

# A Conspiracy Heart Pound Louder

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The conspiracy theory of life—or, "they're plotting to get me"—threatens to make us a nation of paranoids.

No longer is it fashionable to have someone substantially disagree with you. Now, if the next man falls to see matters as you see them, then he is obviously part of a scheme to: (a) overthrow the neighborhood; (b) bribe officials; (c) get rich at your expense; or, (d) all of the above.

Dr. Eric Berne's "Games People Play" became a best-seller partly because it helped explain the motives—obscure or devious—of the opposition.

Now, a new and lighter book, "How To Make Yourself Miserable" (Dan Greenburg and Marcia Jacobs), promises to be a shelf-emptier with such probing questions as: "Can you take the simple worries and commonplace fears of everyday life and transform them into true misery-making anxieties?"

Jules Feiffer, nervous lines over the faces of his wise cartoons, has made a career out of puncturing the complex persecutions and vice versa of people.

But the need for a conspiracy theory is not always funny. The shriek of plot is the political siren of both extremes. Rather than argue, explain, debate, call the other guys foul names and wail that evil secrets dwell in the hearts of men.

In Comment, the newspaper of Immaculate Heart College, Sister Mary Jean takes a look at the "New Left," finds it blustering in the shadows of the "Old Right." And it is marked by the same intolerance, the same denial of the complex, the same repudiation of the political, the same use of rhetoric at the expense of substance.

Our own City Council, the pilloried hall of 1,000 fracasas, has only recently been torn by conspiracy charges.

From the left, dozens of liberal-minded conservationists came to believe the City Planning Department had to be in clandestine cahoots with a group of hillside developers.

How else could professionals approve a plan the neighbors couldn't appreciate?

In the blur of accusations, somehow the fact that the developers were based in New York seemed to underline the "proof" of conspiracy. Secret deals from faraway places.

From the right, dozens of soft-gummed conservatives came to Council charging that fluoridation was part of the worldwide Communist plot. Fluorides might end tooth decay, heh-heh, but the real purpose was poisonous—to brainwash by mouthwash.

This hogwash, or at least the pressure therefrom, was enough to defeat a sane medical measure. One councilman admitted he was not afraid of fluoridation but he was scared of his constituents' wrath if he didn't vote nay.

And the singular tragedy of the Kennedy assassination is now thoroughly bleared by conspiracy seekers. When it happened three years ago, the right and left each chose to see their favorite devil organizations behind the pathetic figure of Lee Oswald. Then, for a while, the findings of the Warren Commission quieted most intriguing theorists.

In the recent wake of some scholarly and not-so-thoughtful questions, the conspiracy-callers have returned, haunting the tragedy.

Where there is any uncertainty, they prefer to find the surety of a secret plot.

When the Warren report was first published, there were complaints about its haste, that it may have been issued quickly to allay fears of conspiracy because Americans are emotionally unsuited to believe in a conspiratorial way of life.

Wrong, I'm afraid. I think we've changed.

Now the extremes have shoved a step farther, to charge that the commission report was itself a conspiracy to hide the original conspiracy.

Screams of intrigue, coming from all directions, have deafened the center.

You can hardly ever hear trust any more. *End*