

# Voluntary Organizations: A Facet of America's Greatness

By CARL MASON FRANKLIN

America has been called a nation of joiners. We are. I don't know that anyone has ever made an exact count of all the voluntary organizations and associations in the United States, but my guess is that there must be a million or more. Upon coming to Norman a few years ago, I learned that there were over two hundred and fifty organizations in this community of modest size. I was particularly impressed by an incident which happened at a meeting of one of the local organizations to which I had been invited to speak in the fall of 1948. My wife was seated next to the president of the organization and more by way of conversation than anything else, she asked, "What is the purpose of your organization?"

"Purpose?" responded the president, a charming, gracious lady, somewhat taken aback by the question, "Why, Mrs. Franklin, I don't know that we have a purpose." She was obviously a little embarrassed at the implication of her admission and, after thinking it over for a little while and after consulting with her vice chairman who was seated next to her, she explained to my wife that they did have a purpose after all but that she had momentarily forgotten what the purpose was.

I have often reflected on that incident and, while it is a little amusing, it is also significant of a universal attitude of the American people that they have no fear in organizing voluntary associations even when they may not have a particular purpose in mind.

I do not mean to suggest that the overwhelming number of these one million or more voluntary organizations and associations in the United States do not have a purpose. Indeed, I am convinced that most do have definite purposes and often fulfill in substantial measure the needs of those who compose the membership. The significant fact is that Americans, by tradition, can't seem to help getting together even when they may have no clear understanding of the purpose for their organization.

Essential to the formation of voluntary organizations are: first, a climate of free-

dom and uninhibited choice; and second, the feeling of brotherhood, the feeling of a common bond with one's fellow man. America's countless voluntary organizations are a strong affirmative answer to the age old question, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

It is true, of course, that people usually band together in voluntary associations because they feel the need of co-operating in an effort to solve a common problem. But, sometimes the persons who see the need and act as the motivating force in forming a voluntary association, are not of the same faith as those who comprise the organization once it is formed. This may sound like a strange statement to you and yet I have been informed that such is the case with the Hillel Foundation, indeed, that it was founded in 1922 by a non-Jewish professor of Bible at the University of Illinois. Subsequently, it was taken over by B'nai B'rith and there are now some seventy-one field units on college and university campuses where a sufficient number of Jewish students are enrolled to justify a foundation.

What, one may ask, is the significance of the formation of Hillel Foundations and other similar student organizations on approximately 2,000 college campuses in the United States? To me it is an answer to those crass materialists who believe that Americans are incapable of organizing for any worthwhile purpose unless they can

"get something out of it for themselves."

In the formation of the first Hillel Foundation one finds a non-Jewish professor who was aware that Jewish students at the University of Illinois needed a type of religious, cultural, and social organization for those of the Jewish faith. And so, he helped form this voluntary organization. He was a living example of the Biblical admonition that it is better to give than to receive. He gave his time, efforts, and talents to the formation of an organization in order that a group of students might be served. As is true of other student organizations on this campus and on campuses all over the United States, Hillel Foundation provides a religious, cultural, and social environment in which its members may be brought nearer to the fulfillment of what Thomas Carlyle called "man's self-realization."

But what is the larger meaning of voluntary associations and organizations in the American cultural pattern? Voluntary associations are a social invention of free democratic societies based upon the idea of brotherhood of man under God through mutual respect of individuals for each other. Voluntary associations are predicated upon the assumption that men by their nature love their fellow men; that human dignity is the greatest force in civilization; and that men by their nature are not puppets, or pawns, to be pushed inexorably this way and that by the impersonal forces



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Carl Mason Franklin came to the University in 1948, as Executive Vice President and Professor of Law, from Ohio State University where he had been Assistant to the President. During 1950-51 he was on leave of absence as Sterling Fellow at Yale. He resigned in 1953 to become Professor of Law at the University of Southern California. This article is based on his address given at the laying of the corner-stone of Hillel House, in 1952.*

of history. They assume that men are masters of their own destiny.

All of this represents the antithesis of the Communist idea of brotherhood and peace. Karl Marx's formula, which represents the antecedent of the Communists' ideology, conceives of people as greedy, economically-centered individuals. The destinies of mankind, as Marx viewed the mid-nineteenth century, were held in the tight grip of the machine; control of machines was control of the powers of production, and the powers of production would spread across the globe speeding up the onset of international socialism.

But of course, some explanation had to be made in Marx's dogma for those non-economic forces that always have been regarded as historically significant. These were written off as unimportant, ornamental cornices on the periphery of the central economic phenomenon. Hence, art, music, and letters became, not the spontaneous creations of talented spirits but the result of economic forces at work.

Similarly, no morality, no ideas of right and wrong, had any life of their own. They, too, were part of the decoration, mere consequences of whatever economic times might be in flood at a particular moment in history.

People generally were divided into the oppressed and oppressors. Today the appellations are only slightly altered into the presumed bifurcated society of "haves" and "have nots."

Under the Marx theory, government like art or culture, is only a decoration, a materialistic accident of time; it represents the people who at the time hold the "powers of production."

It is clear, I think, that Marxism and Communism are philosophical frauds because of the erroneous major assumptions which they make about the nature of man.

While talking repeatedly of brotherhood, Marx at the same time appears to deny the existence of those spiritual qualities which are the basis of real brotherhood, the kind of spiritual quality which led a non-Jewish Bible professor to form an organization dedicated to Jewish brotherhood. Marx's fundamental mistake one hundred years ago as he first pondered on the industrial revolution, and the flaw that makes his arguments and those of his Communist vassals worthless today, is the assumption that men in a capitalistic society have no sense of right and wrong, no regard for any human instinct except that of selfishness and greed. Marx put all of his bets on economic law—none on the hearts and souls of men. He thought that society never could be bettered just because men and women wanted to have it that way.

Continued page 32

# The Level of Time

By FRED HARRIS

**T**HIS GRADUATION—this commencement—is a goal we have worked toward for many years. At last the time has come, and we find that it is more a milepost on the way than it is the actual destination.

You know, if you read the newspapers or listen to comedians on radio and television, you would get the idea that the graduates of 1954 believe they know everything there is to know; that we think the world is eagerly awaiting us, clamoring for the honor of employing us or accepting our services. However, those who have watched this generation—our generation—know that that is not true. In fact, it seems to me that our greatest danger lies in our feeling that we know nothing; that we must, as some have told us, quickly unlearn all that we have learned in school in order to succeed in a hard and practical world.

As members of a quiet and serious, realistic generation, we know that there is a struggle, a fight, awaiting us. We, of course, realize that our law degree is no key to instant success.

On the other hand, the world is not so dark, nor is life so disappointing, as some of our advisers would have us believe. If we listened to them, and believed all they said to us, we could not help but cry out as Hamlet did: "The time is out of joint;—O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right."

Today, all around us, we find a great homesickness for the past. So many people yearn for what is fondly called the "good old days." I think that, if this feeling is analyzed, it will be found to be a technique of evading, escaping the many problems which confront us today.

The "good old days," as they are called, were not at all as some remember them; because, when we think of the past, we have a tendency to cloud our memories, unconsciously, with our imagination, and we recall things as we would like them to have been. In reality, people who lived during those good old days were faced with wars, depressions and business failures, droughts and dust bowls, suicides and soup lines.

Yes, each generation has its own problems, and each generation must meet and solve them. After all, these problems are

not caused by chance or circumstance—not by fate or bad luck, but by people, and they can be solved by people.

Today—not yesterday—today and tomorrow are the only times over which we have any control. Our classes, and classes like us, have been provided with the basic knowledge, the rare ability to see and live with reality, and the understanding and compassion for our fellow man, which makes us, or at least makes me, a little glad that we were born in a trying age which can best utilize our capabilities.

A great many people have had a large part in our attaining this bachelor of laws degree. Taxes have financed our school, teachers have sacrificed a good deal to be what they are, and wives, parents, other relatives and friends have helped more than can be measured. Still others have helped with their encouragement. Thus, the conclusion is inescapable that with this degree there goes not only honor and distinction, but also certain obligations, duties, responsibilities which we as honorable men and women cannot ignore.

First of all, there is the duty to our family. True, the law is a "jealous mistress," but we must reserve enough of our time to be the kind of parent and husband or wife that we should be. We must not deprive our children of an interested and devoted father or mother.

Second, is the duty to ourselves. We must continue to grow and to learn. We must seek out new ideas and new interests. Above all, we must not become mere specialists—legal technicians. We must be human beings first and lawyers second.

Third, we must remember our duty to our community; to take part in civic affairs; to give freely of ourselves to aid in the growth and development of our community for the greater welfare of those who live there.

Fourth, we owe the duty of service to our fellow men who are not so fortunate as to have the college education that we have. We must share our knowledge with others, and use it for the advantage of all. Further, as lawyers, we must champion the cause of the poor and down-trodden, and see that no man is denied justice.

Fifth, we owe an obligation to the bar and to our fellow lawyers to aid in the con-

tion, must become aware of the desirability of initiating a foreign language program. They must be convinced of the importance of language training and of the many benefits that their children may derive from it. Often the school principal or the superintendent can take the initiative in bringing the advisability of establishing such a program to the attention of the parents in the community. Parent-Teacher Organizations are often instrumental in the initiation of foreign language study in the elementary grades where everything favors its introduction. Efforts should be made to ascertain just how much interest exists among the parents, teachers, and school officials in the introduction of the study of the foreign languages into the school curricula. Many of the programs now under way began by sending out questionnaires to all of the parents of elementary grade pupils in that community, in an effort to learn their attitude toward such a proposed program. The number of parents favoring such a program of language study, when approached through questionnaires and forum discussions, represents a surprising majority in the cases where this type of contact has been made. Once the language program is under serious consideration, every effort should be made to bring it to the attention of the entire community. The complete and enthusiastic support of the parents, teachers, and the school administrators is a "must". A language program, like any other program of its type, succeeds only if it is undertaken voluntarily and with the whole-hearted support of the community. To gain this support, the many values to be derived from foreign language study must be pointed out and clearly emphasized. Once the active support of the community is gained, the officials in charge can proceed to schedule the foreign language chosen for instruction as part of the curriculum for the period in which it is to be introduced, and the necessary arrangements for its introduction can be completed.

Many of the values to be derived from the study of foreign languages, like those gained from the study of history or literature, cannot be accurately measured. It is quite evident that the benefits to be derived from language study are in direct proportion to the amount of time and effort spent in the study. We are aware that the study of a second language contributes to the general learning process of the child, although the impossibility of determining the exact amount of this contribution is apparent. Language study does provide a new experience and the child quickly gains confidence in himself through his sense of accomplishment in acquiring the language

skills of another people. He acquires a new and much keener interest in other peoples, in their history and their customs, and he is quick to detect the various ways in which our cultures differ. In this sense the study of a foreign language serves to widen the child's horizon; and having thus become acquainted with the language and the customs of other peoples, he ceases to consider them strange and entirely different from himself. This is the first step in the use of language as the key to better international understanding: becoming closer to our world neighbors and actually getting to know them. This growing interest in other peoples which is gained through language study reveals itself in a desire to learn more about them, and generally leads to an increased interest in related fields such as the history of that country, its geography and the social conditions that prevail there.

Foreign language study instills in the elementary grade pupil a new respect for foreign children and for children of other national backgrounds who live in his own community. He learns to appreciate these children through the study of their language and to accept them as equal members of his community. On the other hand, the children of foreign descent, upon studying the language of their parents, acquire a new pride in their background and in their native tongue. The feeling of mutual respect that is achieved leaves little room for the discriminatory attitudes so prevalent in many of the bilingual areas of the United States.

Other values to be derived from foreign language study become more apparent at a later stage in the child's development. The study of a foreign language, in offering the child another medium of self-expression and communication, aids in the enlargement and the enrichment of his vocabulary. It is also generally conceded that the study of a foreign language aids in the learning of one's own language, resulting in a greater appreciation of the expressive power and the beauty of one's own tongue. However, these benefits will become more and more apparent as the child progresses through elementary school and on into more advanced areas of learning.

The main purpose here has been to present some of the facts concerning foreign language training in the elementary schools as it now exists, as well as to point out many of the values that have been derived from the introduction of foreign language study at this stage. That the study of foreign languages in the elementary grades is a realized possibility is apparent. It has succeeded wherever it has been undertaken with careful planning and a sincere belief in its potentialities. Our task is to make each

community aware of the promise that such programs hold for the future, and of the unlimited benefits to be derived from language study. Once this is achieved, the teaching of foreign languages in our public elementary schools will take its place alongside the instruction in other fields of learning that we consider indispensable to a well-rounded education.

### *Minimizing Production Loss . . .*

Continued from page 19

is without weaknesses—there is no perfect substitute for the work-stoppage. In any given situation the plan might give relative advantage to one party or the other, just as the stoppage strike does for that matter, but it is believed possible to devise a formula under which, while one party might gain a relative advantage in one case or another, neither employer nor employees would gain such advantage in all cases. All things considered, proponents of the plan deem its weaknesses minimal in light of the hope it promises.

### *Voluntary Organizations . . .*

Continued from page 30

On the contrary, the existence of the Hillel Foundation and of the other organizations today and everyday all over the United States is a complete denial of Marx's beliefs and a re-affirmation of the American ideal that men can improve their surroundings by voluntary association instead of by coercion, revolution, and bloodshed.

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