

fault. TV may be the paradigmatic money-grubbing institution of our day. Show TV producers a connection between higher profits and more effective outreach to supporters of the NAACP, and Hollywood will beat down Kweisi Mfume's door.

What Mfume does not acknowledge is that you can work out deals on paper, but only the marketplace can ratify the terms of those deals. If the marketplace says, boy, oh, boy, those affirmative-action guys from the NAACP (because that is what they are) are terrific—then the rest takes care of itself. Endless vistas of blue sky. On the other hand, if the marketplace does not—well, let's get down to specifics—ratify a program with the approved mix of black and white characters or black and white ideas, then the audience will nix said program. And whatcha gonna do about it? Boycott the audience?

A corollary point: Educational preparation may not be everything, but those who get it enjoy an edge over their competitors. Why in the world wouldn't the NAACP want those African-Americans it dispatches to white-dominated fields, e.g., television and constitutional law, to go there carrying the best and sharpest educational tools available? Here again, the marketplace rules. Kweisi Mfume cannot hold your hand forever.

Yet the NAACP's interest in raising and maintaining educational standards, if it exists, is indiscernible. Ideological zeal demands opposition to vouchers and private schools and deep suspicion of rigorously enforced standards of performance. What a broad, smooth road to irrelevance: Ignore the way the world operates; posit a counter-reality; insist on the pureness and eternal validity of that reality.

America is still a mostly free country. You can believe what you want. Left alone to lean heavily on a phantasm, just do not be surprised, or too angry, when in broad daylight the thing goes

poof, and into the dust you go tumbling.

Kweisi Mfume's America is a nation that simply cannot repent enough, now or, seemingly, ever. Jim Crow may be planted in the cold, cold ground. Nevertheless, if we are going to have an NAACP, it has got to raise money and hell alike. It needs, in consequence, a Righteous Cause. The "rebel" flag will do in a pinch. The gun companies will do. Adam's Mark? Great.

By the way, not five minutes ago I had a conversation that strikes me as somewhat to the point. A middle-aged Ethiopian-born man who delivers mail in our building recently became a U.S. citizen. He is one of the gentlest, most decent people I know, and I relish his friendship. The day he took the oath, he came to work in a red, white, and blue vest and necktie and brought his papers by to show me. He has a son completing medical residency and a daughter still in community college. A couple of us were chatting with him in the hall. Some American blacks do not accept him as black, he said. His ancestors did not work the plantations; he himself lacks the legacy of white oppression. That is what makes you black—because, if I may interpolate, Kweisi Mfume says so, and that's the law and the prophets.

My friend soldiers on, with humility and good cheer. He wants to be an American: the old-fashioned variety. And I say, God bless him, because he will make it. Theoretically blacker blacks, who take their cues from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and who cannot let the past go because hurting makes them feel so good—to these, various things need saying, mostly for their own sake.

The most direct piece of advice that comes to mind may be the most useful: Get a life. c

Plea Denied

by *Richard Moore*

At dawn
to memories of crime,
"Begone!"
I screamed. "Some other time!
Save your disgusting onset
till sunset."

"Your faults
cry now," they thundered, "roar
and waltz
wild on your ballroom floor
because you need to suffer,
you suffer."

"Come, knit
us nicely in your song.
We'll fit.
You cannot get along
(so don't you dare to flout us)
without us."

Reactionary Radicals

RADICAL REACTIONARIES



Tale of a “Seditionist”

The Story of Lawrence Dennis

by Justin Raimondo

Lawrence Dennis was an outsider in a movement of outsiders, a unique and largely solitary figure whose career as a writer—and notorious “seditionist”—embodies the tragedy and bravery of the Old Right, the pre-World War II “America First” generation of conservative intellectuals and activists. In many important ways, Dennis is the prototype of modern “paleo-conservatives.” His career as a controversialist and the leading American nationalist intellectual of his time charts the rise and fall of the Old Right—and, perhaps, holds a lesson for us today.

Born in Atlanta in 1893, Dennis had what historian Justus Doenecke describes as “a varied career,” which included a stint as a “boy evangelist.” In 1901, after the death of his father, the eight-year-old Dennis traveled to Europe with his mother, where he became conversant in French and German. After four years, he returned to America, a young cosmopolitan. His mother envisioned him in the pulpit, but Dennis was meant for other things. He applied to Exeter, an incubator of the elite, and was accepted. “Before that,” he recalled, “I had never been to college; I had never been to school.” He had no formal schooling, “although I had plenty of education.” Young Dennis entered Harvard in 1915. When Eastern bankers and an Anglophile fifth column succeeded in dragging us into the European war, he joined the Army and was sent to Brest, France, where he was put in charge of a company of military police. He returned to Harvard and earned his degree in 1920: two years of prep school, a little over two years of college, and he stepped readily into the elite circles he had somehow penetrated as a member of the U.S. diplomatic corps.

That Dennis did not really belong in those circles is only hinted at in the remarkably oblique interview he gave, in 1967, to William Keylor for the Columbia University Oral History Collection. While the leftist Keylor attempted to indict him for sedition all over again, asking about William Dudley Pelley, Father Coughlin, and the German-American Bund, the subtext of Dennis’s recollection of his life is that of an outsider “passing” for an insider—and doing a remarkably good job of it. His answers, when asked about his early life, and especially his relationship with his parents, are revealing for what they do not say. Dennis never names his parents and never even claims that they were married. When Keylor asks him about his mother’s influence on his politics, Dennis not only denies any influence but declares: “I never had much association with her after I passed fourteen or even thirteen.” She lived in Washington, D.C., and sent him “about \$100 a month.” How Dennis had

the money to attend Exeter and Harvard, without any formal education or family connections, is a mystery.

When the State Department sent Dennis to Haiti, where the U.S. army of occupation was enforcing stability at gunpoint, he was really in his element. As the assistant to the minister, an old “New Orleans aristocrat,” he had “the run of the town.” This meant he belonged to the American Club, where he socialized with other diplomats and military personnel, and he also was a fixture at the Haitian Club, or Cercle Belle Vue, owned by a German who had married a Haitian—“an octoroon, of course”—and the whole thing was “a very broadening experience,” said Dennis. “I was on both sides of the fence.” This theme of duality, of cultural ambidexterity, continued after he was assigned to the American legation to Romania: “There again I played both sides of the street. I went to Romanian parties and I also went to Jewish parties. The Romanians were very anti-Jewish and wouldn’t take a Jew into any of their clubs. But I went to the best Jewish club there,” he said. “I played both sides of the street and I got along very happily.”

In 1927, Dennis resigned from the diplomatic service in protest against U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, and became an economic consultant to various investment banking firms with Latin American interests. He had served as the American troubleshooter in Nicaragua, and the experience made him a confirmed opponent of foreign loans south of the border and of a foreign policy in which American gunships were dispatched by New York banks to make good on their bad investments. He burst on the national scene in 1930, in a series of articles for the *New Republic* in which he exposed the foreign-bond racket and predicted that the bubble was about to burst. Dennis’s first book, *Is Capitalism Doomed?* (1932), established him as a much more acerbic and perceptive critic of capitalism than any of the leftist ideologues who threw their lot in with Marxism.

Unlike the Marxists, Dennis protested that his critique of capitalism was “not destructive.” In the midst of the Great Depression, he sought to “prolong and render more pleasant the old age of capitalism.” The system was caught in a dilemma: With no new worlds to conquer, and no new markets, there was no way for the profit motive to lead us out of the crisis. “In its old age, a senile capitalism must be nurtured by the state, not with war profits, necessarily, but on an even diet of 2 percent gruel.” Powerless to create markets for itself, decrepit capitalism must depend on the state to keep the masses from idleness. It is either that or war: “Keeping six to eight million men unemployed,” he warned, “is the best known way to prepare for war. The day a war starts somewhere in the world, millions of

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