

A Refreshing Reminder

As always, last week's salute to Iredell County 4-H—the tabloid supplement to your regular paper—gave you a lift. It had to.

This remarkable youth organization is as adaptable, as energetic, as exuberant, as inquisitive, as eternally optimistic, as great an investment in the future as the youth it serves. As you read through the 20-page words-and-pictures report on the state of Iredell 4-H you were refreshed and relieved. Refreshed by the good news of our highly-motivated young people who are accepting adult direction as they focus their lives on productive and rewarding challenges. Relieved by the reminder that the world is not, after all, headed you-know-where in a handbasket.

Through the experience and leadership provided by adults, boys and girls in 4-H learn basic, lasting values and how best to apply them to their lives. You can witness this investment in the wholesome faces of children smiling from the pages of your 4-H edition last week.

And you could not help noticing that 4-H, it is a change in. It is evolving to meet the needs of youth in a society growing ever more demanding and more complex. The very complexity, though, offers opportunity and versatility. Through 4-H, young people are becoming better prepared to accept these opportunities.

The head, heart, hands and health 4-H represent are at their best on a solid base of education. And education may be defined as preparation for life. This is why 4-H places such a premium on education. It is the foundation of which the rest can be built.

In 1914, Congress established the goal of 4-H that was patterned after agricultural clubs popular at the start of this century. The youth organization, quite simply, was to help young people develop life skills. It continues to meet that challenge. Then, as now, 4-H was part of the Agricultural Extension Service. But, today, its influence by no means is limited to agriculture.

Members of a 4-H club today might be found making posters to help their schools celebrate Love Your Library Month. They might campaign against drunk driving, and drug abuse, teen pregnancy, peer pressure and, yes, they do what they can to help preserve the family farm because they see the farm as an extension of the family as the very core of society.

The modern 4-H club, then, continues its mission of preparing young people for life. It also is dedicated to alerting them to some of the pitfalls of life. Both are essential, even noble undertakings.

FBI Ignites Police-State Fears

From The Virginian-Pilot, Norfolk

News that the Federal Bureau of Investigation amassed files on John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Pearl Buck, Sinclair Lewis, Carl Sandburg and other American writers is a sad reminder that the FBI has played Big Brother too often.

According to news reports, the excerpts from FBI files (obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and released last week by two magazines, The New Yorker and The Nation) indicate that information about the writers was collected in a virtually indiscriminate fashion, in most cases without any apparent objective—except to peek into the private lives of anyone who irritated the FBI.

The author of The New Yorker article, respected journalist Herbert Mitgang, writes that "despite the millions of dollars spent on investigative man-hours and record-keeping, none of the writers—more than 50 men and women—whose dossiers I looked into were ever convicted of any crime attributed to them."

The American boast is that the United States is the land of the free, where the right to speak and peacefully assemble is constitutionally protected. But all too often over the years, federal, state and local police departments have mocked that claim by prying into the lives of men and women whose opinions, social and political activities or acquaintances were judged by narrow and mean-

spirited government officials as "subversive" or "un-American."

Among those who have drawn police scrutiny are union and civil-rights activists, socialists, anarchists, Marxists, communists (the American Communist Party was banned for a time), ultrafascists and ultraracists, racist bands and anti-Semites. The FBI, the Central Intelligence Agency and the Americans engaged in presumably protected expression and activities.

Protesters against the Vietnam War were placed under surveillance and harassed by the FBI and intelligence agencies. The FBI unlawfully burglarized offices of anti-war groups in quest of information about their members and possible links to foreign governments. Unwarranted snooping into the lives of Americans was a routine activity when J. Edgar Hoover ruled the FBI, and Hoover apparently supplied every president from Franklin D. Roosevelt to Richard M. Nixon with dirt on political foes.

Unsavoury, all of it. That other democratic governments are guilty of similar crimes does not justify the misuse of police power and police resources in the United States to trample civil liberties. William Webster, the former FBI chief who now heads the CIA, apparently was disposed to curb inappropriate nosiness by the law enforcement agency. That should be the norm. To the degree that police transgress against civil rights, America is a police state, which Americans rightly detest and sensibly fear.

Correcting Overswing Of Pendulum

From The Providence Journal, Rhode Island

Thirty years ago, black youngsters were admitted for the first time to previously all-white Central High School in Little Rock Ark.—protected from angry pro-segregation mobs by troops of the 101st Airborne Division, sent in on the orders of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

On Monday last week, a three-member panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, determining that Boston's public schools are not racially desegregated, overturned U.S. District Judge W. Arthur Garrity's long-standing court orders requiring the school committee to use specific racial guidelines in student assignments—the last vestige of the jurist's 13-year reign over the Boston school system.

These two events, separated by three decades, are emblematic of the tragic side of our nation's evolving race relations—as well as the complexities and ironies associated with our efforts to produce racial justice and equality.

Little Rock represents that long period of legally enforced racial segregation, when youngsters, both white and black, had to bypass nearby schools because they were of the "wrong color" and were forced by law to attend more distant schools reserved exclusively for students of their own race.

But it also symbolizes the efforts made by Americans to break down legally required racial segregation—above all, the Supreme Court, which began the whole process with its decision in Brown vs. Board of Education (1954), the courageous handful of black

students who entered Central High School for the first time Sept. 25, 1957, and President Eisenhower, whose determination to see that the law of the land was enforced led him to send in the paratroopers to ensure the safety of the black youngsters.

Boston represents a more recent phase of that story—the well-intentioned but misguided effort at judicially imposed social engineering, whereby the former artificial and unjust racial separation in the schools was replaced by an equally artificial and counterproductive effort to achieve uniform patterns of racial integration.

Indeed, in an ironic twist on the Little Rock scenario, Boston youngsters, both white and black, have been forced by court order to bypass nearby schools because they were of the "wrong color" and have been compelled in order to produce some hypothetical racial "balance" throughout the system.

The American people long since have learned the lesson of Little Rock—that legally enforced racial segregation is constitutionally impermissible and morally offensive.

Something on your mind?



Letters to the editor welcomed.

From anyone.

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