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Book Review

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Book Reviews

Reviewed by Arnold H. Sutin*

DECISIONS FOR A DECADE: POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR THE 1970's, by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968, 222 pp.

No declamations describing persistent wide spread social wrongs, recognized to be wrongs; nor the painting of yards of pathetic renditions of governmental neglect and indifference in executing needed social and economic changes; nor the sprinkling of the body politic with piecemeal legislation, will expunge such wrongs or effect any meaningful changes social or otherwise. All such declamations, renditions or legislation, regardless of quality, amount to lamentation and despair.

Sincerity and the opportunity for legislative reform may momentarily drive men forward in exaggerated optimism, but sincerity and the sporadic cranking out of laws will not, however, resist the gripping chill of prospective years and decades of frustration which commonly links the sonorous call for major action and accomplished deeds—a chill imparted by the conscious knowledge within us that, only by sustained economic and political organization, guided by comprehensive and basic programs, political and economic, coupled with mass agitation, may one ever hope to convince a complacent public of the vital need for social reconstruction.

In my judgment, it is by reason of the violation of the aforementioned political truisms, that Senator Edward Moore Kennedy's book *Decision for a Decade* falls short of the mark; in addition the volume is prosaic in syntax, superficial and fragmentary in content which only further detracts from its educational worth. Senator Kennedy has it would appear from this reviewer's stance, to have placed himself by reason of this volume's content, style and manner, within that tribe of shallow inveighers who, with phrases of *bombastus furiosus* seek to sell their literary wares to a bullish market. Finally, *Decisions for a Decade* and books of its ilk, are calculated, regrettably, to turn the concerned reader's thoughts away from the essential causes for our great social and economic dilemmas, to their symptoms; from the fundamental needs for real progress to short term means via legislative sops, and thus turning these very means into ends in themselves, ends which cannot hope to deal with those gigantic, social and economic man issues now thundering at every door for admission and solution.

Senator Kennedy launches his volume by a short introduction which essentially sets the guiding theme of the entire volume and with literary

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indulgence I shall paraphrase Kennedy in good campaign rhetoric thusly, "America can do better every day in every way for all its people." As to how this may be realistically achieved is not convincingly established at any time, but the good Senator does a reasonably creditable job in cataloging topically selective problem areas both domestic and foreign and in advancing in staccato fashion many varied legislative palliatives, in solution thereof. A fair specimen, of the Senator's approach may be noted from the following descriptions:

The narrowing of democracy; The consequences of alienation; The tasks ahead; New forums for Democracy.

The need to serve; A volunteer army; flaw in the draft; A program for reform.

The first duty of Government, the control of crime; Are the courts the cause; How to support the police; Control of firearms against the real cause of crime and so on,

all of which are reminiscent of Associated Press headlines commonly read in our dailies. As to the first, touching upon political and social alienation, the good Senator would promote presidential primaries and the extensive use of opinion polls; as to the second, the need to serve in the military, the development principally of an all volunteer army is proffered and finally, for the control of crime, in large measure, the implementation of vigorous police enforcement throughout the country coupled with use of "community service officers" hired in appropriate cases from the diverse neighborhoods of the city. One worn out palliative after another in monotonous succession and unhappily the good Senator's approach in foreign affairs follows a strikingly similar route.

Throughout the volume, not a meaningful page by way of causative affirmation for the underlying social unrest, dissent and turmoil everywhere; not a page on the facts and laws which expound on the genesis of the plague around us, facts and laws which may marshal this nation and point imperatively to the path it must take; not a page regarding the great internal conflict between the multitudinous entities pervading our society demonstrating the illuminating sociological principle that it is unenlightened self-interest which has carved the history of our nation; its past, its present, and its future; not a page on the genesis and rationale for persistent and wide spread poverty, with the failure to afford a decent existence to millions of Americans despite the potential for enormous productivity; not one page in demonstration or rectification of this great tragic phenomenon of our civilization; not a page concerning the means to negate the effect of commanding economic laws that recite the demise of our small entrepreneurs, all factious legislation notwithstanding; not a page on the affliction of escalating living costs, disassociated with proportional increases to millions of wage earners incomes, an affliction which remains politically unassailable; not a

page on our pathetic state of affairs which seemingly demand tremendous volumes of laws and still more laws as so many lures to allow the drive for basic social change to radiate into vacancy; yes, so many laws to keep a near disjointed society from running wild and lead in their common lack of observance to contempt for all laws. Alas, not even a page to guard against the quagmire of sentimentality and naïveté which the author's many commentaries engender.

It is now winter as the reviewer pens these lines and it is figuratively speaking, the bleak winter of our political and economic discontent. Our country is being choked to death, figuratively speaking, by its own pulsating and ulcerating tonsils but Senator Kennedy would negate any fundamental change from traditional thoughts and actions. Another winter is with us and correspondingly on the human scene more short term sops and sterile stock and trade slogans swing forth to do battle with the social dragons among us. In vain do we listen to the mass media pulpsters and literary hucksters who would treat the malaise about us with the dilettante's hand. It is winter and another volume lies before me full of sound and some fury signifying "abnegation."

*Reviewed by James T. Flaherty**

THE LOST ART OF CROSS EXAMINATION, by J. W. Ehrlich (G. P. Putnam Sons, New York, 1970) pp. 192.

Man flocks to the arena where combatant meets combatant, be it a coliseum, rink, field, court, or ring, be it man versus man, animal versus animal, or man versus animal. Participation in this form of psychological release as a vicarious experience is as old as mankind. In his introduction, Mr. Percy Foreman warns the reader to expect the trial lawyer to be "a man who relishes a fight," whose "devastating courtroom performance" combines the art and skill of a lawyer and a professional boxer. Author Ehrlich gives early evidence of his killer instincts—the killer instincts of the professional matador who will toy, fence, and play with the bull; who will tease and torment; who will solicit the rhythmic olé from the fascinated crowd after a particularly exciting play, and then thrust home.

The author notes the distinction between the theory of a trial and the reality of trial—the theory based on the book, and the reality founded on the frailties of human nature. An interesting conflict occurs when he denigrates the validity of the human senses (sight, sound, memory, etc.), then admits his own use of his senses as indispensable tools of the trade. (Whose ox?). It was rather unkind to suggest that the easily confused witness is untruthful. When witness X says it was this way and

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