledge of ourselves and other people. The founder of the Cook’s Tours, perhaps, epitomized these notions in his belief that when many people have traveled to many places, understanding, both national and international, will result. Something like that was predicted of the development of the radio and the telegraph. These hopes must not be sneered at. One can only be sorry that as yet they seem not to have been realized.

In any case, our stores of knowledge have been piling up. The psychosis of “information please” has taken hold. People do know more and more. But, unfortunately, it is no feat to demonstrate that too often we can, with utter unconcern, disregard in our behavior what we know. How much sheer encyclopedic knowledge we have is neglected in our dealings with others! Given such a state of affairs, there is small cause
for optimism that new doses of data will not be by-passed with
the same nonchalance as the old. As Norman Angell put it,
"If men can disregard in their policies the facts they already
know, they can just as easily disregard new facts which they do
not at present know."

The great task today is not the piling up of what can be known
but the ever-widening application of what is known. We must
discover how to use the awareness, the already existing percep-
tions of men and women. If prejudices are widespread and
latent, ready for wider manipulation, we had better bring into
play the means of dealing with them which will use all the
available stores of good sense. We must bring to the con-
sciousness of people what will be readily accepted, because
correct to fact and verifiable in their daily living. And then,
we must show them how to use what they so readily admit.
We must put into their hands and heads devices so obvious, so
simple, and so readily teachable that even the dullest will
experience little difficulty in putting them into practice.

There is enough evidence attesting to the surface effects of
our conventional modes of dealing with prejudices. If they
have been inadequate, it is because they do not get to the
deeper business of providing methods which give the means
whereby anyone may keep up the process of self-immunization.
The failure to provide such methods explains why we have to
do the lessons of old always anew. Aristotle once said, "To
educate is not to present the student with a pair of shoes, but
to impart the art of shoemaking." Those who would strike
deeply at the existence of prejudices must similarly impart
the art of their detection, disruption, and prevention.

The objective here shifts from a teaching of the what you
should think about people to the how, — to the making of sense
at any moment. It is our belief that the teaching of simple
skills must go hand in hand with all the other procedures. If we
would emphasize that teaching the following pages, it is
only because it has been neglected by others.

AN EXCURSION INTO THE OBVIOUS

Nowhere on this earth have there ever been found two
human beings identical, that is, absolutely the same in every
respect. We speak in haste of "identical" twins, but very few
would maintain that they are indistinguishable one from an-
other.

Hamlet's cry, "What a piece of work is a man!" hardly
suggests the infinite diversity, the profusion of variety, the
luxurious and endless differences that are discoverable in and
between men.

Look about you in the street cars, in your churches and
schools, in your own family to see for yourself what should
and must be incontestable—that no two are in every way alike.
Even the attempt to catalogue the gross and striking deviations
will be a job not quickly finished. And what of the nuances and
subtleties manifested in the shifting varieties of human experi-
ence? When we cannot throw a stone twice in the exact same
arc or stand twice in the selfsame spot, or sing middle C in
the same way with the same overtones, or find two blades of
grass or two nickels without some variation, neither ought we
to expect to find the "paragon of animals" so "infinite in fac-
ulty" duplicated anywhere.

It is interesting to speculate on the "why" of this phenome-
on of heterogeneity. Is there some deeper reason or purpose
for it? Does it form part of some "master plan" of efficiency
or productivity? These are questions for the metaphysicists.
For us here it is enough if this one fact be discerned: that
differences do exist, that our world is peopled by persons who
are unlike.

If this fact of non-identity be granted, it is hardly necessary
to bedevil the obvious; namely, that any one human being
will be an absolute individual, unique, matchless, and clearly
marked, "each," in the words of Carlyle, "distinct within his
own skin."
Now let us relax this emphasis. Look again at the myriad throng. But this time note the respects in which the individuals are similar one to another. Quite consciously abstract the resemblances, the characteristics common to them. Let your gaze fix on as many points of correspondence as possible; their gait, the shapes of their heads, their intonations, the coincidences as they shift from laughter to despair, their appetites, their opinions, even their similarities with trees and hillsides. Pick out the affinities and parallels between these diverse things. Poet-wise find the analogies no matter how outrageous between these men and the tinkle of bells, the roll of tumbleweeds, the silence of the wilderness, the swiftness of a catastrophe.

In short, if we wish, we can blot out the uniqueness of each man just as we can highlight it. It requires little besides effort and intent to focus on either the differences or the similarities between men. Both of these ways of looking are within our control. Which we do habitually will depend upon the conditions and emphases in which we have been trained. That we do each and both in everyday life needs merely to be asserted.

What is not so readily understood, however, is that the differences are more fundamental than the similarities. They are prior in existence. Individuals inhabited the earth, working, fighting, and playing before the vagaries of existence set some of them to the observation that likenesses could be catalogued. Our forebears, for their very survival, had to notice the similarities in nature. It was only because they could learn the common markings of poisonous snakes, berries and other natural phenomena, that what we know as intelligence and profiting by experience became possible. When human nervous systems ignore the recurrences, they do no learning, they stagnate and die. If, however, in the first place, they had not been able to tell the injurious plants from the wholesome ones, there might not have been another chance for the working and development of that intelligence.

For us there is small wisdom, then, in stressing one to the neglect of the other. The effort to see both will distinguish us from the primitive, the unlearned, and will make us function with full resources. To discover "similarities in differences and differences in similarities" must constitute the starting point for our program of good sense.

ON A CERTAIN BLINDNESS

This concern with what may seem obvious (though too many are too often oblivious of it) is of the utmost importance for an understanding of the way people evaluate when their prejudices are operating either consciously or unconsciously. Examination of the reports of a large number of those who admit their irrational antipathies reveals what the reader's experience will, perhaps, verify—that these antipathies are expressed in a thoroughgoing emphasis on similarities. Careful study of the speeches and writings of any of the most vicious hate-breeders functioning today invariably reveals one fact: that in their overt and covert propaganda there is an almost complete failure to admit the fact of differing, unique individuals, with different and varying ways of life.

This going by similarities is the hallmark, the clue to the sickness of intolerance. At its worst the mechanism is to be seen in the prevalent habit of derisive naming. As Van Wyck Brooks put in the Opinions of Oliver Allston,

For every race on the planet the vulgar American has an opprobrious epithet. It would take a Rabelais to exhaust the names he showers on his fellow beings—wops, dagoes, heinies, squareheads, frogs, sheenies, limies, chinks and dirty Irish. Commonly uttered in good humor, these names express a latent attitude which, under pressure, may yield in social relations only the deposit of contempt that easily turns to animosity.

Never mind the "opprobrious" character of these epithets. Observe what is more important, that they serve to lump to-

gather human individuals, each different, of limitless variety, into the Procrustean bed of a conforming pattern.

Hubert Herring once pointed out the indiscriminate characterization of a neighboring people. In the last sentence note how he falls into the pattern himself.

There are some things which any American knows about all Mexicans: Mexicans are bandits, they carry guns, they make love by moonlight, they eat food which is too hot and drink which is too strong, they are lazy, they are communists, they are atheists, they live in mud houses and play the guitar all day. And there is one more thing which every American knows: that he is superior to every Mexican.²

A survey of one hundred college students indicated that they pictured

the Germans ... as predominantly scientific, industrious, and solid; the Negroes as superstitious, lazy, happy-go-lucky; the Irish as pugnacious, quick-tempered, and witty; the English as sportsmanlike, intelligent, and conventional; the Italians as artistic, impulsive, and passionate; the Jews as shrewd, mercenary, and industrious; Americans as industrious, intelligent, and materialistic; Chinese as superstitious, sly, and conservative; Japanese as intelligent, industrious, progressive; Turks as cruel and very religious.³

Of prime importance from our point of view is the recognition that the motives of those who make such assertions are not in question. It matters little whether they are sincere or dishonest. What does matter is the implication that the individuals spoken about are all of a piece. What is of tragic consequence is their emphasis on the respects in which individuals are similar, with a corresponding neglect of the live, different human beings who only can be encountered in the streets.

Nor is the question of the meanness or sympathy of the characterization of moment. The focus on similarities obtains in either case. Almost two hundred years ago, in an essay "On National Prejudices," Oliver Goldsmith wrote of a visit to a tavern where

one of the gentlemen, cocking his hat, and assuming such an air of importance as if he had possessed all the merit of the English nation in his own person, declared, that the Dutch were a parcel of avaricious wretches; the French a set of flattering sycophants; that the Germans were drunken sots, and beastly gluttons; and the Spaniards, proud, haughty, and surly tyrants; but that in bravery, generosity, clemency, and in every other virtue, the English excelled all the rest of the world.

When the gentleman asked Goldsmith if he "was not of the same way of thinking," his answer is recorded in the following:

I told him, that, for my own part, I should not have ventured to talk in such a peremptory strain, unless I had made the tour of Europe, and examined the manners of the several nations with great care and accuracy; that perhaps a more impartial judge would not scruple to affirm, that the Dutch were more frugal and industrious, the French more temperate and polite, the Germans more hardy and patient of labour and fatigue, and the Spaniards more staid and sedate, than the English; who, though undoubtedly brave and generous, were at the same time rash, headstrong, and impetuous; too apt to be elated with prosperity, and to despond in adversity.

We profit little by arguing the partiality or impartiality of these sentiments. Instead, it is enough if we understand that men can talk about other men without the effort to think of them as individuals. We not only can, but we also do. This habit of speaking and thinking in generalized fashion is widely prevalent in our society. It is so easy to slip into the pigeon-holing which blocks out individuals that we are too likely to forget that individuals are not being considered.

When Roark Bradford, certainly without malice, says that there are three types of Negroes, "the nigger, the colored person, and the Negro—upper case N," his very method of analysis helps him to forget that he tells us very little about what we should find if we went to the homes and farms and shops. When Mr. Bradford goes on to describe the indolence, irresponsibility, poor fighting qualities, primitive emotionality, and the uproariously funny behavior of "the niggers," it is often necessary to pause and ask "about which ones is he writing?" Are "all" so? How many individuals, each one unique, does this statement represent? It does not help much to say that Mr. Bradford might admit that he has but "some" of the millions of distinct entities in mind. The fact remains that in his writing he has obscured them. If he is aware that his lumping together arbitrarily manifests a going by similarities, then he should let his readers know it. If however, they are left with the assumption that he is at the same time going by differences, then that, too, must be understood. We must, for clarity and intelligibility, know which way he is thinking.

This is no plea for the elimination of similarity-making statements and for their replacement by difference-making ones. Not at all. It is a plea for watchfulness, for sharper discernment, for an awareness that the one is not the other; that the one is closer to fact than the other.

If readers insist that this is quibbling, William James has already answered them.

An unlearned carpenter of my acquaintance once said in my hearing: "There is very little difference between one man and another; but what little there is, is very important." This distinction seems to me to go to the root of the matter. It is not only the size of the difference which concerns the philosopher, but also its place and its kind. An inch is a small thing, but we know the proverb about an inch on a man's nose.

To a Veddah's eyes the differences between two white literary men seem slight indeed,—same clothes, same spectacles, same harmless disposition, same habit of scribbling on paper and poring over books, etc.

"Just two white fellows," the Veddah will say, "with no perceptible difference." But what a difference to the literary men themselves! Think of confounding our philosophies together merely because both are printed in the same magazines and are indistinguishable to the eye of a Veddah! Our flesh creeps at the thought.4

A full-fledged consciousness of the possibilities for confusion, when we identify rather than distinguish between the two methods of evaluating is our objective. That consciousness must be achieved in the face of vast resistance. There is no space here to catalogue the learned nonsense about the character of "a Negro" or the philosophy of "the Jew" uttered on the unexamined assumption that the resulting pictures reflect the lives and doings of individuals. When a radio program or a movie depicts "Southern girls" as sweet, charming things

whose conversation is spotted with endearments, and "the British" as humorless and pompous fools or servile cockney menials, nothing is lost so long as we know that only some aspects of lives and manners in widely varying instances have been abstracted for presentation. If, however, we accept such caricatures as characteristic of distinct human entities, we have taken a long step toward the outlook and attitudes which mark the intolerant. Ellsworth Faris has stated the issue in these terms:

The effect of race prejudice on individuals who hold it is to limit their powers of discrimination. It blinds a man to differences where these would otherwise be easily seen. Persons are treated according to a stereotype and not as separate and distinct individuals. This is a sort of mental laziness . . . which, being directed toward a class, is manifested toward the varying members of a class as if it did not vary.3

Once the going by similarities is adopted as if it included at the same time a going by differences, we have the phenomenon so much a part of Hitlerism. How readily one can talk of a "German" or "Aryan Race!" But we must remember that the word and phrase wipe out the particular units from which the abstraction was made. Does not such talking seem to say that the components of the group are all alike from corpuscle to complexion? (By the way, does the reader remember any pictures of the major Nazi rulers?) The anthropologist Sir Grafton Elliot Smith has well summarized the fact that "kinds" exist in Germany.

It is a fiction to speak of a German race. We should rather ask what types of physical build are represented among the Germans. Here we encounter a complete lack of unity. Blonds with long heads in the North, darker people with short heads in the South; broad faces here, narrow ones there; noses turned up and aquiline, the general build tall and short, broad and slight.

There is no "German race"; there are only local types which are very different from one another, each of which comprises individuals of different characteristics, so that representatives of all these types may be found in any part of Germany and of the neighboring countries. The East German is closer to his Polish neighbor than to the Frisian; the Tyrolean shows more similarity to the East Alpine Slav than to the North German; the Rhinelander more to the neighboring Frenchman than to the German in more distant parts.6

In short, if we would make sense in our treatment of people, the first step is our emancipation from the "as like each other as two peas" fixation. There are no two peas exactly like each other. Our failure to look plus the acceptance of our generalized habits of thinking help to keep our responses uncritical. If we notice similarities, that is because we have turned away from the differences. "We see what we see," says Alfred Korzybski, "because of the details we omit." And the moment we come to accept the general truth about the particular, we have imperiled not only the soundness of our own judgment, but maybe the very existence of others as well. For let us ever remember that this confusion makes possible the designs of the demagogue. Herbert J. Seligmann has shown how.

The propagandists choose those aspects of the individual which are most likely to arouse fear, envy or dislike in their audience, and they make it appear that such a caricature as they draw represents the entire group, though it may be no more characteristic of the people as a whole than the gangster, the vulgar rich, the criminal, are characteristic of any people. The prejudice, as its name defines it, gives the individual no opportunity to prove himself.?


BREAKING THE SPELL

The habit of going by similarities is coached and fixed by many unrealized assumptions in our everyday talk. One of the most common has to do with the notion that if the nouns we use seem specific, we of necessity have specific items of experience in mind. Thus, to speak of "a Jew" is not necessarily to think of, say Yehudi Menuhin; nor of Marian Anderson when the conversation turns to "Negroes." We must see clearly that "a Jew" and "a Negro" are words, marks on paper, vibrations in the air, and not living persons. In life there are only individuals who may be so classified or designated. As Lamarck said, "The classifications are artificial, for nature has created neither classes nor orders nor families nor kinds nor permanent species, but only individuals." In our similarity-speaking it is all too easy to lose sight of the breathing entities as they are somehow engulfed in the masses conjured up by the words "Jews" and "Negroes." We are urging here the recognition that the habits of generalization too readily take us away from life. And a return to life facts is of the utmost significance when the war of words beats so incessantly around us. It is doubly so when, according to Pavlov, "men are more influenced by words than by the facts of the surrounding reality." We must be impressed with the fact that the very pattern of our language use may blot out from our perceptions the "single human experience" when we come upon it.

It is as if one sought to see the full coloring of a spectrum with glasses that filtered out all but the reds. The forester's training takes him from the word "trees" to the infinitely varying single objects in front of him, between whose growths and markings he is able to make distinctions. So, too, must we as laymen get from the very blurred and inclusive pictures in our talk to the very sharp and well-differentiated single persons who live about us.

The problem may be put in another way. "Jews are un-scrupulous," someone says. The very form of the statement presupposes a unity. If, now, an investigation is made into the circumstances to which the word applies, no unity will be found. Multiplicity will be immediately evident when people are studied. Here is a Jew somewhat so in certain circumstances; there is another rarely so; here is one frequently so. The oneness implied in the original sentence has to do with the way we customarily talk. In life no such oneness can be discovered—only a manyness which has nothing to do with what can be said about it.

Our language should serve as an instrument by which the relationships and aspects of life are correctly charted. The moment its use breeds barriers, blinding screens between us and the facts of life, it is imperative that they be removed.

How can that be done? Is it possible to make our talk about people fit their differences as well as their similarities? Can we preserve the sense of their uniqueness without losing the sense of their likeness? By what means can the image of distinct human beings be brought into our talking?

THE ANTISEPTIC INDEX

We now use in our everyday affairs several simple devices by which we tell people apart. Special names are given each of us as a way of indicating uniqueness. It might be useful, when thinking or talking of "Jews," then, to remember that Jew with one name is not Jew with another name. But that may be too cumbersome. A filing clerk uses the alphabet to preserve the differences between letters and memoranda. Why not, when the temptation comes to discourse about "Negroes," remember that Negro_a is not Negro_b, etc.? We can also use demonstrative pronouns: this Jew is not that Jew. Alfred Korzybski has suggested that we learn from the mathematicians, whose technique of employing subscripts enables them to manufacture an endless series of individual terms without
adding in any way to the numerical vocabulary. Thus, we should talk of Negro₁, Negro₂, Negro₃, etc. We should index with a number the similarity-emphasizing names.

The reader will now do well to see what this simple maneuver can do for his evaluating. In the first place, the word "Jew" indicates the respects in which the persons are similar in terms of religion, cultural history, etc. Then by adding the subscript numbers—the indexes—the way is open for the indication of the different, unique individuals who are to be found in life. When you talk of Jew₁, Jew₂, Jew₃, ... Jew₇₂, you have included both the characteristics which are discoverable, both the similarities and differences.

Merely to say Jew₁, Jew₂, etc. is to call to consciousness what is so manifestly correct in fact. Samuel Johnson once said, "It is not sufficiently considered that men need more to be reminded than informed." If you know that each man is nowhere duplicated, then the habitual use of the index will help to remind you of what is too often forgotten. The demagogue may shout his venom about "Jews," but you will be unharmful if in the moments when he pauses for breath you apply, ever so silently, the antiseptic index. The next time you read Mein Kampf or the equally defamatory fictions of writers afflicted with prejudices, you should stop to ask, "Which ones are here written about? Jew₁, Jew₂, Jew₃, or which? Does what he says fit them all?"

For the earmark of the prejudiced, from Hitler to the anonymous writer of letters, is the refusal to say which; is the inconsiderate condemnation of "everyone" to whom the label can apply; is the wholesale attack on the innocent as well as on the guilty; is, in short, the obliteration of the individual.

To remember to index is to keep the processes of intelligence ongoing. To speak as if individuals were non-existent, as if what is said need not take them into consideration, is to pave the way for bigotry and obscurationism.

Wherever the philosophy of democracy is asserted, one doctrine is sure to be affirmed: a widening and deepening respect for the integrity of individuals. From de Tocqueville down to the present, men have sought in the workings of democratic institutions the promotion of "a sense of dignity and worth in each individual and a recognition by each individual of the dignity and worth of others."

We can do no less, if we would acquire that "sense," than to bring the individual to existence in our speech and in our thought. We can do more, much more readily, after we have been rid of the verbal phantasms which so becloud our vision.

In the words of William James.

The obstinate insisting that Tweedledum is not Tweedledee is the bone and marrow of life. ... The practical consequence of such a philosophy is the well-known democratic respect for the sacredness of individuality.

THE NECESSITY OF INDEXING

All this discussion of similarities and differences, groups and individuals, general and specific could be quickly summarized and passed over were not the neglect of these distinctions so fraught with the possibility of social disaster. For it is one thing to admit these notions and quite another to put them to use. It is quite impossible to overemphasize the extent of the non-application of what we know, for in Archibald MacLeish's diagnosis, "such is the character of what everyone knows that no one knows it with enthusiasm." When we shall know these things so enthusiastically that our awareness of them comes automatically, then may our dealings with people be purged of the confusions that lead to intolerance.

If we do not make these distinctions, a host of stupid reactions go unchecked. Suppose, on some occasion while walking down a flight of stairs in your home, you slip, fall, and break your arm. Your grievance and hurt are real. You seek to prevent a recurrence, so you put a piece of carpet on the slippery steps. You have dealt with the "offender," and life goes on.

But suppose you are not so sensible. Instead, you begin to
orate. You make definitions, not distinctions. You say, "Stairs are the instruments of destruction. They are the means of bringing unhappiness to my world. Their existence is a constant threat. I dislike them, and henceforth I do business only with those who live in stairless houses. Furthermore, houses equipped with stairs are not going to be built in my neighborhood." And so an Anti-Stairite is born, fully armed for dispute and action.

We should analyze such a pattern of response this way: The Anti-Stairite assumes the "identity" of steps. He acts as if each were just like every other. Therefore, if one causes him damage, so do all the rest. If all the rest are hurtful, who can say that he is not justified in his stair-baiting? Given the original premise, the argument seems logic-tight, and the conclusion inescapable. But that assumption of identity has to be exposed and its falsity trumpeted to all who will listen. Steps is not Step. To transfer one's dislike from one to the other is to fail to see that the other is different. Mark Twain's caution belongs in this place.

We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it—and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on the hot stove-lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove-lid again—and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one any more.

Also relevant is this note by George Bernard Shaw.

The only man who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measure anew every time he sees me, whilst all the rest go on with their old measurements, and expect them to fit me.

Our serious human difficulties do not center on reactions to steps, stove-lids, and measurements but to individuals. Substitute Jew, Negro, Catholic, or anyone else for the inanimate objects, and the phenomena of prejudice and mass blaming come in the wake of such non-differentiated thinking. George Washington was once moved to write of this disturbing habit in General Braddock:

The General, by frequent breaches of contract, has lost all patience;
and for want of that temper and moderation, which should be
used by a man of sense upon these occasions, will, I fear, repre-
sent us in a light we little deserve; for, instead of blaming the
individuals, as he ought, he charges all his disappointments to
public supineness, and looks upon the country, I believe, as void
of honour and honesty.

The nightly reports from Berlin by E. E. Ward, broadcasting
Nazi-inspired calumnies, are an outgrowth of the failure to see
differences. He was originally known as Edward Leopold
Delaney, and, as Edwin Hartrich tells it,

It started in Chicago. At least, that was Delaney's version. It seems
he lost his job to a brother-in-law of his boss. He has never for-
gotten nor forgiven the Jewish race for that.

In his *Inside Europe*, John Gunther shows the inexorable work-
ing of the transfer of hate from the "offender" to all others
similar only in some respects.

After he [General Goering] had returned to Berlin (1918), a
socialist mob saw him in uniform and forcibly tore his officer's
insignia from his coat lapels. Foaming with rage, he swore venge-
geance. His hatred of socialists, which is psychopathic in intensity,
dates from that day. This incident is important to Nazi history. It is
not entirely fanciful to assume that much of the Brown Terror
was directly motivated by this incident.1

It is not even necessary that the original dealings be with
"real people." This example from Bruno Lasker's *Race Atti-
tudes in Children* shows the shifting of an antipathy derived
from words to non-verbal human beings. This might not hap-
pen so readily were children inoculated with the vaccine of a
consciousness of differences.

The word "Jew" always awakens in my mind [said one young
woman] a momentary feeling of unpleasantness. I have never
had any experience with a Jew which would arouse this feeling,
and I was unable to account for it until I remembered a fairy tale
which somebody read to me when I was small. In this story the
villain is a Jew, lying, thieving and altogether a despicable charac-
ter. The study must have made a deep impression on me, and as I

1937, 1938, 1940, by John Gunther.

had never seen a Jew, my childish mind pictured them all like
this one.2

Lasker himself discusses one instance of the perverting effects
of reading unaccompanied by such inoculation.

It does not require the description of whole peoples in a piece of
literature widely read by children to create a prejudice against
them. Often a single character of fiction suffices to fix for many
generations popular attitudes toward a racial group. The out-
standing example, probably, is Shakespeare's Shylock. For three
centuries this classic of the schoolroom, *The Merchant of Venice*,
has taught the boys and girls, not of the English-speaking coun-
tries alone, that the Jews are a crafty, designing, usurious cruel
people. Shylock became the symbol of a race.3

The mechanism of transfer is documented in the essay
"Where Do We Get Our Prejudices?" by Robert L. Duffus, in
the admission of a woman who said,

"I have a rather decided prejudice against the Negro. I don't
know why I have this feeling, unless it is because when I was a
small child a story was told me of a white girl who was kid-
napped by two Negro renegades. The picture, even today, is very
vivid to me."4

Here is another confession of interest.

"When I was a little girl just starting to school, some one told me
that in all the Catholic churches the Catholics kept weapons
and ammunition in the basements, all ready at the slightest provo-
cation to make war on the Protestants and kill them. The same
person told me that she knew a Catholic lady who had said that
she could wade in Protestants' blood up to her knees with a smile
on her face. I have had Catholic girl friends since then, some of
the best friends I have known, but I could never get rid of my
first impressions."5

Lest you assert too hastily that such awareness of differences
is beyond the comprehension of children, it might not be amiss
to point out that this wisdom is sometimes manifested in
them with unassuming clarity. The author of the children's

3. *Ibid*.
5. *Ibid*. 
play, *The Three Bears*, puts in the mouth of the Baby the insight that is not apparent in the father.

Father Bear: Get even with the (Grizzly) cub, for its mother killed your mother.
Baby Bear: But the cub didn’t do it!
Father Bear: But a bear’s a bear, and I say kill him!

The moment the Wards and the Hitlers shout their hysterical “But a Jew’s a Jew” without coming to see that Jew, is not Jew, just as bear is not bears; in their very blindness there is heaped up the fury and the rage which leads without restraint to the “and I say kill him,” which means “anyone even remotely like him whether implicated or not.”

And for those disposed to judge “Catholics” by the behavior of the leader of the Christian Front or by the utterances which stem from the Shrine of the Little Flower, Hamilton Basso in *Days Before Lent* says something most pertinent.

I would not take it upon myself to defend the institutionalized Church, I have known too many priests, however, good priests and bad priests, sincere ones and insincere ones, not to realize that it is fatal and foolish to indict individuals with whatever indictment you may choose to draw up against an institution or a class. There are always exceptions; hundreds, thousands, perhaps millions of them; and exceptions, in science, do not prove the rule. They knock the rule all to hell.6

Do we seem to say that Ward, Braddock, Goering, the Father Bear, et al. have no justifiable grievance? No. We must understand that each was wronged and hurt by somebody. And if they would turn about so as to direct their anger and rage to the somebody responsible at the time, even the loudest assertion of the doctrines of fair play may well feel moved to defend their responses. The logic of events suggests that justice is served when the balancing of the books has its counterpart in the business of living. Ward’s enmity for his boss is to be understood even though deplored. If he had stopped there, if his enmity had been allocated to the individuals responsible for his discomfort, then what we know as prejudice could not exist. It is the development and spread of his hate encompassing those who in no wise participated in his discomfort that culminates in the tragic phenomenon we would deal with.

Our task in dissolving prejudices is now clear. We are not to try to prevent the Wards from disliking those who hurt them. We should not try to stop young readers from hating “evil” characters in books. We must, instead, seek to localize, to keep the enmities there. And we must accept such negative responses to particular situations as logical and inevitable. The very thoroughness of this limiting effort will simplify the problem of human relations, for it is easier to cope with antipathies in narrow areas than when they are widely extended.

In his analysis of “The Jewish Problem in America,” Albert Jay Nock has taken full cognizance of the prejudice mechanism described here.

He [the Occidental] is also more inclined to bring an indictment against a whole Oriental people on the strength of the occasional rascality or swiney which he has encountered in individuals. Where the Oriental is concerned he is quicker to generalize, to take omne ignotum pro magnifico, as on our Western coast when he evolved the maxim that “for ways that are dark and for tricks that are vain the heathen Chinese is peculiar.” All this may be deplored as unjust and indefensible, but there it is for our social architects and engineers to deal with as best they may. The civilized Occidental knows that an Oriental person, like any other, must be granted its fair proportion of rogues and swine, and he makes his general estimate accordingly; but here again it is not the view of the civilized Occidental which counts, but the view of the Occidental mass-man.7

We may overlook Nock’s argument that the “mass-man” is more prone to “indictment against a whole people” than is the “civilized” man, for one can find instances to the contrary. It is his challenge to the “social architects and engineers” that we here accept. There is a way to treat such primitive orienta-

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tions. The strategy of attack will manoeuver in every way possible to emphasize the allocating of one's hate. It will try to teach the necessity of indexing as widely as possible. It will have as its major objective the education of individuals everywhere to the recognition that individuals exist and must be dealt with. It will not deny that similarities between people are observable, but it will announce the indisputable existence of differences as well. It will move to bring people away from their befuddled habits of talking to observe the human beings around them.

It will do no good to underestimate the magnitude of what is involved here. It will take the combined efforts of all the available "men of good will"—and more besides. But if we would achieve the kind of world in which men can live with other men, considerations of difficulty are small argument against this small first step. In a nation at war, talk of arming is not strange. We should not have it stopped, but extended so that we arm to the teeth—and also the brain.

**IN THE NAME OF DEMOCRACY**

One of the effects of the totalitarian revolution, whether willed or not, is the stunting and blighting of human consciousness. The concentration camp should become for us the symbol of the spurious unity achieved when men are herded and stamped like cattle. Unity in a Democracy can not come from such simple brutality. It will develop most securely when we have established, in the words of Franz Boas,

The democratic principle that a citizen is to be judged solely by the readiness with which he fits himself into the social structure and by the value of his contributions to the country's development.

That principle does not yet have the enduring support of the millions whose help is essential for the extension of the democratic way of life. Europe now, in many places, is in the grip of those who would police the stranger and the alien to their death. And nearer home, too, can be seen the vanguard of the "Fascist mentality." You need but watch them, ready to trample on any emerging individuals. The keynote of their Weltanschauung is not, as is often naively stated, "a dislike of those who are unlike themselves." That analysis of their state of mind is too gross, too easy. Look more closely and see how their hostilities move into action. When their mass-hates are unleashed, they discriminate against others exactly to the degree that they fail to discriminate between them. Here is the slogan for our times: We must learn to discriminate between—not against. Now is the hour for a declaration to the conquered in Europe, and everywhere else, that we fight for the emergence
once again of free individuals. We can take our cue from Dr. Albert Francis Blakeslee.

Opposition to totalitarianism is not merely because it attacks man's rights but also because it suppresses his personality. Individuality is the kernel of democracy, the biological basis of the struggle for freedom. When we fight for individuality we fight on the side of nature.¹

The tragic image of the concentration camp will have to be replaced by the clear picture of the living individual. When we focus on it, we shall come to understand anew what tolerance means; the reiteration, not the obliteration of differences.

In 1905 Samuel McChord Crothers summarized eloquently the burden of what has been said here. The intervening years have left their mark on people—but not on his words.²

Poor man! Whether he have a black skin or a yellow, and whatever be the racial type which his features suggest, the trouble is the same. He is sacrificed on the altar of our stupidity. He suffers because of our mental color-blindness, which prevents our distinguishing persons. We see only groups, and pride ourselves on our defective vision. By and by we may learn to be a little ashamed of our cruelly ambitious generalizations. A finer gift is the ability to know a man when we see him. It may be that Nature is "careful of the type," and "careless of the single life." If that be so, it may be the part of wisdom for us to give up some of our anxieties about the type, knowing that Nature will take care of that. Such relief from excessive cosmic responsibility will give us much more time for our proper work, which is to deal justly, each single life.³

² The basic points of view expressed in these pages represent an attempt to apply some of the "uncommon common sense" of Alfred Korzybski as developed in his Science and Sanity, An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics, The Science Press Printing Co., Lancaster, Penna., 1941.

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It is with a particular sense of gratitude and humility that we publish the following authentic letter recently written by one Japanese.

—Editor

OAKLAND, CALIF.
April 2, 1942

DEAR CUSTOMER:

We wish to take this opportunity to thank you for the very cordial business relationship in the past. As of Saturday, April 4th, 1942, our delivery service will be discontinued. However, our office at 3860 Piedmont Avenue will be maintained to accommodate your needs for the present with cash and carry service at a discount.

We do not wish to inconvenience you with a task of finding another laundry, which may take a few weeks. May we suggest the Market Laundry Company, Inc., located at 750 Myrtle Street, Oakland, where you may anticipate the same quality and service. Simply dial TE—2900 for a prompt and courteous service.

Inasmuch as we regret to leave our birth place and home, we are willing to cooperate with military authorities in this wartime measure requiring both alien and American citizen Japanese to evacuate from vital military zones. But then, we look forward to this evacuation with the spirit of pioneers. We shall establish an Utopia—a new frontier of this great nation.

Again thanking you for the most enjoyable relationship, we remain

Very truly yours,

TONY M. YOKOMIZO
Proprietor, SUNSET LAUNDRY

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Next month: "Social Action in Congregationalism," by C. Howard Hopkins