

Every Catholic who has suffered through sermons that could pass for Marxism 101 must hope, and pray, that John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* will begin to set the bishops straight.

Note: Libertarians and conservatives know the federal government's National Public Radio as National People's Radio, and no wonder. We have only to look at NPR's perversion of *Centesimus Annus*.

The day after the encyclical was issued, their gloriously-voiced but ideologically-crabbed Rome correspondent, Sylvia Poggioli, announced that, according to the pope, the failure of socialism is no "one-sided victory for capitalism."

The pope agreed with "Karl Marx," she said, that "alienation, the exploitation of workers, and the estrangement of the poor and the weak" are endemic to "Western societies."

According to Poggioli, the encyclical denounces "the practical materialism of market economies, their unbridled search for profit, consumerism, and selfishness without solidarity. The pope says it is not possible to understand man on the basis of economics alone. And he calls for state intervention to regulate market economies through a strong legal system that also takes into consideration the ethical and religious needs of the human being."

Not once did Poggioli allude to the pope's real message.

What Poggioli calls "state intervention," the pope calls the "rule of law," essential to a free economy. And she twists the pope's condemnation of vice under capitalism into a criticism of capitalism itself.

The pope did say that man can't be understood on the basis of economics alone, but who, aside from marxists or some of my fellow libertarians, ever thought he could? The pope simply reminds us that the free market is not enough. We must also have the decent social structures that religion builds.

The pope praises the privatization efforts now underway in Eastern Europe, but cautions against the importation of Western immoralism along with economic freedom. Here is how Poggioli reported it: "The encyclical reflects the Pope's concern that what he calls the viruses of Western capitalism now threaten to contaminate the lands of eastern Europe."

Centesimus Annus is an historic call for free markets, but you'd never know it from the NPR's Sylvia Poggioli. She cheats her listeners of the truth. ●

The Deaf and the Blind by The Old Curmudgeon

One virtue that you *don't* go to the good grey *New York Times* for is high humor. Except, of course, when that humor is unwitting. Some of that commodity is supplied by Karen De Witt, in "How Best to Teach the Blind" (May 12). It seems that there is a severe internecine struggle going on among both the blind and the non-blind over how to teach the blind. One problem is that, for a leading journalist, Ms. De Witt seems to have great difficulty in finding the right words. There are battles, for example, between the

"visually handicapped" or "visually impaired" versus the "non-visually handicapped." Look, how about using some plain English for a change, and say "blind" and "seeing" or even God forbid, "normal?"

It turns out that Braille, formerly learned by about half the blind, is now known by only a small percentage of blind people. One blind engineer went to graduate school and found that he could no longer make do with tapes and various voice-activated machines—that for graduate work you had to be able to read. It turns out that some of the "illiteracy" we've been hearing about has been deliberately fostered by those who teach the blind. As a result of this shift away from Braille in the last forty years, only about 12 percent of the blind can now read.

Among pro-blind groups, the normal tend to be anti-Braille and the blind, or "militant blind," are very much in favor of it. The arguments grow curiously and curiously. One argument of the anti-Braille forces is that Braille "discriminates" against the mentally retarded and the "tactile impaired" who couldn't touch the letters. One would think that the blind would know better about their own education, but both sides have the distressing tendency to employ coercion. Thus, the militant blind are trying to get state governments to force all the blind to read Braille, and five state legislatures have already succumbed to this new horror. The compulsory Braille forces maintain that parents are preventing their blind kids from learning Braille, because, says

blind Kansas State Representative Dick Edlung, "A lot of [parents] have it in their heads that if the kid just tried harder, he'd be able to see." Weird; are there really parents like that, or is this just a desperate argument by coercive Brailletes? On the other hand, the anti-Braille forces claim that where Braille has been compulsory at schools for the blind, the kids are forced to wear aprons to cover the Braille on their desks because they could see the dots; apparently, that makes them fake Braille readers, a big no-no.

Look, if the kids can see the dots, what are they doing in schools for the blind in the first place? Surely, seeing the dots should not be some sort of stigma.

Have we wandered into a loony bin, or am I missing something here? For those who wish to keep the players straight, there are three big pro-blind groups: the American Foundation for the Blind, run by the seeing and anti-Braille; the militant blind National Federation of the Blind, which is pro-compulsory Braille; and a mixed-group of blind and seeing, the American Council of the Blind, which is also anti-Braille.

In the meantime, over in the other ballpark, the deaf are having their own struggles. Here there are three camps, two struggles. One is between lip-reading, allegedly imposed on the deaf by the normal (hearinged?), as against the militant deaf, who want to express themselves in their own indigenous, organic, beautifully expressive sign language (or so I am told by my least favorite neurologist, Dr. Oliver Sacks.) But *within* the signing movement, there are two camps, the rational (or "sellout") deaf, who want to sign in *English*, a language which they already know and read; and the still more beautiful, expressive, etc. organic Sign Language—allegedly infinitely better and richer than (Ugh!) English, a language imposed on the deaf by dead white heterosexual males. And on and on.

Do you get the impression that these poor handicapped, whether deaf or blind, are having their lives made infinitely more miserable by all these blanket-blank social worker, whether militant or not who are Pushing Them Around? - **M.N.R.**

Errata

It has been called to my attention by Dr. John Howard, founder of the Rockford Institute, that details of my report about R.J. Neuhaus in the March issue were inaccurate. For one thing, Neuhaus was brought to the Institute not as a link to philanthropies, but as a social theologian whom Dr. Howard mistook for an incipient conservative. Second, it was John Howard who provided Neuhaus with the entree into conservative foundations. Having worked patiently since the mid-seventies in building such connections, Howard shared his contacts with longtime leftist Neuhaus, by now repackaged as a conservative. John Howard is a man whose integrity has never been challenged, not even by neocons; and seeing that his account squares with my own memories while still a professor at Rockford College, I gratefully accept his corrections.

His comments about what transpired between Neuhaus and the Institute shift the blame firmly on to the object of an undeserved friendship. Neuhaus not only dared to attack his employers but shanghaied their funding sources in anticipation of his departure. In view of such conduct, having him thrown out onto the street, as he accused the Rockford Institute of doing, may have been excessively gentle.
—Paul Gottfried.

We erred in describing Paul's "Scrambling for Funds" as an excerpt from his forthcoming book with Thomas Fleming. The article, with additional material on neoconservatives as well as neocon-funded libertarians, is actually being published in yet another book of Paul's.

—The Editors

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