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THE
CATHOLIC
HOUR

This Week in America

REV. THURSTON DAVIS, S.J.

GEORGE HUNTON

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Reverend Thurston Davis, S.J., is America's Editor-in-Chief. Mr. George Hunton is Editor the of the Catholic Interracial Review, Secretary of the Catholic Interracial Council and former Executive Secretary of the Cardinal Gibbons Institute.

Fr. Davis: First of all, I want to say thanks to the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Broadcasting Company in the name of the weekly magazine, *America*. This week — and the three following Sundays of August — the editors of *America* have the privilege of talking to the millions of people who make up the audience of the CATHOLIC HOUR. We have been asked to tell you something about our work — the problems we deal with as priest-journalists, and the way we go about getting our national weekly journal written, edited and published every seven days. People enjoy talking about their work as a rule. I know we do here at *America*. And we hope you will enjoy listening.

This week I would like to tell you something about the kind of apostolate

we are engaged in. We can skip a lot of the details — you know, the blue pencils, the technical side of deadlines and type sizes and galleys and page proofs. But there is one thing I shall certainly not pass over in silence. That is the very important fact that an editor-in-chief isn't able to get anywhere at all unless he has a good staff of associate editors.

Now right at the beginning I can proudly state that *America* is singularly blessed in this respect. There are nine of us Jesuits together on the *America* staff here in New York, and I have a hunch that you would go a long way before you found a team of men that enjoy working together as much as we do.

Next Sunday — and the two Sundays following — you are going to hear from three of *America's* associate editors. Tune in at the same time next Sunday for what you can be sure will be a very stimulating discussion of labor management problems, with doubtless a few meaty asides on the subject of the national economy, the Federal Budget or the guaranteed annual wage. You're almost certain to hear a lot about the way in which the statements of the modern-day Popes apply to business and industry and labor. Father Benjamin Masse is a veteran member of our staff, and this is his field. You'll hear him

next Sunday.

The week after, the scene shifts to the Far East, and to international problems in general. What are we to think of India and the uncommitted nations of South East Asia? What about Red China? What will be the fate of Nationalist China? How about Japan? And Indonesia? And the Philippines, that staunch friend who is now beginning her second decade of independence? Father Vincent Kearney, *America's* expert on the Far East, will have a lot to tell us about his work and his travels in the Orient.

The final Sunday's program will bring you Father Harold Gardiner, another long-time member of the *America* staff and its literary and book-review editor. You see, a contemporary weekly journal of opinion isn't concerned merely with politics, economics or foreign affairs. It takes a broad view of the entire cultural scene as well. I think you will enjoy hearing Father Gardiner sum things up on the literary front.

Old-time readers and friends of *America* will undoubtedly miss the presence on our program of Father John La Farge, who has been on the staff of *America* since 1926. It so happens that Father La Farge is appearing on the CATHOLIC HOUR television program this very afternoon at 4:00 p.m. and couldn't man-

age to be with us. But we are very fortunate in having a devoted friend and colleague of his on this program. For years he and George Hunton have collaborated in the Catholic Interracial Movement, and I can't imagine anyone I would rather have here in the studio with me today than the busy editor of the *Interracial Review*.

Mr. Hunton: I'm glad to be here, too, Father Davis. Not that I can claim to be a stand-in for Father La Farge, but I'm happy that you thought of me in connection with him, for I've known him a long time, now, both as an editor of *America* and as a great leader in the cause of interracial justice.

Just to get a better idea of *America* and its work, could you tell us something about its history? When did it start, and what was its original purpose?

Fr. Davis: Mr. Hunton, I think that before I mention *America* I should say that we who work on *America* are just a small part of an immeasurably larger thing — the Catholic press in the United States. *Time* magazine recently told the story of the U. S. Catholic press, and told it very well, too. And it *is* quite a story! Last May the Catholic Press Association met in Dallas, Texas. If a person knew little

or nothing about the Catholic Press in the United States, and just happened to attend that meeting, I think he would have been astounded to find how alive and how competent our newspapers and magazines are. Few people realize that the American Catholic press has a combined circulation of over 22 million readers. Of course, when we get together at a convention like the one in Dallas, we always discuss our weaknesses as well as our strong points. But by and large one had to admit that the Catholic Press Association has achieved an almost miraculous growth in the last forty years.

I mention this in the first place because I want to lay stress on the fact that *America* is proud to be part of this very vital apostolate of the press here in the United States.

America was founded back in 1909. Father John Wynne, who organized and edited the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, was also the founder and first editor of *America*. In those days there was no Catholic weekly in the United States. There were some top-notch monthly magazines, which today are proud veterans of the American Catholic Press. But it was felt in 1909 that the constantly growing number of educated Catholics in the United States needed a weekly journal of Catholic opinion. So *America* was

launched.

We began publication on April 17, 1909, and we have missed only one single week in the 47 years since — once when the presses broke down, some twenty-five years ago. *America's* purpose, its original purpose, as you put it — Well, *America* has the same purpose today that it had in 1909. That purpose is to try to shed light, from a Catholic point of view, on the vital issues of the day. There is a lot of information in *America*, of course, but simply giving information isn't *America's* central purpose.

Mr. Hunton: Yes, in these days when there are so many publications, news agencies and wire services, information is easy to come by — at least in the free world, and on most of the important topics of the times.

Fr. Davis: Our function at *America*, Mr. Hunton, is much more the Christian formation of public opinion and the formation of Christian consciences. So many of today's problems are at root moral problems. At least, they undoubtedly have moral overtones. I know you would agree the question of segregated schools is one such question.

Mr. Hunton: It certainly is. And with it,

the entire problem of race relations in the United States and throughout the whole world, for that matter.

Fr. Davis: Foreign aid is another case in point. Giving food or machines or technical help or dollars to the underdeveloped countries of the world is not just a matter of national self-interest. Foreign aid is fundamentally a moral question, and any thorough discussion of it must take account of these moral aspects. That is why we would treat it editorially, or at greater length in feature articles, in *America*.

Mr. Hunton: I can think of several other such questions — censorship and comic books, decency in the movies and in the communications field generally, unfair discrimination in employment practices, obligations of workers to their employers and the converse responsibilities of employers to the men they hire.

Fr. Davis: Atomic Energy Commissioner Thomas E. Murray raised an extremely important moral issue recently when he said that the nation ought to give serious thought to whether or not we have now produced big enough nuclear bombs. Should we go on and on, building bigger and bigger ones, or does the moral law

step in at some point here and dictate that the ones we have are quite large enough? That is the sort of problem which *America* would be expected to tackle. We ran an editorial on it, and are planning to have a symposium on the question later in the year.

Mr. Hunton: So, Father Davis, you would say that your weekly magazine, *America* exists not only to inform minds but also to form consciences and opinion from a Catholic point of view.

Fr. Davis: Exactly. That has been our purpose for almost fifty years now, and it will remain our purpose so long as *America* is edited.

Mr. Hunton: I noticed some months ago in *America* an article entitled "So You're Moving to Suburbia". Why would you as a Catholic editor feel that the suburbs present the kind of problem that *America* ought to be interested in?

Fr. Davis: That's a good example, Mr. Hunton. You know better than I how many young people are marrying and moving out of the cities these days to a cottage or a ranch house in Suburbia. We feel that these young families are meeting all sorts of new challenges and fresh

problems economic, social and religious problems — in their new communities.

The suburbia question is a live one, all the way from Long Island to Los Angeles. Thousands of young husbands and wives are facing important decisions as they adjust to new ways of life in what a friend of mine recently called out new American "Frontier". It's a topic we hope to come back to from time to time in the pages of *America*. Especially important, I feel, is the question of "conformium" in the suburbs — the problem of everybody feeling he or she has to be just like everyone else. Of course, conformism isn't limited to the suburbs by any means, but it appears to be more keenly felt there than anywhere else.

Mr. Hunton: Is *America* written just for Catholics, or is it aimed at a wider readership?

Fr. Davis: Primarily, I would say, its readers are Catholics, but we are writing for men and women of good will everywhere. Archbishop Cushing of Boston made an interesting remark on the subject last fall when he was talking over station WMEX in Boston. He spent some minutes on the subject of *America* and *America's* readers, and put it this way:

If you read any of the secular news

weeklies, you will notice that *America* is one of the few Catholic journals with any influence upon our non-Catholic friends. We have innumerable Catholic Magazines, many of excellent quality, but very few ever reach the hands of non-Catholics. *America* is one of these.

I imagine that the Archbishop would certainly include your own magazine, *The Interracial Review*, among the ones which reach people of all faiths.

Mr. Hunton: Why would you say, Father Davis, that a magazine like *America*, edited by Jesuit priests, would be of interest to Non-Catholic readers.

Fr. Davis: Well, Mr. Hunton, *America* has the official sub-title "National Catholic Weekly Review". The word "Catholic" as a printer would put it, has to be understood as though it were set in both upper case and lower case type. In other words, *America* is most definitely Catholic in the "upper case" sense. That is, we try to expound and defend our Catholic Faith in the most competent way we know how. We attempt to apply the principles of our Faith, and the principles laid down by the Holy Father, to every important issue of the twentieth century. But, as you know, the word "catholic"

— with a lower case letter "c" — means universal, non-exclusive, all embracing. So, since we deal with the full sweep of the world's concerns, we figure that what we write and publish in *America* is probably fairly important and fairly interesting to everybody.

Mr. Hunton: We have already listed a good many such topics of universal interest, but I guess we could enumerate a good many more. You carry regular columns of film criticism, theatre reviews, and now I see you have added another for television.

Fr. Davis: Yes, these are some of the things that *everybody* is concerned about. And there are dozens more Education, for example. Education is one of the most argued topics in today's world, and so we are constantly trying to point up the important issues that affect our schools: Federal aid for school construction, teachers salaries, why Johnny can or can't read, the need for better science and math instruction, the values of the teaching of Latin and Greek. Our education editor Father Neil McCluskey, attended the White House Conference on Education last November in Washington, and was at a panel at the recent convention of the National Education Association out

in Portland, Oregon. He felt, as many others at the convention did also, that the NEA missed a big opportunity in Portland to stand up and be counted on the school segregation issue. In general, Mr. Hunton, we try to follow and report on educational matters almost every week.

Mr. Hunton: I have noticed that *America* keeps coming back to the question of how public education must find some solution to the problem of really incorporating moral and spiritual values into its curriculum. That's certainly an important question — and one to which I imagine you will be returning very often in the future.

Fr. Davis: Yes, you're right. And to many others too, examples would be: public housing, price controls, rigid or flexible farm supports, the soil bank, problems of national defense, the press and the entire field of communications, UNESCO and its critics, the United Nations, NATO and SEATO. How should the free world deal with the new tactics of the Soviet Communist line, now that Stalin has been purged by his former creatures? Then there are all the dozens of problems which come to mind at the mere mention of social legislation and social action — working mothers, unem-

ployment, old age and disability insurance, juvenile delinquency, narcotics control, mental health and the terrible problems raised by our growing divorce rate. You see why I say that, even from this very incomplete listing, we can rightly talk about the 'catholicity' of our Catholic journalism. And by the way, we had a piece just last week on "Satchmo" Armstrong.

Mr. Hunton: Perhaps you could tell us something about your editorial offices.

Fr. Davis: Though the Jesuits assigned to the staff of *America* come from all over the country, we live together here in New York. We have a small house on West 108th St., which is our residence and editorial office combined. We have lived there about thirty years now, ever since Father Wilfrid Parsons was editor.

Mr. Hunton: Editing the *Interracial Review* I have some idea of what it means to meet a monthly deadline. But it must be a bit different with a weekly magazine. There must be a lot of pressure on you priests at Campion House, with deadlines coming so frequently and relentlessly. What is your weekly deadline, Father Davis?

Fr. Davis: Well, Mr. Hunton, I remarked earlier on this program that I wasn't going to talk about deadlines, but I must agree that in our line of work they *are* awfully important — and have an ineluctable way of creeping up on us every week. We start planning our issues some weeks in advance, of course, and often correspond with writers for two or three months about a feature article. But the week-by-week part of *America*, the actual review-of-the-week section, has to be done rapidly and under pressure. There just isn't any other way.

Every Monday morning our whole staff sits around a big table in the board room and goes over a list of some thirty or forty topics which are in the news that day. We discuss them back and forth, each editor proposing what he thinks could or should be said, and finally we settle on the editorials and the shorter editorial comments — about 17 of them — which we plan to publish that week. From Monday noon on we stay at our desks all week long until the job is done, the copy edited, the galleys returned from the printer and proofread, the dummy made up, the page proofs printed and the final corrections made.

Thursday morning we meet again for a last-minute discussion and for a long, silent session of proof reading. Then we

go to press. Copies of the final product come back from the printer on Friday. On Friday, too they are mailed out all over the country. That's the way a typical week goes at *America* Monday through Friday — Then on the next Monday, we start in all over again. Mondays come along awfully fast!

Mr. Hunton: That's quite a routine — fifty-two weeks a year.

Fr. Davis: Yes, Mr. Hunton, but it's not as bad as it might sound.

Mr. Hunton: Why do you say that?

Fr. Davis: Well, because every week is different. The news keeps moving along. Issues develop. New problems come up. It's an interesting kind of job.

Mr. Hunton: Suppose you take a typical weekly issue and tell us what goes into it and why. Many magazine readers have no notion of how all the parts get assembled into the final printed copy which they buy at their newstands or receive in the mail.

Fr. Davis: Well, it isn't done by magic. First of all, we have to ask "What is the news this week? and what in the news is

most worth discussing?" A couple of weeks ago the big news was the way the Kremlin, after a short spree of public self-criticism, snapped back to its old rigidity and cracked the whip once again over its minions.

So we wrote an editorial which said that Khrushchev and his crew, in turning the comrades loose, had evidently bitten off more than they could chew. That's becoming clearer every day. That week, too, Mr. Nehru had just given a London press conference in which he upbraided Mr. Nixon and Mr. Dulles on their statements on neutrality. That provoked another editorial. Back home in the U.S.A. that week the big news was a *Reporting on Blacklisting*, published by the Fund for the Republic, and written by John Cogley.

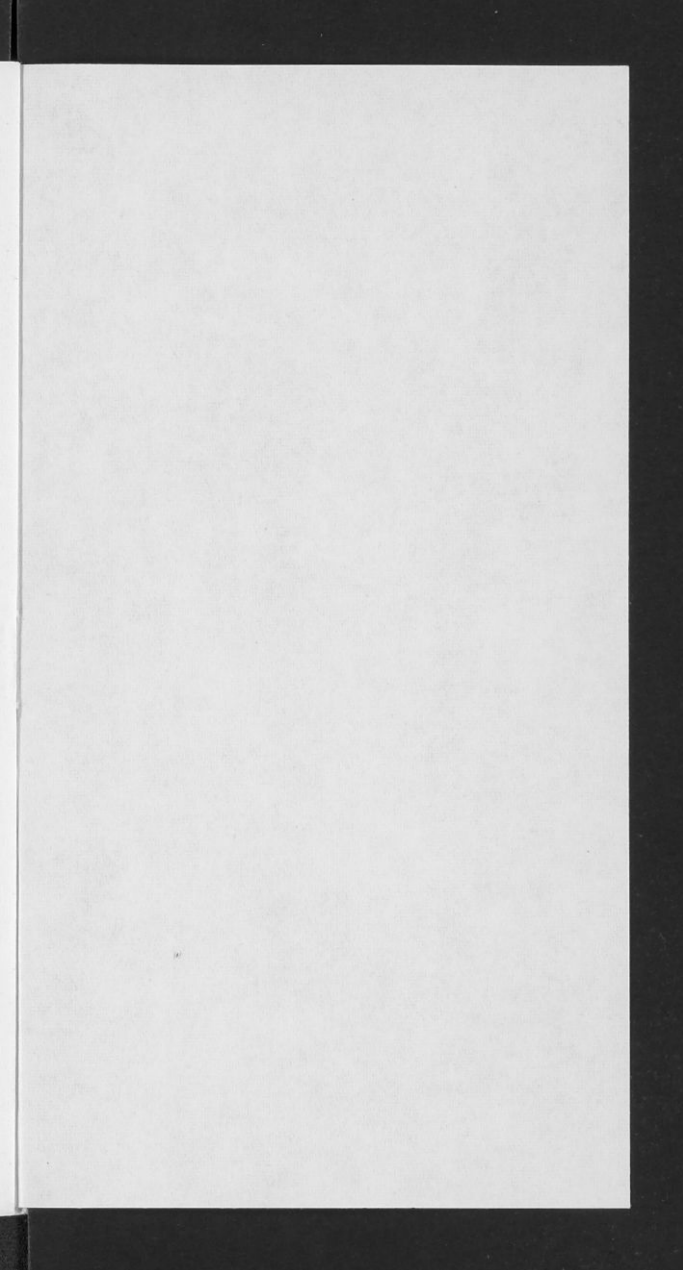
Our feature article that week was a discussion of Mr. Cogley's book, written by the chief council to the senate Internal Security Sub-committee, Mr. Robert Morris. Among a dozen other topics of the week, we discussed the balancing of the Federal Budget for the first time since 1951, the disillusionment felt by many over the National Education Association's annual meeting in Portland, Oregon, the new highway bill and the need for politicians to "keep their punches up" as we get nearer to Election

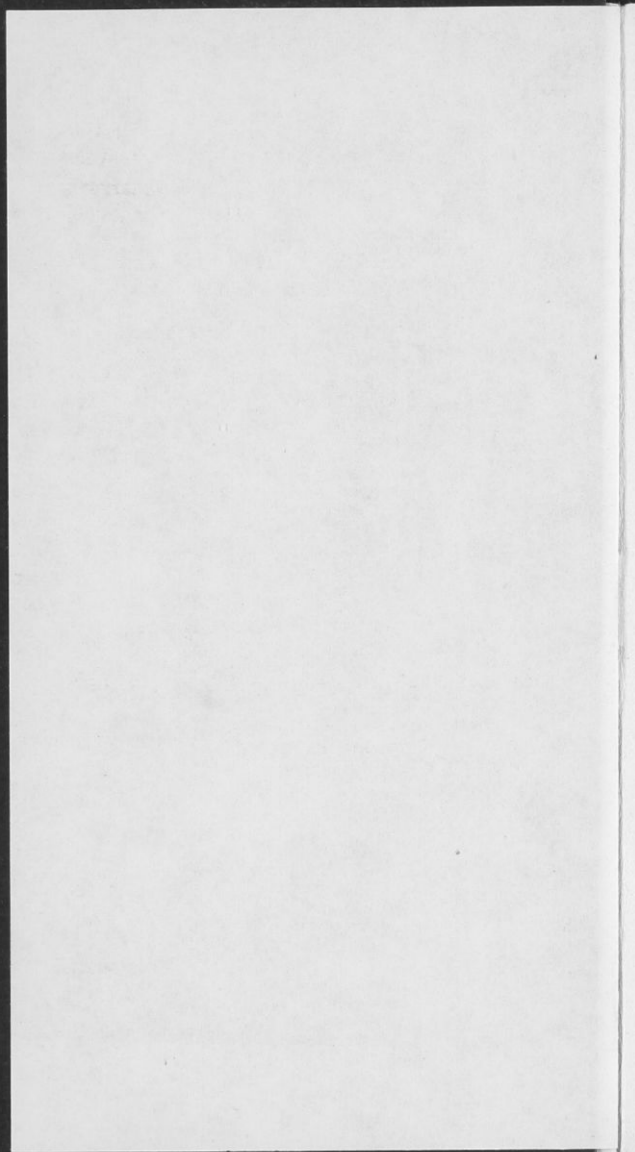
Day. A young American Rhodes Scholar, Arthur Hull Hayes, Jr., contributed a "Report from Oxford". We ran an article on two airforce chaplains who have flown 350,000 miles the last seven years giving missions to air-force personnel. And we had a fine article that same week on modern techniques of using stained glass. All this plus book reviews, film reviews and our other regular features. Thats a typical week.

Mr. Hunton: This has been an interesting round-up. I only wish more people knew intimately the amount of work and study that goes into our Catholic press. In these times, we all need to be informed. But information just isn't enough. If we are going to be able to live as Christians in these challenging days of ours, we need too, the strength of principle and conviction which comes from strong faith in God, undying hope for the human family and deep love for all our brothers in Christ. We have to do more than read the news. We must form our consciences about the world's big problem in the light of our faith, hope and charity.

Fr. Davis: I certainly agree, Mr. Hunton. And to end where we began, the ceaseless work of the Catholic press is precisely that — to help men and women of

good will face up to the full measure of their responsibility in the modern world. That means knowing the world's problems, facing them honestly, judging them serenely — and then bravely taking a stand on the firm ground of Christian conscience and conviction.





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