

October 5, 1962

Mr. Norman Cousins
Editor
The Saturday Review
25 West 45th Street
New York 36, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Cousins:

As a somewhat active participant (at least intellectually) in the present conservative movement in our country, I read your editorial of September 1, 1962, "In Defense of the Genuine Conservative," with more than average interest.

There are several ideas expressed in your editorial with which I should like to take issue. You say: "The principal difference between conservatism and liberalism is represented not so much by disagreement over the nature of a free society or its goals as by disagreement over the approaches." Here I would have to disagree with you most emphatically. To us in the "conservative" movement there is every difference in the world between a society based on collectivism and one based on individualism. The difference is quite deep in every respect, that is, philosophically, morally, ethically, economically, and politically. I can't imagine a more fundamental philosophic schism in American life today as that which exists between the "conservatives" and the "liberals", or to be more exact, between the "individualists" and the "collectivists."

Your definition of a "genuine conservative" really does not apply to ideology at all but to methodology. There is a whole area of ideological ferment in America today which has simply escaped the attention of the Saturday in particular and the liberals in general.

My one major complaint is that reputable liberal magazines like your own refuse to open your pages to any genuine exchange of ideas. The Saturday would perform a great intellectual service to this nation affording "equal time" to many of the outstanding intellectuals and scholars who today are part of the right-wing movement.

Very sincerely yours,

Samuel L. Blumenfeld

111 East 26th Street
New York 10, N. Y.

Saturday Review

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In Defense of the Genuine Conservative

A GREAT political tradition is in danger today of acute contamination through unsavory association. The tradition is conservatism, both political and economic. The contaminating agents are a wide assortment of persons and groups who have appropriated the label for uses totally alien to the historical development it represents. It is a clear case of ideological grand larceny and something ought to be done about it.

The term conservative has a specific background and meaning. It stands for stability as opposed to innovation; for restraint as opposed to daring; for the preservation of inherited conditions as opposed to drastic reform. These ideas are not only compatible with a free society; they have an essential place in it, along with genuine liberalism. True conservatism is opposed to liberalism, but not destructive of it. The principal difference between conservatism and liberalism is represented not so much by disagreement over the nature of a free society or its goals as by disagreement over the approaches. Both conservatism and liberalism serve as the twin structural supports of constitutional government.

In any event, there has sprung up over the past few years a strange array of noisy haters and spoilers who have arrogantly appointed themselves the standard bearers of the conservative banner. In thought and action they resemble far more a pack of political desperadoes than the inheritors of Gladstonian ideas and manners. They claim

to be conservatives, but exactly what is it that they would conserve? Would they conserve the Constitution of the United States? Only if some major surgery could be performed, especially on the first ten amendments. Would they conserve the one institution that has been specifically charged with the responsibility to preserve a constitutional form of government; namely, the Supreme Court? Only if they could expunge some Supreme Court justices and decisions they happen to detest. Would they conserve the ideals that animated the men who founded this nation—ideals that have to do with the basic nature of free man and his place in a free society? Only if these ideals could be twisted into their direct opposites.

They presume to speak in the name of Christianity, many of them, but they use it as though it were a blowtorch for consuming the Christian spirit. In what they do and say, they hold the Sermon on the Mount in contempt; if someone were to recite these kindly teachings, they would see red. Faith, hope, and charity are replaced by scorn, hate, and malice, and the chalice is filled to overflowing with bile.

There is a disheveled quality to their thinking, but some of them are not without intellectual pretensions. They claim affinity with such figures as Edmund Burke, Jeremy Bentham, Lord Acton, Alexander Hamilton, and, more recently, Senator Robert A. Taft. But names such as these are the syntactic props of respectability rather than any

valid philosophical or historical underpinning. When they intone the name of Burke, do they agree with him that "it is better to be the citizen of a humble commonwealth in the Alps, without a prospect of influence beyond the narrow frontier, than a subject of a superb aristocracy . . ."? Or that "government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants. Men have a right that these rights should be provided by this wisdom"?

Their particular animus is the word democracy. They believe that the United States is a republic and was never intended to be a democracy. But in this they are refuted by the one man in American history whom they claim as their progenitor, Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton did not hesitate to use the term "representative democracy." In fact, he described representative democracy, "where the right of election is well secured and regulated, and the exercise of the legislative, executive, and judiciary authorities is vested in select persons, chosen *really and not nominally by the people*" [italics ours] as that government that would "most likely be happy, regular, and durable."

And how do they reconcile their contempt for the term democracy with the statement by that prime figure of nineteenth-century English conservatism, Lord Randolph Churchill, that he did not care if they called him a Tory so long as they also called him a democrat?

THEY claim Robert Taft as their patron saint, but they are lucky that he is not alive to tear himself loose from their unwanted affections. For Robert Taft was a genuine conservative. He may have had his foot closer to the political brakes of legislative progress than any man of his time, but at least he insisted on staying on the main road. He was not out to supplant democratic institutions, but to keep them free of overly centralized controls. Even here, however, he recognized that housing and education were national problems and had to be handled accordingly. There were few stronger voices on the issues of civil rights and racial equality. As it concerned the United Nations—an object of supreme contempt by those who now speak in his name—Senator Taft felt that what was needed was not weaker but stronger world organization. He believed in the need for world law and felt the United States should take leadership inside the United Nations in that direction. In fact, this was the central theme of his book on American foreign policy.

Genuine conservatism is now being libeled by know-nothings. There is no reason to doubt that the tradition will survive the ordeal, but it may be unpleasant while it lasts. —N. C.

Saturday Review

25 West 45th Street, New York 36, N. Y.



Norman Cousins, Editor

November 1, 1962

Mr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld
111 East 26 Street
New York 10, New York

Dear Mr. Blumenfeld:

Many thanks for your forthright and closely reasoned letter on the liberal-conservative editorials. I'm sorry to learn that you don't agree with the outlook set forth in them, and sorry too to learn you think SR is a "liberal" magazine. Actually, we have striven to avoid doctrinaire block-thinking, and have tried instead to adopt a balanced, independent stance. While we don't keep ledger-accounts reflecting our liberal-conservative bylines, I think you will find that our pages contain representative American and international thought. I don't know how you would classify such writers as George Sokolsky, Joseph Alsop, William Buckley, Roscoe Drummond, and Barry Goldwater; but it is worth noting that they have appeared in SR's pages within the past year or so. To sum up, I can assure you that I don't choose among our contributors on the basis of their political commitments. Again, my thanks for writing to me.

Best wishes,

Norman Cousins
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NC - r

January 13, 1963

Mr. Norman Cousins
The Saturday Review
25 West 45th Street
New York 36, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Cousins:

Many thanks for your kind letter of November 1, 1962 which I am answering so belatedly. If you will recall you were responding to a letter of mine in which I took issue with your editorial of September 1, 1962, "In Defense of the Genuine Conservative." In your letter you wrote: "I don't know how you would classify such writers as George Sokolsky, Joseph Alsop, William Buckley, Roscoe Drummond, and Barry Goldwater." Permit me, as a conservative, to give you my views on these men.

Mr. Sokolsky would have to be classified as a moderate Republican. He was not an opponent of government intervention in economics, the progressive income tax, or other collectivist measures. Joseph Alsop has always struck me as being a liberal Republican, basically committed to the Welfare State ideology. William Buckley, surprisingly, is not an anti-statist. He is not opposed to the progressive income tax or government intervention in the economy. He is a quasi-libertarian, Hoover Republican, and as you know many of Hoover's measures were clearly in the direction of the New Deal philosophy of government. Roscoe Drummond is a moderate Republican. He is never clearly associated with anti-statism. Barry Goldwater is probably the most conservative of the group, but even Goldwater is not a purist. I am sure that he would be most reluctant to take a stand on such basic issues as the repeal of the income tax, the separation of economy and state, etc.

The writers I should hope to some day find in The Saturday Review are Prof. Ludwig von Mises, the greatest exponent of free market economics in our century; Nathaniel Branden, founder of a new school of psychology, namely Objectivist Psychology; Thomas Molnar, whose excellent book "The Two Faces of American Foreign Policy" has recently been published; and Robert Welch, one of the most interesting political writers this country has produced. This last name might be anathema to you, however, I think that the ultimate test of your editorial fairness would be in your willingness to bring yourself to elicit an article from Mr. Welch. That, in itself, would no doubt double the sale of any particular issue his article appeared in. The fact that not one single magazine will open its pages to Mr. Welch--although they will freely roast him alive at every opportunity--is what disturbs me more than anything else about our free press. Why don't you take the plunge and see what happens? Publishing might even

become exciting again.

With best wishes for the New Year,

Sincerely yours,

Samuel L. Blumenfeld

111 East 26th Street
New York 10, N. Y.

Saturday Review

25 West 45th Street, New York 36, N. Y.



Norman Cousins, Editor

January 25, 1963

Mr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld
111 East 26th Street
New York 10, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Blumenfeld:

Many thanks for your further vigorous comments on the question of gradations and distinctions within the conservative movement. Your remarks are suggestive and stimulating, and I will certainly keep them in mind during our editorial discussions in the coming year.

My reactions to your specific points are, predictably, mixed. I agree with your assessments of George Sokolsky, Joseph Alsop, and Barry Goldwater; I'm not so sure you are right about William Buckley's position, however. As to Prof. von Mises, Nathaniel Branden, Thomas Molnar, and Robert Welch, I can only repeat what you probably are aware of already: *Saturday Review* is an independent journal, and welcomes stimulating, responsible, balanced articles from all points of the compass. As you know, Sokolsky, Buckley, and Alsop have appeared in *Saturday Review's* pages. Any article submitted to us gets respectful consideration.

Again, my thanks for your straight-out comments.

Best wishes,

NC:fcf