

Houston Objectivism Society Newsletter

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THE LIMITS OF TERM LIMITS

by J. Brian Phillips

In the first 100 days of the new Congress, the House of Representatives passed 9 of the 10 pieces of legislation proposed in the Republicans' "Contract with America". The only act which failed to pass was a constitutional amendment establishing term limits for Representatives and Senators.

The concept of term limits has broad popular support. Opinion polls find that nearly 80% of the public support such limits, and 22 states have enacted some form of term limit legislation for Federal Congressmen. In Congress, support is largely, though not entirely, along party lines-- Republicans in favor, Democrats opposed.

Advocates of term limits argue that incumbents primarily focus their attention on being reelected, (for example, delivering "pork barrel projects to their district) rather than serving the best interests of the country. Further, incumbents enjoy tremendous advantages over challengers in elections. Term limits, supporters argue, will permit members of Congress to focus on governing, and will ensure that fresh ideas are injected into political debate.

Opponents counter that voters already have a means of imposing term limits at the ballot box. Term limits would remove good and bad legislators alike, deprive Congress of experienced members, and give even more power to bureaucrats and other non-elected officials.

For the most part, all of these arguments are true... and irrelevant. It is true that incumbents generally do not serve the best interests of the country, that they enjoy benefits over challengers. It is also true that voters can limit a politician's terms at the ballot box, and that term limits would most likely grant more political power to non-elected officials.

At least implicitly, both sides of the term limit debate want better government, and disagree over the means of achieving that end. But the issue which neither side addresses is the proper role and function of government, i.e., what constitutes better government and why. In fact, both sides are in essential agreement regarding this issue.

According to Objectivism, the proper role of government is the protection of individual rights. The government holds a legal monopoly on the use of force, a monopoly which can only be legitimately exercised in retaliation against those who initiate the use of force. Government serves as the means of enforcing objective rules of social conduct, i.e., the prohibition on the initiation of force.

In such a society, government plays a very limited role in the lives of its citizens. Police investigate crimes and apprehend their perpetrators. Criminal courts determine the guilt or innocence of accused criminals and assess punishment. Civil courts arbitrate contractual disputes. The military protects against foreign enemies and threats. These are the only proper functions of government. By this standard, government today is grossly overextended.

Certainly, the better Republicans are saying things to this effect. But their arguments rarely, if ever, address fundamental issues. For example, rather than attacking the moral premises underlying the welfare state, they argue that "we can't afford it anymore". In other words, welfare is not morally wrong, it simply isn't practical at this time.

Despite their pleas for fresh ideas, advocates of term limits actually deny the importance of ideas. They argue that by changing the makeup of Congress (or City Council, or any other elected body)

AYN RAND APPRECIATION DAY

In honor of the 90th anniversary of Ayn Rand's birth, and her extraordinary life, the Houston Objectivism Society has declared June 10, 1995 "Ayn Rand Appreciation Day."

HOS was founded on the philosophic principles of Miss Rand and the June meeting will be dedicated to the explicit recognition of her accomplishments. At the meeting, Sean Rainer will explore the ways in which Miss Rand was a living example of the heroes she wrote about. Sean will also focus more narrowly on her personal life and more broadly on her place in the history of philosophy and literature.

The meeting will be held at the home of Clay McFadden's mother. The address is 8415 Burkhart. Take the Bingle exit off of I-10 West. Go north on Bingle. Burkhart is the third street on the right. The house is located approximately half-way down the block.

the quality of the actions of that body will improve. It is not the ideas of the officeholders which matters, but the length of their service.

Advocates of term limits argue that if we simply eliminate career politicians, we can simultaneously eliminate special interest groups, pork barrel politics, and other forms of political favoritism. However, in fact it is not career politicians which give rise to political favoritism. Rather, it is the political system which gives rise to political favoritism and career politicians.

In a society in which government is limited to its proper functions, political favoritism would not exist-- government would have no favors to dispense. It is only in a society in which government can initiate force that the issue of political favoritism arises.

In such a society, political favoritism consists of easing the use of force against one group or using more force against another. In every instance, the initiation of force is existent-- it is simply the victims which are open to debate. Pressure groups generally attempt to influence the names of the victims and/or extent of their victimization.

Advocates of term limits do not oppose the initiation of force. They do not challenge and oppose its moral foundation-- altruism-- or its political manifestation-- statism.

Indeed, the concept of "state's rights" is regularly raised by advocates of term limits. In general, advocates of term limits oppose the centralization of government power-- they typically do not oppose what Austin does, but only what Washington does. Note Gov. George W. Bush's frequent calls for Washington to allow Texans to run Texas.

The primary argument of opponents is that term limits will reduce experience and give bureaucrats more power. They do not find such power objectionable, just the hands by which it will be wielded.

Again, the argument revolves around length of service. Opponents argue that long service develops skilled and experienced legislators. While this is true, we must consider the nature of that service, i.e., the context and purpose.

In today's context, a skilled legislator is one who is adept at passing legislation which forces others to sacrifice to his constituents. A frequent means of obtaining the necessary votes is to support similar legislation for his colleagues.

Experience then, means the ability to trade votes and work within the system. But those votes and that system are such that the rights of individuals are often violated. Skills of this kind are less than desirable.

Interestingly, the term limits debate represents somewhat of a reversal in the positions of Republicans and Democrats. Democrats have long appealed to "the people" to justify their policies. In the debate over term limits, Republicans have taken up this call. In the book *Contract with America*, Gingrich writes: "Our Contract with America is the agenda of the American people, not of the establishment of Washington."

On the other hand, Republicans have appealed to tradition and the past to justify their policies. Democrats are now using experience as a justification for defeating term limits.

The proper response to term limits is to regard the idea for what it is-- a superficial gimmick which will accomplish nothing substantive.

As an example, consider the 19th Congressional District here in Houston. That seat has been held by Barbara Jordan, Mickey Leland, Craig Washington, and now Sheila Jackson Lee. While none of these Representatives left office because of term limits, the fact is that the voters of that district repeatedly sent to Congress individuals who vote to the left of Bill Clinton. Term limits would not change the political philosophy of the voters of the 19th District, or any other district. And if term limits had been in place, we simply would have gone from Barbara Jordan to Craig Washington more quickly.

Politics is not a primary-- it is based on the more fundamental branches of philosophy. Anyone who thinks that freedom can be obtained through term limits is engaging in Libertarianism, i.e., attempting to obtain the derivative while denying or attacking its root.

It is easy to sympathize with those

Term Limits (continued)

who are disgusted with the corruption and evil which emanates from Washington (and other legislative bodies). There is certainly much to find disgusting about many of the laws passed by our Representatives, Senators, and City Council.

But to throw them all out of office without regard to their culpability in those laws is an inversion of justice and an evasion of one's responsibility as a voter. Candidates and office holders must be judged on the basis of their advocacy of freedom and individual rights, not the length of their service in office.

In a free society, individuals would most likely serve short periods in government and then return to their professions. However, we do not live in a free society. I would much prefer that an individual such as Phil Gramm (knowing what I know of him today) make a career of politics, rather than throw him out of office and open the door to someone such as Lloyd Bensten.

The frustration born of a mixed economy is understandable. But superficial attacks on that system achieve nothing and divert attention from the important issues. The real solution requires an identification of the fundamental problem. The problem is the philosophy of Plato, Kant and Hegel. The solution is the philosophy of Aristotle, Locke, and Rand.

LYCEUM IN REVIEW

The Rebirth of Economics: Richard Salsman

by J. Brian Phillips

Despite the clear repudiation of socialism around the world over the past decade, capitalism has not emerged as a sociopolitical ideal. While the ultimate cause of this lies in philosophy, the science of economics shares a large portion of the blame. In his lectures at the Lyceum Conference held in Housotn in February, Richard Salsman outlined the history, collapse, and the proper foundation of, economics.

Economics, Mr. Salsman said, is the science which studies the production, distribution, and exchange of privately owned goods and services in a division of labor setting. He noted that economics is neither a primary, nor a branch of philosophy, but rather the application of politics to production and trade. While political philosophy supplies the abstract principles of organizing society, economics explains how those principles work out. In other words, economics shows how the moral is the practical.

To properly understand economics, one must first understand the hierarchy and context of philosophy. Economics depends upon three specific philosophic issues: the nature of man, a theory of knowledge, and a theory of values. Of course, a proper view on each of these issues is vital to a proper understanding of economics.

For example, man is born tabula rasa, he possesses volition, he has a capacity for reason, he is fallible, etc. Reason is valid and man's primary means of attaining knowledge. Values are neither subjective nor intrinsic, but objective.

Mr. Salsman pointed out that men must be predominantly rational and selfish in order to be producers. While many men are inconsistent (for example Lee Iococa), they are predominantly selfish in their productive lives. A culture dominated by rational premises is a culture which is productive.

A businessman who follows his whims in any manner-- what to produce, how to price it, whom to hire, etc.-- will be at a distinct disadvantage to his competitors. He will ignore market conditions, the demands of his customers, the competency of his employees, etc. The degree to which he does this is the degree to which he harms himself as a businessman. Similarly, if he does not seek and attain a profit, his resources will dwindle and he will no longer have the capital necessary for production.

Value theory is crucial to economics, in that it determines price theory, wage theory, etc. Karl Menger, the founder of the Austrian school, is the closest to Objectivism in value theory. Menger was also an Aristotelian. Two of Menger's most famous students, Ludwig von Mises and Fredrich Hayek, rejected his theory of value.

Because epistemology is the base of value theory, false epistemological views lead to false economic views. Rationalism, for example, leads to model building without reference to the actual facts. Empiricism leads to the accumulation of reams of facts, which remain isolated and unintegrated.

Not surprisingly, the prevailing view today is that there are no universal laws of economics. Mr. Salsman rejected this view, and proceeded to explain several of the fundamental laws of economics: Say's Law (which he called the A is A of economics), The Law of Supply and Demand, and Gresham's Law.

Say's Law, named after Jean Baptiste Say, states that "supply creates its own demand." In other words, production creates purchasing power equal to the value of the goods or services produced. Production makes possible consumption, a position which has been reemphasized by supply-siders.

Enemies of capitalism have attacked Say's Law, arguing that you

can't produce unlimited supplies of bathing suits in Alaska. As Salsman noted, no rational businessman would do this. However, Say's Law applies to the economy as a whole, not to individual industries.

John Maynard Keynes argued that high unemployment refuted Say's Law. High unemployment, Keynes said, meant the existence of a supply (labor) that did not create its own demand. However, as Salsman pointed out, Keynes ignored the fact that the protracted high unemployment of the 1930's was not a result of a free market, but a consequence of massive government intervention in the free market.

The Law of Supply and Demand applies to particular markets, and states that, all things being equal, a higher quantity results in a lower price, and vice versa. Prices convey information, to both the consumer and the producer. To the producer, higher prices are a signal to produce more. To the consumer, higher prices are a signal to consume less.

Salsman explained that price controls, ceilings, etc. do not change the Law of Supply and Demand, but merely changes the way in which it is manifest. For example, price controls on gasoline resulted in lower prices, but longer waiting times. (Time is also a value which exists in a limited quantity.)

Gresham's Law states that "bad money drives out good money". When two kinds of money circulate with the same fixed value (fixed by law) the inferior will drive out the superior. Hence, gold and silver coins, while legal tender, have been pulled from

circulation while coins made of inferior metals circulate freely. (Even copper pennies-- those minted before 1984-- are very rarely circulated today.) Conversely, in a free market, good products drive out bad products.

Ayn Rand often noted that many of capitalism's worst enemies were its alleged defenders. Mr. Salsman concluded his lectures by briefly examining the ideas of some of the most prominent defenders of capitalism.

Adam Smith, the founder of economics, laid the foundations for its downfall. He held that man has innate ideas, that man is determined to be "selfish" in a benevolent and altruistic manner. Salsman noted that Smith adopted both the Utilitarian ethics of Jeremy Bentham and the emotive ethics of David Hume, as well as some of Hume's skepticism.

Von Mises held that inheritance and environment determine one's character. Action, not reason, he held, is man's nature. (Note the title of his magnum opus-- *Human Action*.)

Hayek's Nobel Prize speech was titled "The Pretense of Knowledge". He held that socialism refuted an unwarranted conceit in the power of reason.

More recently, George Gilder has argued that capitalism rests on altruism and faith. Starting a business, he has contended, is a leap of faith, since one never knows if one will be successful.

These lectures covered an enormous scope of material, yet were presented with clarity. They provided a wonderful background in the history of economics, and what is needed for its rebirth.

INTELLECTUAL ACTIVISM

Houston Chronicle
March 28, 1995

In his March 20 Outlook article, "Education alone won't put helmets on cyclists," William J. Winslade presented a full case in support of more controls over the citizenry, while simultaneously claiming he values freedom.

He says that bicycle helmets prevent head injuries. True, but the answer is rational persuasion, not using the government to control others with an ordinance making it mandatory.

He then gives some probable reasons why people don't wear helmets and proclaims none of them are justified. Justified by what criterion? I can think of many rational reasons for not wearing one.

The overriding principle, of course, is the principle underlying all of this. Namely, the idea that the government has sovereignty over the individual rather than the individual having sovereignty over his own life. This principle is far more deadly in the long run than any little helmet law.

John Alway

\$ \$ \$

Rice Thresher

HOS members Mikael Thompson and Steve Miller had lengthy letters printed in the Rice University paper. Their letters, which defended individual rights, were written in response to a letter defending "animals' rights".

Unfortunately, space prevents us from printing their letters in the newsletter.

FORD HALL WEEKEND IN BOSTON

By Bennett Karp

A banquet and auction sponsored by the Ayn Rand Institute and Leonard Peikoff's lecture at the Ford Hall Forum were the main events of an exciting weekend in Boston April 22nd and 23rd. ARI's banquet/auction was the second of three such events being held this year to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Ayn Rand's birth and ARI's 10th anniversary. (The first was held in Los Angeles in February; another is scheduled for Chicago in October.) Approximately 130 people attended.

Reflecting on the state of the culture on the occasion of ARI's 10th anniversary, Peter Schwartz noted that the culture *is* terrible, and that the antidote, which is Objectivism, is desperately needed.

Because the culture is so bad, there are abundant opportunities to present a rational alternative. But since Objectivism is so radically opposed to the cultural mainstream, one cannot expect it to be readily accepted by that mainstream. Rather, the focus must be on those who choose to think. It is these rational (but not necessarily Objectivist) individuals who act as the bridge in bringing new ideas into the culture. Mr. Schwartz cited several examples of positive signs such as teacher Marva Collins, whose students read *The Fountainhead*; the book *Animal Scam*, which explicitly identifies "animal rights" as an attack on reason; and increasing use of Ayn Rand's works in college courses. Alluding to an exchange between Dagny and Galt near the end of *Atlas Shrugged* ("It's the end," she said. "It's the beginning," he answered.), Mr. Schwartz said today's culture is the end, but we are forming the beginning of a beginning.

ARI Executive Director Michael Berliner had been presented with a plaque of appreciation at the Los Angeles banquet. Mr. Schwartz explained why: Dr. Berliner's dedicated work had brought ARI from its humble beginnings (the file holder that *was* ARI ten years ago was displayed at the banquet) to its current size and robust level of activity.

With the banquet coming just days after the bombing in Oklahoma City, Dr. Peikoff began his remarks with comments on that horrible event. Noting that some commentators had already started saying that this is where right-wing extremism leads, he focused on the essence of the bomber's motivation, thus providing the audience with the intellectual ammunition needed to refute any attempt to package-deal Objectivism with the ideology behind the bombers. The bomber's were not motivated by individualism. They had no concern for individuals (not even babies), nor for individual rights. They had an "us versus them" collectivist attitude. And their *form* of collectivism was nationalism, not patriotism, but for America *apart* from individuals.

Dr. Peikoff noted their use of force, their reverence

for the Davidians, their support for a white supremacist who had been executed for murder that same day. These people (and those who sympathize with them) are Nazis. Contrary to the commentators, individualism is not the problem, but the solution. The least we could for the Oklahoma City victims, said Dr. Peikoff, is to state publicly what had killed them. (Dr. Peikoff commented again on the bombing during the question period of his Ford Hall Forum talk the next evening. Readers will be interested in listening to the tape.)

Turning then to a more pleasant topic (these were, after all, after dinner remarks), Dr. Peikoff updated the audience on the status of his potential career as a TV talk-show host. Dr. Peikoff has taped a sample show, which will be edited down to about nine minutes to be used to find a network interested in sponsoring the show. Although there is no way of knowing at this time if the show will materialize, Dr. Peikoff is encouraged by the response and interest he has seen from many of the network and industry executives he has met. There is a real interest in the ideas. Instead of reacting with hostility, the executives label him as "economically conservative and socially liberal." It is a sign of progress, Dr. Peikoff noted, that Objectivism can be so well received.

With Harry Binswanger as auctioneer, 20 items from the estate of Ayn Rand were made available to the highest bidders. Nearly \$58,000 was raised for ARI. The most noteworthy item was Miss Rand's 150-page handwritten manuscript of the title essay of **For the New Intellectual**. Before the bidding on this item began, Dr. Peikoff made some remarks on the historical significance of this document.

In part an answer to *The End of Ideology* by Daniel Bell, it represents Miss Rand's first non-fiction work after *Atlas Shrugged*.

The essay lays the basis for an appreciation of Objectivism by presenting a history of thought from the perspective of psycho-epistemology, a term used here by Miss Rand for the first time.

The topic of Dr. Peikoff's Ford Hall Forum lecture the following evening was "What To Do About Crime." Today, crime is widely seen as a serious problem. All sorts of explanations for the cause of crime are put forth by various commentators. Yet, no satisfactory explanation has been provided, and there has been no success in practice in reducing crime. The cause of crime (talking here about serious crime, such as robbery, assault, murder, not just any act that is illegal), Dr. Peikoff noted, is a *philosophic* issue: to explain crime, you need to understand values and human nature.

Most crime is committed by a relatively small number of hardened criminals. They exhibit

characteristic patterns of behavior. There is a criminal mind. It is characterized by an extreme short-range, anti-conceptual, amoral focus.

Following more than a century of steady or declining crime, there has been a sudden surge in recent decades. Why are there so many criminals now, Dr. Peikoff asked. Man is moved by *ideas*. It is the dominant ideas in the culture that have changed. Kant's influence is the root explanation. Under the influence of modern ideas, the generation that grew up starting in the 1950's and 60's (by which time Kant's ideas had infiltrated virtually all areas of the culture) produced a greater number of criminals. Since man has free will, criminals *are* responsible for their behavior. But at a deeper level, the blame for the increase in the number of criminals belongs to the intellectuals.

Against the liberals, who seek to prevent crime by means of the welfare state and to rehabilitate criminals by means of psychotherapy and education, and against the conservatives, who simply want to lock up today's criminals while breeding tomorrow's, a proper approach to crime must focus on *thinking* patterns. We need to teach a rational philosophy.

This brief overview has barely touched the surface of Dr. Peikoff's insightful lecture. Readers can look forward to seeing the entire talk in *The Intellectual Activist* and to obtaining the tape from Second Renaissance Books.

Other events during this special weekend included a reception sponsored by Second Renaissance Books, various special events sponsored by ARI, and, for those who could find the time, sight-seeing in one of America's finest cities.

CPR UPDATE

Pamphlet mailings

In his capacity as Chairman of the Committee for Property Rights, Brian Phillips mailed a copy of the pamphlet *Government vs. Freedom* to executives with both Home Depot and Wal-Mart.

Both chains have experienced significant opposition to their plans to build stores in the Northeast. In numerous communities, zoning has been used to halt or delay construction projects.

Two executives from Wal-Mart responded with a letter thanking Brian for his support. The President noted that Wal-Mart receives very few letters supporting their efforts, while another executive promised to pass the pamphlet on the head of the legal department.

Janet Lee Wich, as chair of the government subcommittee, sent copies of the pamphlet to 50 office holders, including Houston City Councilmembers, State Representatives, and State Senators.

Representative Talmadge Heflin responded: "I have read this piece and find myself in agreement with the statements made therein." Councilman Felix Fraga and Controller George Grenias also responded, though neither voiced an opinion on the pamphlet.

Future mailings are planned for members of the media and businessmen in the Houston area. Johnnie McCulloch is preparing to upload the pamphlet to America On Line.

Board of Advisors

A Board of Advisors has been formed for CPR. The members are: Matt Gerber, Dwyane Hicks, Michael Maz-

zone, Warren Ross, and Janet Lee Wich.

CPR membership

HOS members should note that membership in the Committee for Property Rights is separate and distinct from membership in HOS. A mailing for CPR membership is scheduled for the near future.

Zoning comes to Baytown

On May 6, 1995 voters in Baytown adopted a zoning ordinance. Baytown had been the nation's third largest city without zoning (Houston and Pasadena, TX, are the two largest).

The victory for pro-zoners most likely will embolden Houston's zoning advocates, some of whom have vowed to have zoning in place by the end of 1996.

Planning without zoning

The Rice Design Alliance held a panel discussion entitled "In the Public Realm: Planning without Zoning" on May 16.

The panel members, according to the *Houston Chronicle*, "sought to discuss ways of empowering neighborhoods without zoning, such as through the formation of taxing districts."

Such taxing districts are currently in use in the central business district and in the Galleria area.

HOS MEETING SUMMARIES

by Sean M. Rainer

Houston architecture April 8, 1995

Pete Jamison guided members on an architectural tour of Houston during the April HOS meeting. The refreshments for the tour were provided by Jim and Sandy Brents.

Pete began his presentation, entitled "Toward an Architectural Esthetic," with a brief survey of the history of architecture. The many different historical periods were placed into four broad eras: 1) Greco-Roman, 2) Medieval, 3) Renaissance and 4) Modern/Post-Modern.

Of particular focus was this last, Modern/Post-modern era. This era was born with the advent of the skyscraper by Louis Sullivan, sometimes called the Father of Modern Architecture. It was also Sullivan, along with Frank Lloyd Wright, who founded the Organic school of architecture. The Organic school emphasizes the importance of taking the site of the structure as well as the needs of the building into consideration. It is in this vein that the architect of the Texas Commerce Building downtown designed the structure with one corner "sliced off" to give inhabitants a view of the Houston skyline. Had he built the building without consideration of the site one of the more appealing aspects of the building, the observation deck, would most likely have been non-existent.

Pete then made mention of some post-modern trends in architecture that were actually a regress from the work of men like Sullivan and Wright. An example would be the use of Greco-Roman columns and arches and, moreover, the use of these in places that do not serve the any structural function, i.e., they are solely ornamental.

Using dozens of slides taken in and around Houston, Pete analyzed the different aspects, both good and bad, of several familiar buildings. For example, Pete noted the difference in the use of balconies on the Wortham Center versus a Montrose apartment building. On the former, the balconies seemed out of place and, at the best, unfunctional. On the apartment building, the balconies were designed to give its inhabitants a glorious view of the city for more than 90 degrees.

Throughout the talk Pete praised the work of local architects Camrath and Makey. Also, following the lead of Howard Roark, Pete offered several, more philosophical, observations on the subject including his definition of the "architectural good": that which furthers and honors the human activity within. From this follows a list of architectural virtues.

Pete also indicated that he is considering a more

comprehensive work on this subject. Those of us who attended the meeting and who will never look at a building the same way again hope that he does.

Heroes May 13, 1995

In the back room of JoJos on Richmond Ave., members discussed the topic of heroes at the May HOS meeting. Neil Erian presented a paper that attempted to answer the basic philosophical questions on this issue.

Prior to Neil's presentation, Janet Wich reminded members about their pamphlet pledges and Warren Ross enumerated the rights of HOS membership. Those rights include 1) an opportunity to attend HOS meetings; 2) the HOS newsletter; and 3) use of the HOS library.

What are heroes and why do we need them? These are the questions that Neil began his presentation with. To the first, Neil described heroes as "implacable men who fight for definite values in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles or purposeful foes." A hero, he continues, is one who makes a conscious choice to pursue values and has an unwavering commitment to purpose.

As man is a conceptual being, he can manage an unlimited number of concretes through the use of abstractions. Heroes are man's "integrated archetype of life," said Neil. They are the concretization of an ideal.

Identifying a hero, Neil said, "starts by differentiating one's exalted emotion from them, then identifying the widest premise underlying one's sense of life." As man is a volitional being, he must choose which concretes to omit in this process of abstraction. A man's hero, then, would seem to reflect his own ethical principles, whether implicit or explicit.

Using Ayn Rand and Dr. Andrew Bernstein as references, Neil presented the four essential characteristics of a hero:

1) He must be a moral giant. A hero must be steadfastly committed to rational values.

2) He must possess tremendous intellectual and/or physical prowess. This distinguishes the hero from the merely moral individual, e.g., John Galt from Eddie Willers.

3) He must take action in the face of obstacles. Opposition can be either internal or external, natural or man-made. He must, in other words, be tested.

4) The hero must be triumphant. He must achieve success, if only in the solace of his mind.

That, in brief, is the essence of a hero. The next question, as Neil presented it, would be "Why does man need heroes?" Neil contends that a hero's success, whether physical or spiritual helps man confirm the reality of an ideal. He sees in his hero the realization of his values and, thus, the reaffirmation that they can be achieved. As Neil puts it, "[a hero] is the epitome of the moral and the practical..."

Neil's final point focused on the need to understand the context when judging a hero. For example, how much can he be expected to know? It is wrong, Neil said, to assume that a person's context of knowledge is the same as yours. This would surely lead you to overlook a number of men that might be actual heroes

simply because you hold them to an unreasonable standard. Aristotle, notes Neil, could not be expected to have known the incredible practicality of reason. After the industrial revolution, though, you could hold a manto this standard. Using Thomas Aquinas as example, Neil also suggested that the fundamentality of of certain ideas overshadows minor contradictions. Aquinas is credited for almost single-handedly dragging the Western world from the dark ages. It would seem ridiculous to focus on the fact that he believed in God and not on the fact that he reintroduced civilization to logic.

After Neil's presentation, he fielded questions on such topics as "anti-heroes" in modern fiction, sports/war heroes versus real life heroes and the moral man who never faces great opposition. After answering questions, Neil and Michael Gold each briefly discussed a personal hero.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVERTISING

\$ The ancient philosophy study group meets every Sunday (except Sundays after an HOS meeting) at 10 a.m. in various homes in Southwest Houston. For more information, contact Brian Phillips at 271-5145.

\$ The July meeting, which will focus on literary analysis, will be hosted by Janet Lee Wich. She asks that members planning to attend that meeting read Macbeth. Any version is acceptable, except for the modern English.

\$ Anyone wishing to advertise in the Newsletter should contact Brian Phillips for details and advertising rates.

\$ The HOS Executive Committee would like to publish a Directory of Members in the near future. Members will be included only if they request so. The directory will be distributed only to those who are included in the directory. The cost will be \$1 per copy. The directory is being published to facilitate member contact and to help members utilize the professional services of other members, as well as find members who share interests. The deadline for submissions is June 1.

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