

## **Dulce Et Decorum Est** **or The Modest Newsletter and the Idea of Patriotism**

But first . . .

### **Silly Sam and the Vegetable Garden**

*by Eric A. White*

The title of this little work may mislead the reader to think that they are about to engage in some sort of story, fable or tale. Unfortunately, I have already disappointed him. I also apologize to anyone named Sam. I am in no wise attempting to discredit any particular person or name. I am in every wise attempting to analyze a class of people. If a Sam happens to fall into that class of people, it is by total coincidence. The point of this essay is to answer the question, "What about Veggie Tales?" What about the silly little vegetables who sing silly little songs? After all, they are cute, and they may even remind us of some of our friends. And, indeed they do.

On one hand, I wish not to discuss Veggie Tales at all. On the other hand, the application of this modest essay will be unavoidable. There is a philosophy which girds (not undergirds) much childish entertainment (or amusement, for there is a distinction which must be made). For the sake of this discussion, I will refer to this philosophy as the "Cattus Petasatus" philosophy. The Cattus Petasatus philosophy succinctly stated is thus, "We can have fun whenever and wherever we wish." In its more destructive forms it may come across as "we have the right to entertainment in every circumstance of life." This of course must still be compared further to the violent aberration, "I have the right to be amused, and you better not try to interfere with that, pal." The reason the third is so violent is that it is often rooted in tradition.

Let us examine, for an example, Silly Sam. Silly Sam is silly. He chants regularly the mild mantra of Cattus Petasatus. He is a pious fellow. He not only believes his mantra, but he attempts to live his life as consistently by it as he is able. We join Silly Sam during a variety of activities, and we observe his pious behavior.

Silly Sam understands the manners and customs of the dinner table. He uses forks and knives as they were intended. He uses a napkin instead of the tablecloth to wipe his chin. He sits in his chair and not on the table. At this level, one might even say he is well behaved -- but not quite.

Remembering his commitment to Cattus Petasatus he is determined to have fun. He will tickle his neighbor's elbow. He will toss the olive into the air and catch it in his mouth. He will pretend to wipe his mouth on his sleeve. He will spin the catsup bottle. He will spill the salt in order to throw it over his shoulder. May we honestly say he is still behaving himself? Silly Sam, when questioned, would say, "Of course. You may have fun whenever and wherever you wish."

Thence, we follow Silly Sam to the local congregation of shoppers, the mall. We again observe his astuteness to patronize (in all senses of the term) stores. We follow him through the toy store (his favorite) where he squeezes the noses and paws of every animal and beast on the shelf to free them from their bondage of silence and to conduct a great dissonant chorus. We find him running through the halls playing tag with his friends. We find him in the children's play area even though he is too tall according to the sign. "Is this appropriate behavior?" we cry,

but no one hears; they are all talking on cell phones.

On another occasion we visit Silly Sam at his place of worship. Here, in this place, we optimistically, and nearly joyfully, seek demeanor. But wait. The service has begun. The organ is pumping out the prelude. The first hymn has begun. Ah yes, now we see him. Here he comes from the narthex and happily takes his seat in the pew in front of us. He smiles at his neighbor and obviously has the joy of the Lord. Oops, he has accidentally turned his hymnal upside down. Now he has corrected it, but he isn't singing the words. In fact, it sounds more like he is singing words like "watermelon" and "orange." Well, at least he is in a nice suit and tie. But, we are soon chagrined to see that the tie is covered in cartoon characters. Alas, Silly Sam is silly.

Finally, out of despair we call Silly Sam. We tell him we must meet with him, that we have bad news we must share face to face. We meet with him and show him a most terrible site. Then we show him his own daughter, lying sick and dying in a hospital bed. No. No, not sick any longer. Then we turn to him in those quiet moments, and we ask, "Where is your faith, O Pious One?"

In that one moment, he is a destitute man because Cattus Petasatus has failed him. Silly Sam learns that we cannot always be entertained or amused. Silly Sam learns that we cannot always have fun. Some matters are serious.

### **Advertisement: *The Political Proposal: A Summer Political Reading Program***

*by Jillian Ross*

This semester I read Adler's *Padiea Proposal*. In it, he contends that every American should be well acquainted with the Constitution and the Federalist Papers. After pondering the notion and asking advice from others, I came up with *Political Proposal*, which includes the following works: *Politica* by Aristotle, *The Declaration of Independence*, *The Articles of Confederation*, *The Federalist Papers*, *Democracy in America* by de Tocqueville (for those Frenchmen in our group), and *The Communist Manifesto* by Marx. The aim of the reading group is to consider seriously America's political structure, as well as expose us to other key political works. We will meet for 10 weeks starting Friday, June 12<sup>th</sup> - August 20<sup>th</sup> and take July 2<sup>nd</sup> off. The discussions will take place from 10:30pm – 12:00am (Just think, this will not conflict with anyone's work schedule, Friday night activities, or bashes). For more information and a reading schedule see Jill. (Please note, if you have the Great Books and The Gateway to The Great Books, you have all the works for the summer. This may be the incentive you need to get the set.)

### **For the Bash**

See if you can bring your Moravian Hymnal so we can sing Jerusalem the Golden. Also, see if you can bring this newsletter or the stuff in the following pages so we can talk about it. I want to discuss the idea of patriotism and I think that the following material will be useful for that purpose. I confess I do not know a great deal about patriotism. I also confess that the selections included were not chosen because their authors know a great deal about the idea of patriotism. But they will serve to shape a good discussion. What I want to get to at the end of this discussion is to find out how the love of one's country fits in with radical monotheism. How is love for the a geographical place a stream that leads to the greater river of loving all things for God's sake alone? This, it seems to me, is the key to the idea of patriotism.

Also think of the retreat. I doubt we will have another bash before the retreat, so we need to decide how everything is going to work. We need to decide what we will do on Friday evening and we also need to put somebody in charge of planning the worship. Ryan is preaching so we probably just need a few other people to work with him and be in charge of making sure there is a plan and decency and order.

### **Patriotism, a Menace to Liberty**

*by Emma Goldman, 1911*

*HTML by Peter Jaques, May 24, 1994*

<http://www.connix.com/~harry/emma.htm>

*Abridged, with Captions to Tell You what You Are Missing by Joel Zartman*

WHAT is patriotism? Is it love of one's birthplace, the place of childhood's recollections and hopes, dreams and aspirations? Is it the place where, in childlike naivete, we would watch the fleeting clouds, and wonder why we, too, could not run so swiftly? The place where we would count the milliard glittering stars, terror-stricken lest each one "an eye should be," piercing the very depths of our little souls? Is it the place where we would listen to the music of the birds, and long to have wings to fly, even as they, to distant lands? Or the place where we would sit at mother's knee, enraptured by wonderful tales of great deeds and conquests? In short, is it love for the spot, every inch representing dear and precious recollections of a happy, joyous, and playful childhood?

If that were patriotism, few American men of today could be called upon to be patriotic, since the place of play has been turned into factory, mill, and mine, while deafening sounds of machinery have replaced the music of the birds. Nor can we longer hear the tales of great deeds, for the stories our mothers tell today are but those of sorrow, tears, and grief.

What, then, is patriotism? "Patriotism, sir, is the last resort of scoundrels," said Dr. Johnson. Leo Tolstoy, the greatest anti-patriot of our times, defines patriotism as the principle that will justify the training of wholesale murderers; a trade that requires better equipment for the exercise of man-killing than the making of such necessities of life as shoes, clothing, and houses; a trade that guarantees better returns and greater glory than that of the average workingman.

Gustave Herve, another great anti-patriot, justly calls patriotism a superstition, one far more injurious, brutal, and inhumane than religion. The superstition of religion originated in man's inability to explain natural phenomena. That is, when primitive man heard thunder or saw the lightning, he could not account for either, and therefore concluded that back of them must be a force greater than himself. Similarly he saw a supernatural force in the rain, and in the various other changes in nature. Patriotism, on the other hand, is a superstition artificially created and maintained through a network of lies and falsehoods; a superstition that robs man of his self-respect and dignity, and increases his arrogance and conceit.

Indeed, conceit, arrogance, and egotism are the essentials of patriotism. Let me illustrate. Patriotism assumes that our globe is divided into little spots, each one surrounded by an iron gate. Those who have had the fortune of being born on some particular spot, consider themselves better, nobler, grander, more intelligent than the living beings inhabiting any other spot. It is, therefore, the duty of everyone living on that chosen spot to fight, kill, and die in the attempt to

impose his superiority upon all the others.

The inhabitants of the other spots reason in like manner, of course, with the result that, from early infancy, the mind of the child is poisoned with bloodcurdling stories about the Germans, the French, the Italians, Russians, etc. When the child has reached manhood, he is thoroughly saturated with the belief that he is chosen by the Lord himself to defend his country against the attack or invasion of any foreigner. It is for that purpose that we are clamoring for a greater army and navy, more battleships and ammunition. It is for that purpose that America has within a short time spent four hundred million dollars. Just think of it four hundred million dollars taken from the produce of the people. For surely it is not the rich who contribute to patriotism. They are cosmopolitans, perfectly at home in every land. We in America know well the truth of this. Are not our rich Americans Frenchmen in France, Germans in Germany, or Englishmen in England? And do they not squander with cosmopolitan grace fortunes coined by American factory children and cotton slaves? Yes, theirs is the patriotism that will make it possible to send messages of condolence to a despot like the Russian Tsar, when any mishap befalls him, as President Roosevelt did in the name of his people, when Sergius was punished by the Russian revolutionists.

[*Statistics*] . . .

The awful waste that patriotism necessitates ought to be sufficient to cure the man of even average intelligence from this disease. Yet patriotism demands still more. The people are urged to be patriotic and for that luxury they pay, not only by supporting their "defenders," but even by sacrificing their own children. Patriotism requires allegiance to the flag, which means obedience and readiness to kill father, mother, brother, sister.

The usual contention is that we need a standing army to protect the country from foreign invasion. Every intelligent man and woman knows, however, that this is a myth maintained to frighten and coerce the foolish. The governments of the world, knowing each other's interests, do not invade each other. They have learned that they can gain much more by international arbitration of disputes than by war and conquest. Indeed, as Carlyle said, "War is a quarrel between two thieves too cowardly to fight their own battle; therefore they take boys from one village and another village, stick them into uniforms, equip them with guns, and let them loose like wild beasts against each other."

It does not require much wisdom to trace every war back to a similar cause.

[*Anecdotes*] . . .

The contention that a standing army and navy is the best security of peace is about as logical as the claim that the most peaceful citizen is he who goes about heavily armed. The experience of every-day life fully proves that the armed individual is invariably anxious to try his strength. The same is historically true of governments. Really peaceful countries do not waste life and energy in war preparations, with the result that peace is maintained.

However, the clamor for an increased army and navy is not due to any foreign danger. It is owing to the dread of the growing discontent of the masses and of the international spirit among the workers. It is to meet the internal enemy that the Powers of various countries are preparing themselves; an enemy, who, once awakened to consciousness, will prove more dangerous than any foreign invader.

The powers that have for centuries been engaged in enslaving the masses have made a thorough study of their psychology. They know that the people at large are like children whose

despair, sorrow, and tears can be turned into joy with a little toy. And the more gorgeously the toy is dressed, the louder the colors, the more it will appeal to the million-headed child.

An army and navy represents the people's toys.

[*Etc.*] . . .

We Americans claim to be a peace-loving people. We hate bloodshed; we are opposed to violence. Yet we go into spasms of joy over the possibility of projecting dynamite bombs from flying machines upon helpless citizens. We are ready to hang, electrocute, or lynch anyone, who, from economic necessity, will risk his own life in the attempt upon that of some industrial magnate. Yet our hearts swell with pride at the thought that America is becoming the most powerful nation on earth, and that it will eventually plant her iron foot on the necks of all other nations.

Such is the logic of patriotism.

Considering the evil results that patriotism is fraught with for the average man, it is as nothing compared with the insult and injury that patriotism heaps upon the soldier himself, that poor, deluded victim of superstition and ignorance. He, the savior of his country, the protector of his nation, what has patriotism in store for him? A life of slavish submission, vice, and perversion, during peace; a life of danger, exposure, and death, during war.

[*Ranting*] . . .

Aside from the sexual effects of barrack life, it also tends to unfit the soldier for useful labor after leaving the army. Men, skilled in a trade, seldom enter the army or navy, but even they, after a military experience, find themselves totally unfitted for their former occupations. Having acquired habits of idleness and a taste for excitement and adventure, no peaceful pursuit can content them. Released from the army, they can turn to no useful work. But it is usually the social riff-raff, discharged prisoners and the like, whom either the struggle for life or their own inclination drives into the ranks. These, their military term over, again turn to their former life of crime, more brutalized and degraded than before. It is a well-known fact that in our prisons there is a goodly number of ex-soldiers; while, on the other hand, the army and navy are to a great extent plied with ex-convicts.

[*Raving*] . . .

The proletariat of Europe has realized the great force of that solidarity and has, as a result, inaugurated a war against patriotism and its bloody spectre, militarism. Thousands of men fill the prisons of France, Germany, Russia, and the Scandinavian countries, because they dared to defy the ancient superstition. Nor is the movement limited to the working class; it has embraced representatives in all stations of life, its chief exponents being men and women prominent in art, science, and letters.

America will have to follow suit. The spirit of militarism has already permeated all walks of life. Indeed, I am convinced that militarism is growing a greater danger here than anywhere else, because of the many bribes capitalism holds out to those whom it wishes to destroy.

[*Astonishing Conclusion*].

From the original e-text, courtesy Spunk Press. Converted to HTML by Peter Jaques, May 24, 1994.

**Ragged Old Flag**

Written by Johnny Cash

I walked through a county courthouse square,  
 On a park bench an old man was sitting there.  
 I said, "Your old courthouse is kinda run down."  
 He said, "Naw, it'll do for our little town."  
 I said, "Your flagpole has leaned a little bit,  
 And that's a Ragged Old Flag you got hanging on it."

He said, "Have a seat", and I sat down.  
 "Is this the first time you've been to our little town?"  
 I said, "I think it is." He said, "I don't like to brag,  
 But we're kinda proud of that Ragged Old Flag."

"You see, we got a little hole in that flag there  
 When Washington took it across the Delaware.  
 And it got powder-burned the night Francis Scott Key  
 Sat watching it writing \_Oh Say Can You See\_.  
 And it got a bad rip in New Orleans  
 With Packingham and Jackson tuggin' at its seams."

"And it almost fell at the Alamo  
 Beside the Texas flag, but she waved on through.  
 She got cut with a sword at Chancellorsville  
 And she got cut again at Shiloh Hill.  
 There was Robert E. Lee, Beauregard, and Bragg,  
 And the south wind blew hard on that Ragged Old Flag."

"On Flanders Field in World War I  
 She got a big hole from a Bertha gun.  
 She turned blood red in World War II  
 She hung limp and low by the time it was through.  
 She was in Korea and Vietnam.  
 She went where she was sent by her Uncle Sam."

"She waved from our ships upon the briny foam,  
 And now they've about quit waving her back here at home.  
 In her own good land she's been abused --  
 She's been burned, dishonored, denied and refused."

"And the government for which she stands  
 Is scandalized throughout the land.  
 And she's getting threadbare and wearing thin,  
 But she's in good shape for the shape she's in."

'Cause she's been through the fire before  
 And I believe she can take a whole lot more."

"So we raise her up every morning,  
 Take her down every night.  
 We don't let her touch the ground  
 And we fold her up right.  
 On second thought I DO like to brag,  
 'Cause I'm mighty proud of that Ragged Old Flag."

**Dulce Et Decorum Est**

Wilfred Owen

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags,  
 we cursed through sludge,  
 Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs  
 And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
 Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,  
 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
 And floundering like a man in fire or lime.--  
 Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light  
 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
 He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
 If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--  
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
 The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*  
*Pro patria mori.*