

*Return to the*

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October 21, 1966

Mr. Norman Cousins  
The Saturday Review  
380 Madison Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Sir:

How utterly dismaying it is to learn that one I respected as a man of principle and a worthy intellectual leader is but a cereal-box Canute so insensitive he does not feel his feet are wet and so unaware he fails to recognize the tide of truth is swirling around them!

That you should seek to stem the truth is in itself a shock. If it is that you long to protect something, then I tell you what you should have learned as a boy, that the only defense is truth. You cannot stamp it into the earth. It is tragic that you try. But as you try, it rises again.

Your begowned literary prostitute helps you not and hurts ~~me~~ the people, in their innate understanding, ~~and~~ ~~you~~ and you and others of like ilk succeed only in making the defense of what you seek to defend more difficult for those who strive to do that in the only way it can be done, with honor and integrity.

The father of the whore is not shielded by proclamations of her chastity. They merely demean him. In the end they strip him of what might be his shelter, that he did not want her to be a whore.

Your judge whom you appointed literary surgeon sharpened an axe, found it was not a scalpel and that he did not know how to use a sharp edge anyway, so he switched it and flailed away with the blunt end, blindly, passionately and quite dishonorably. He dishonored not me but you. He battered not me but our already bleeding national honor.

Go back and read my letter of May 9, little boy who plays God, so that when the day comes, as soon it will and must, you may drink the full measure of the shame that is yours.

What a sorry day it is for our country that in her time of need her intellectual leaders are both stupid and cowardly! What a trying time when judges and lawyers, faced with injustice and dishonor, are silent! Or worse, seek to defend injustice and dishonor! Who, then, is to show the people the way? Who is to lead, to show the path of wisdom, to divert from misdirection those charging feet impelled by the release of pent-up emotion?

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It is an unequal challenge I have twice addressed to your judge, a farmer against a judge in his own courtroom. I predict he will not accept it, for he cannot but know he has beshitted the robe and defiled the pen.

Should he be weak but willing, I invite you to join him. In the past two years I have learned that truth is indeed a shield, and I fear him no more with you at his side.

Without respect,

Harold Weisberg