

Responses to the 'Lessons of Eagleton'

To the Editor:

In the Op-Ed article by Arnold A. Hutschnecker (Oct. 30) we have yet another prescription out of 1984 for assuring the mental cleanliness of our leaders. Not only would we enjoy mentally certified candidates, but also candidates whose mental fitness had been groomed and screened since childhood. Great.

But who would certify the physicians? How will I know that my candidate has been cleaned by a process acceptable to me?

This is a proposal for social sterility. Far better to accept the risks and put our faith in the people who vote. The people will learn wisdom from cases like Senator Eagleton's, as they did over the "Catholic issue" which President Kennedy put to rest. The people learn slowly, perhaps, but I for one feel much safer in their hands than in the hands of a few self-confident professionals.

S. A. MORSE
Pelham, Mass.

To the Editor:

The "Lessons of Eagleton" was a superb presentation of the question of mental stability of our public leaders. It should be required reading for all students, teachers and parents.

JAMES R. MCCORMACK
Leonia, N. J.

To the Editor:

One would hope that thoughtful readers would appreciate the potential dangers the article suggests. However, one point that he made was not developed and I wonder why.

Where and how do people learn self-control or self-discipline? It is not something we are born with. We

cannot wait until adulthood to master it. Dr. Hutschnecker advocates the use of role-playing from ages six to sixteen. This may encourage understanding of others but does not necessarily mean learning self-discipline. Why wait until age six to learn to accept responsibility for one's own actions? Experience is fine but with guidance it is better. Where are our responsible leaders to come from if learning self-discipline is not made part of the child's early years?

F. COOMBS
Weehawken, N. J.

To the Editor:

Dr. Hutschnecker implied that John F. Kennedy was mentally unstable because he suffered from Addison's disease. Addison's disease is simply a malfunction of the adrenal cortex and can be controlled easily by cortisone. It has nothing to do with mental disorders, as the doctor must know.

If Dr. Hutschnecker had used his own psychiatric patient, Richard Nixon, to illustrate his point, it would have been much more apt, particularly insofar as "a gnawing hunger for a plus of power" is concerned.

I am shocked and disappointed that The Times permitted Dr. Hutschnecker's gratuitous slur on the name of a great President to appear on its pages.

W. K. MCCULLOCH
Ridgefield, Conn.

To the Editor:

Though in total sympathy with the concept of "positively" aggressive statesman and politicians, I believe that a disservice was created by Dr. Hutschnecker's article. In my estimate the basic problem that the thesis confronts is that by concentrating solely

upon the psychological framework of the decision-maker it ignores the historical and ideological context the man operated within. To be specific, our cold war policy has been rather consistent from Truman through Johnson, though necessary at times has made us change from one strategy and tactic to another more suitable to the resources at hand.

As for personalities, President Kennedy, as one of our "neurotic" leaders, though a true cold warrior, rejected the more ambitious recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to either bomb or invade Cuba during the missile crisis. His choosing of the blockade was facilitated by the steady urgings of his brother Robert and another "neurotic," Secretary McNamara.

We must surely go far to find a more self-assured, vital man in our highest office than Lyndon Johnson, yet his record on Vietnam and the Dominican Republic speaks for itself. Alternately, it is quite fashionable to speak of our current President's psychological shortcomings and insecurities. I have not the expertise to accept or reject this topical theme on a scientific basis, yet it was and is the current President who is doing quite a bit to "normalize" relations with former ideological rivals and who may be designated by history as the "neurotic" who ended the cold war.

STEWART REISER
Cambridge, Mass.

To the Editor:

I find Dr. Hutschnecker's essay one of the few substantial psycho-political contributions to public enlightenment in pragmatic politics.

I can agree with most points of Dr. Hutschnecker. His thoughtful article made one realize how scantily research

in psycho-politology is known to leaders and readers-at-large and that the public is unaware of the differences between true leaders of mankind and power-hungry authoritarian politicians. There are Hannibals, Genghis Khans and Attilas, but there also are the Schweitzers, the Count Bernadottes and the Dag Hammarskjolds.

DR. HANS ROSENWALD
Principality of Liechtenstein

To the Editor:

Implying that Mr. McNamara was inhuman or mentally unstable because in the public's mind he was associated with computers, is the essence of twisted logic. This kind of simplistic, irresponsible emotionalism is what the country can very well do without.

Mr. McNamara certainly doesn't need defending by me, so I am using the following quote to refute Dr. Hutschnecker:

Would the man who "saw human lives in the light of cold computerized statistics" have said, as Mr. McNamara did in the Pentagon Papers:

"The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1,000 noncombatants per week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one. It could conceivably produce a costly distortion in the American national consciousness, and in the world image of the United States—especially if the damage to North Vietnam is complete enough to be 'successful.'"

Dr. Hutschnecker reminds me of the expert who never makes a small mistake on his way to the grand fallacy.

ROBERT PRAVDIR
Kew Gardens, N. Y.