

Different Sides, Same War

My commute to the office in Appleton is roughly half what it was when the magazine was headquartered in Belmont, Massachusetts; nevertheless, I still have nearly an hour behind the wheel each morning—an hour I'm determined to put to as good a use as the limits of traffic safety will allow. Reading, of course, is out of the question: As ill advised as drinking and driving may be, *reading* and driving is even more dangerous. (Self-improvement must take a back seat to self-preservation.) I am thus left with a couple of audio alternatives: the radio and the tape player.

Though I do have an excellent collection of inspirational tapes that I listen to regularly, I must admit that, owing to my depraved nature, I can absorb only so much spiritual enrichment at a time. During the inevitable periods of backsliding, I find myself returning to the radio. Call me hopelessly lowbrow, but I have never been able to develop the appreciation for classical music that my more sophisticated friends seem genuinely to possess. I cannot abide popular music, however, and my taste for Country Western is limited to oldtimers like Hank Williams and Patsy Cline—and the handful of new stars who remind me of the oldtimers, like Randy Travis and K.D. Lang. I grew up with rock and roll, but recoil at the marketing of music of such recent vintage under the rubric of "Golden Oldies." Besides, "Jailhouse Rock" and "Rag Doll" and "Sweet Little Sixteen" lose some of their appeal after the second or third millionth time you've heard them.

Morning Sediton

Thus, for the past several years, I have been a regular, if not avid, listener of the drive-time "Morning Edition" news program on National Public Radio. "How can you listen to that stuff?" my conservative friends ask me, and I've often asked myself that same question. After all,

I too am appalled by the shamelessly leftist bias with which the NPR reporters present nearly every issue of the day. I too am outraged that any portion of my annual income tax payment should contribute to the propagation of a worldview that is antithetical to my own. NPR favors homosexual "rights"; I oppose them. NPR supports the efforts of the African National Congress to overthrow the government of South Africa; I oppose them. NPR favors a national health care system; I oppose one. The list goes on and on.

Why, then, do I tune in? It took me a while to figure that out. Of course, the fact that "Morning Edition" is the only all-news program available to me in my car has something to do with it. But the real reason, like it or not, is that I have quite a lot in common with the folks at NPR. We care about the same things; we may not agree on any, but we do both care about them. I want to know what "gay" activists are up to lately, what Winnie Mandela is mouthing off about now, and what Teddy Kennedy is proposing this week to destroy the medical profession. And the best place for me to find out those things — while I'm on the road, at least — is NPR.

Commonality of Combatants

The commonality of enemy soldiers who find themselves sharing a foxhole is a literary commonplace, the affinity between policemen and criminals a television stereotype. These precious paradoxes do have a basis in reality, however. The youth who plays *basketball* for his high school team may very well find that he has more in common with his rivals at the school across town than he does with the *football* players at his own alma mater. Beaux competing for the same belle will find a congruity of interests in each other that they will never discover in their best chums. The more fervent adherents of antagonistic sects

may find much to recommend in each other that they will not find in their lackluster brethren. And readers of *THE NEW AMERICAN* are more likely to engage in provocative conversations with readers of *Foreign Affairs* than with fans of *People* magazine.

When Whittaker Chambers confronted the horror of the conspiracy to which he had devoted the better part of his life, he became not a *non-communist*, but an *anti-communist*. The freedom movement is filled with men and women who, like Chambers, did not merely back off from their beliefs, but came full circle. Though they seem remarkable at first glance, conversions such as his are more to be expected from our sworn enemies than from the indifferent and the apathetic people in the middle who reap the benefits of our struggles but lift no hand to help or oppose us.

It may be unreasonable to expect Bob Edwards, Carl Castle, Linda Wertheimer, Cokie Roberts, and other NPR staffers to come around to my way of thinking. No doubt, they will continue to promote the socialistic aims that make National Public Radio repugnant to me and to other conservatives. But I have to admit that, even if they are on the wrong side, the folks at NPR at least recognize what's important in this world. I know what they're after; I understand what makes them tick. What I don't understand is that vast majority of people in the middle who don't even know what's going on, or don't even care. ■

Looking Ahead

In the next issue of

THE NEW AMERICAN

- James J. Drummey and William F. Jasper report on the accelerating efforts of the federal government to dispossess the landowners of America.