

ROBERT PENN WARREN - ANDY YOUNG Tape 3

Warren: Tape 3 of conversation with Andy Young, Atlanta, March 17th, continued.

Warren: You want to say something on the problem beyond integration?

Young: Yes, I think what we're finding more and more is - along this same line that the Negro is the problem child, but as is true in families, when you finally get on to it, you have problem children because you have problem families. children usually reflect the problems that the family - you know, that exist in the family. I think that when we are raising a ruckus about education, we are really reflecting the fact that education is inadequate for everybody. When we are raising a fuss about voting rights, it's because, I think, democracy has become very lax in its political participation - that politically Americans have not really been responsible, so that when Negroes demand the right to vote, they are reminding all Americans of the need to vote, if our system is going to truly work. We've gotten into so many of these problems like urban renewal, or like, I mean, overcrowding the schools and poor city planning because of political bossism, rather than representative government. Now, in the South, we see the problem ^{is} that we are denied a right to vote, but when we fuss about our denial of the right to vote, we should really remind, and we are really reminding America of the fact that all Americans are being denied

certain rights because they are not actively participating in the political decisions of their community. When Negroes are given a bad deal in the courts of the South, this isn't just because of race. It's partially because of the court system - really needs some readjustment also - that this has been possibly too politically controlled and culturally dominated by regions.

Warren: There's also a class question there too, isn't there?

Young: That's right. That all poor people - now the whole question of employment - Negroes are fussing about jobs, and while it's true Negroes are discriminated against because of race, the real issue is unemployment and automation, and this is not just a race problem. It's a fundamental problem in our whole social-economic structure. Now, I think that where the movement is going and where we are trying to go, is to try to help Americans to realize this, that we ought not to be battling each other on the race, and that by battling each other on the race question, we run the danger of being destroyed, really, by these real problems. And, I always say that, you know, the Roman Empire was destroyed by some of these things - problems from within, but I wonder whether they realized them. Now, America has an opportunity to see what its problems are because, well, history has sort of dressed them up in black - that if you really want want to know what's wrong with America, you find out what people

with black skins are hollering about, and -

Warren: They're scramagas.

Young: Yes, that's right - and because we are the ones that are on the bottom usually. So, I guess this is - the - I was talking out in Seattle, Washington, with a group of people and they were complaining about Boeing Aircraft out there, not having certain government contracts. And, it all of a sudden dawned on me that we were talking about the right to vote, and they couldn't see any real relationship between the denial of - disfranchisement of Negroes in the South and their situation in Washington. They say, "Oh, we don't have that problem here." And then I reminded them that Lockheed Aircraft here in Atlanta had plenty of contracts - government contracts, while Boeing is losing government contracts - and part of this reason is that Richard Russell is Chairman of the Armed Forces Committee of the Senate, and in twenty some years in the Senate, he has been able to accumulate such power that not only is he depriving Negroes of their rights, but he is depriving the citizens of Washington of their equal opportunities in government also. I think that when we begin to document this across the country a little more, and begin to show people how the Southern political power bloc strangles our whole concept of democracy - and we can get rid of this, then we might get around to dealing with some of our problems - our real problems, which are unemployment.

Warren: Or, is the Southern political power bloc in the end merely a symptom of something else - and not the enemy itself?

Young: Well, I tend to think that it's the enemy itself, right now, because I think - well, the psychology of the South and the - say the spiritual and moral dilemma give us the Southern politics. Southern politics maintain this climate. Can you excuse me, just a minute.

Warren: Sure. Let's turn for a moment to a philosophy of non-violence. I have a quotation here from Dr. Kenneth Clark, about that philosophy. I'll read it to you. "On the surface, King's philosophy appears to reflect health and stability, while the black nationalists betray pathology and instability. A deeper analysis, however, might reveal that there is also an unrealistic, if not indeed pathological basis in King's doctrine. The natural reaction to injustice is bitterness and resentment. The form that such bitterness takes need not be overtly violent, but the corrosion of the spirit is inevitable. It would seem, therefore, that any demand that the victims of oppression be required to love those who oppress them, places an additional and probably intolerable burden upon them." You have that line of argument. How do you respond to that line of argument? How do you counter it?

Young: Well, intellectually, I think, two ways. One is that I think Dr. Clark is reflecting a particularly, almost behaviorist.

view of a man, and a psychologist generally see a man, maybe more biologically than spiritually - that, now some of your more recent schools - this fellow from Vienna that developed the whole system of local therapy out of his concentration camp experiences would say that people need - that his whole method is not the release and expression of hostility - but that maybe greater discipline ought to be required in situations where sickness is imminent. He uses the illustration of an ark - when it's beginning to rumble. One of the things that you can do to keep it together is to put more weight in the center of it, and this actually binds the pieces together. And, I think that this would be our experience in non-violence - that, and my experience in child rearing too, that I'm not one of these that - while a certain amount of expression is necessary, I just don't believe in letting hostilities run rampant, and I think that this is what is implied - that you are much more healthy when you express your hostility and aggression. Civilization couldn't exist where hostilities weren't kept in check. Now, what we do is make it a virtue - in fact, a superior virtue to keep your hostilities in check.

Warren: That is, you would answer Dr. Clark, not merely by theological ref - but on old psychological grounds.

Young: Yes, but now - but theologically also, I would say that man is a creature of spirit, and we have so many day to day case

studies, who have become transformed because of their ability to love - that in the act of attempting to do something that seems to be beyond their reach, that we would say that by the grace of God, they actually reach it. Now, it's not a permanent transformation and this doesn't mean that those of us who are non-violent don't get mad with our wives, or something like this, but at least, we have enough experience in coping with our emotions to know that it is to our advantage to control ourselves - that we have gained the most personally and - well, we've actually made friends with the people that we were at war with - and we're saying that for our movement we are trying to create a community of love, a redeemed community, ^{no less,} where men can live together as brothers. And, I've never learn - I've never known brothers to learn to live together by fighting things out. I think that the path of amelioration, or of forgiveness in religious language, is a much more realistic base for community. Now, we're not really teaching them to love in a sentimental, adoring way. I think maybe he misunderstands the christian notion of love.

Warren: Quite a distinction.

Young: Yes, and we're accepting his behavior and we're not - we're accepting him as a person in spite of the fact that he's wrong and in spite of the fact that his deeds are savage and bestial. We say that in spite of the way that he is acting at

present, that he is still a child of God and if you - if you respond to him as a loving brother, that he can no longer continue to be a savage.

Warren: What about this objection that one encounters - if such a policy and such a philosophy may work in the South where you have some - what you referred to as ethos, behind a society - what about a disoriented, non-community - like a big trap of Detroit, big traps of Harlem, big traps of South Chicago, where this ethos has been lost - where there's no ethos to appeal to.

some analyses on that.

Young: Well, fortunately, I think we've been able to take our ethos North with us, that the Negroes in Detroit, see, came from the South, and when Martin Luther King came to New York and brought the tremendous mystique and charisma that has been entrusted in him, say, in the Southern movement, these Negroes - a quarter of a million of them got out and marched behind him in Detroit, and they became a one-day community. Now, what I'm - all I'm saying is that leadership can make a community of the North, but it's true that as the North exists, see, -

Warren: You don't see that kind of leadership there though.

Young: Well, it wasn't in Montgomery until it developed, you see.

Warren: I see. It on, I see.

Young: Now, it develops in part through suffering. That when

you've got to - the big danger of Northern leadership is that it may not be tempered in time - that any delusions of grandeur that Martin Luther King may have had the first few months were bombed out of him when they bombed his home, and he had to face the fact that, you know, you can die doing this - so it's not something to play with. And it pushes him back to new depths. Then you begin to go along a little ways and you're slapped in jail. Some of his great - well, I trace - well, say new ideas of his to his jail periods, certainly the finest articulation of our whole movement came out of his Birmingham jail experience. And, I say that these periods of suffering ^{are} - periods of great intellectual and spiritual deepening.

Warren: You know I was struck by - to cut in - by going to a rally at Bridgeport where you spoke two weeks ago, - there was not one person there that was not clearly middle class. Here's a city where I - this was all isolated.

Young: Yes, but now when we begin to move a movement, this would have been true in terms of Birmingham - if he'd gone there to speak. In fact, he was there about a month before, speaking at an installation service for a minister in the biggest Baptist church there, and that was almost completely a middle class group. But as the price of suffering and as the movement begins to go, the middle classes thin out and the masses begin to come in.

Warren: Oh, this is terrible. I'm just beginning to feel I'm - you know - digging gold now.

This is the end of the conversation of Andy Young, this is the end, no more.