

WHO IS THE ENEMY?

by Norman Cousins

Who is the enemy? The enemy is not solely an atomic-muscled totalitarian power with a world ideology.

The enemy is many people. He is man whose only concern about the world is that it stay in one piece during his own lifetime. He is invariably up to his hips in success and regards his good fortune not as a challenge to get close to the real problems of the age but as proof of the correctness of everything he does. Nothing to him is less important than the shape of things to come or the needs of the next generation. Talk of the legacy of the past or of human destiny leaves him cold. Historically, he is the disconnected man. Hence, when he thinks about the world at all, it is usually in terms of his hope that the atomic fireworks can be postponed for fifteen or twenty years. He is an enemy because nothing less than a passionate concern for the rights of unborn legions will enable the world itself to become connected and whole.

The enemy is a man who not only believes in his own helplessness but actually worships it. His main article of faith is that there are mammoth forces at work which the individual cannot possibly comprehend, much less alter or direct. And so he expends vast energies in attempting to convince other people that there is nothing they can do. He is an enemy because of the proximity of helplessness to hopelessness.

The enemy is a man who has a total willingness to delegate his worries about the world to officialdom. He assumes that only the people in authority are in a position to know and act. He believes that if vital information, essential to the making of public decisions, is withheld, it can only be for a

good reason. If a problem is wholly or partially scientific in nature, he will ask no questions even though the consequences of the problem are political or social.

The enemy is any man in government, high or low, who keeps waiting for a public mandate before he can develop big ideas of his own, but who does little or nothing to bring about such a mandate. Along with this goes an obsessive fear of criticism. To such a man, the worst thing in the world that can happen is to be accused of not being tough-minded in the nation's dealing with other governments. He takes in his stride, however, the accusation that he is doing something that may result in grave injury to the human race.

The enemy is a scientist who makes his calling seem more mysterious than it is, and who allows this mystery to interfere with public participation in decisions involving science or the products of science. His own specialized training may have shielded him from the give-and-take so essential to the democratic process in government.

The enemy is any man in the pulpit who by his words and acts encourages his congregation to believe that the main purpose of the church, or the synagogue, is to provide social respectability for its members. He talks about the sacredness of life but he never relates that concept to the real and specific threats that exist today to such sacredness. He identifies himself as a man of God but feels no urge to speak out against a situation in which the nature of man is likely to be altered and cheapened, the genetic integrity of man violated, and distant generations condemned to a lower species. He is a dispenser of balm rather than an awakener of conscience. He is an enemy because the crisis today is as much a spiritual crisis as it is a political one.