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Take Off Your Blinders, Boys

IN MOST OF THE discussions we have heard, pro and con, about General Eisenhower's candidacy and possible nomination for the Presidency, somebody usually comes up with an observation that goes something like this: "But we don't know where Eisenhower stands. He's never made his position clear on domestic issues. And he's so beholden to the New and Fair Deals that he would have to conduct a 'me too' campaign."

But those who condemn the general for silence or vagueness are really condemning their own faulty memories or their failure to read their newspapers. For he has spoken out on many occasions in the past. And he has not concealed his basic political and social philosophy.

It should not be forgotten that, for more than two years and a half, General Eisenhower served in civilian clothes as president of Columbia University. During that time he made numerous speeches, formal and informal. Recently we went through some 25 of those speeches and took copious notes. We can't give a really representative selection of them on this one page, and we may possibly be doing the general an unintended disservice by quoting out of context the few excerpts that follow. Even so, we think that we should recall to American voters, in the interest of public information, some of the things that General Eisenhower said during the period

when his freedom to speak his mind was not limited by active military service:

"As citizens of the United States, you and I—and all Americans in every corner of our land—must be forever mindful that the heritage of America and the strength of America are expressed in three fundamental principles: first, that individual freedom is our most precious possession; second, that all our freedoms are a single bundle, all must be secure if any is to be preserved; third, that freedom to compete and readiness to co-operate make our system the most productive on earth. Only within the framework of these principles can we hope to continue the growth that has marked our history." (From an address, World Peace—a Balance Sheet, New York, March 23, 1950.)

"Because of our productivity and our insistence upon fairness in human relations, we have largely—though not wholly—freed ourselves from the tragic contrast of abject pauperism lying in the shadow of gluttonous luxury. That appalling picture could not be . . . long tolerated by a people who believe in the dignity of man and the legitimate aspirations of all men.

"And, let us not forget, our freedom from degrading pauperism is due to America's deep-seated sense of fair play translated into adequate law; to American industrial initiative and courage; to the genius of the American scientist and engineer; and to the sweat, the organizing ability

and the product of American labor in a competitive economy. It is *not* the result of political legerdemain or crackpot fantasies of reward without effort, harvests without planting . . .

"The middle of the road is derided by all of the right and the left. They deliberately misrepresent the central position as a neutral, wishy-washy one. Yet here is the truly creative area within which we may obtain agreement for constructive social action compatible with basic American principles, and with the just aspirations of every sincere American. It is the area in which are rooted the hopes and allegiance of the vast majority of our people." (Address before the American Bar Association, St. Louis, September 5, 1949.)

"There is a kind of dictatorship that can come about through a creeping paralysis of thought—readiness to accept paternalistic measures from the government . . . and, therefore, a surrender of our own thought over our own lives and our own right to exercise our vote in dictating the policies of this country. If we allow this constant drift toward centralized bureaucratic government to continue, finally it will be expressed not only in the practice of laying down rules and laws for governing each of us in his daily actions to ensure that we do not take unfair advantage of our comrades and other citizens, but finally it will be in the actual field of operation. There'll be a swarm of bureaucrats over the land. Ownership of property will gradually drift into that central government and finally you have dictatorship as the only means of operating such a huge and great organization." (Remarks before the first Columbia College Forum on Democracy, February 12, 1949.)

"To my mind a capitalist, far from being someone to condemn, in this country is one who by his own efforts in the past has made it possible for this country to be what it is today." (Speech before Newspaperboys' Meeting, Philadelphia, October 6, 1948.)

"More than ever before, in this country, this is the age of the individual. Endowed with the accumulated knowledge of centuries, armed with all the instruments of modern science, he is still assured personal freedom and wide avenues of expression so that he may win for himself, his family and his country greater material comfort, ease and happiness; greater spiritual satisfaction and contentment.

"When even the rudiments of knowledge were possessed by only a privileged few, when man's appalling ignorance handicapped his participation in government, there was ground to believe that an all-powerful state had to rule each subject's life from the cradle to the grave. That ground has diminished with each year of our republic's existence. None remains today. The free individual has been justified as his own master; the state as his servant." (Commencement address, Columbia University, June 1, 1949.)

This brief sampling of General Eisenhower's opinions on civilian matters clearly shows that he has been neither thoughtless nor purposely obscure. He correctly imposes a self-censorship on his statements while he is in uniform. But it would be inaccurate to conclude from this that he has been entirely preoccupied with military matters all his life. He has obviously given serious thought to a wide range of subjects, and he has spoken out forthrightly when the occasion warranted. If he should be the Republicans' nominee, those who now complain of his vagueness would certainly discover that the general has convictions, and the courage to express them.

