

Satirical and other Verse etc.

[The following poems and other material seem consistent with the overall thrust of the material on this web page.]

Satirical Verse: Some Poems from *The Blasted Pine*¹

THE PROGRESS OF SATIRE

(To F.R.S. and A.J.M.S.)

Reading a dead poet
Who complained in his time
Against bad laws, bad manners,
And bad weather in bad rhyme.

I thought how glad he'd be
To be living in our time
To damn worse laws, worse manners
And worse weather in worse rhyme.

Luis Dudek

THE USE OF FORCE (p 111)

Please don't believe
The use of force
Is how we change the social course;
The use of force
You surely know
Is how we keep the status quo.

John K Rooke

TO A GENERATION UNEMPLOYED (p 42)

Epitaph

These at a time when stocks were falling,
A hour when bonds had taken flight,
Forsook their mercenary calling
And walked out blindly in the night.
They ceased to earn and markets mended;
They starved and spared the budget grief.
We all were brave; ah! They were splendid
And rescued business—on relief.

¹ F. R. Scott and A. J. M. Smith *The Blasted pine: An Anthology of Satire Invective and Disrespectful Verse Chiefly by Canadian Writers*. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1957).

AQUARIUS

From *Canadian Forum* October 1956.

FIVE-PER-CENT (p 38)

Because I have ten thousand pounds I sit upon my stern,
And leave my living tranquilly for other folks to earn,
For in some procreative way that isn't very clear,
Ten thousand pounds will breed, they say, five hundred every year,
So as I have a healthy hate of economic strife,
I mean to stand aloof from it the balance of my life.
And yet with sympathy I see the grimy son of toil,
And heartily congratulate the tiller of the soil,
I like the miner in the mine, the sailor on the sea,
Because up to five hundred pounds they sail and mine for me,
For me their toil is taxed unto that annual extent.
According to the holy shibboleth of Five-per-Cent.

So get ten thousand pounds, my friend, in any way you can,
And leave your future welfare to the noble Working Man,
He'll buy your suits of Harris tweed, an Airedale and a car;
Your golf clubs and your morning *Times*, your whiskey and cigar,
He'll cosily install you in a cottage by a stream,
With every modern comfort, and a garden that's a dream.
Or if your tastes be urban, he'll provide you with a flat,
Secluded from the clamour of the proletariat.
With pictures, music, easy chairs, a table of good cheer,
A chap can manage nicely on five hundred pounds a year,
And though around you painful signs of industry you view
Why should you work when you can make your money work for you?

So I'll get down upon my knees and bless the Working Man,
Who offers me a life of ease through all my mortal span;
Whose loins are lean to make me fat, who slaves to keep me free,
Who dies before his prime to let me round the century;
Whose wife and children toil in turn until their strength is spent
That I may live in idleness upon my Five-per-Cent.
And if at times they curse me, why should I feel any blame?
For in my place I know that they would do the very same.
Aye, though they hoist a flag that's red on Sunday afternoon,
Just offer them ten thousand pounds and see them change their tune.
So I'll enjoy my dividends and live my life with zest,
And bless the mighty men who first—invented interest.

ROBERT W SERVICE

From *Bar Room Ballads*, 1940

HYMN TO THE GLORY OF FREE ENTERPRISE (p 39)

Solo: An Elder Statesman

1.

Of freedom this and freedom that the drooling leftist chatters,
But Freedom for Free Enterprise is all that really matters;
This freedom was ordained by God, upon it rest all others,
For man's divinest impulse is to over-reach his brothers;
And so to this celestial urge we make our offering votive;
Behind all human greatness lies the noble Profit Motive,

Chorus of Bankers, Brokers, Executives and Advertising Men

Then hail we now Free Enterprise
Extol and give it praise!
In it the world's salvation lies,
Without it every freedom dies;
O glorious Free Enterprise—
The enterprise that pays!

Solo: The President of the Canadian Manufacturer's Association

2.

For victory we're giving all, at scarcely more than cost,
But what's the good of victory if Free Enterprise is lost?
The war's demands for well-laid plans most loyally we've heeded.
But peace is quite a different thing—no planning then is needed.
So, while today these damned controls have stretched us to the rack
The moment victory comes in sight we want our freedom back.

Chorus:

Then hail we now Free Enterprise,
Extol and give it praise!
In armed revolt we'll all arise
If any postwar party tries
To undermine Free Enterprise—
The enterprise that pays.

Solo: The President of the Canadian Banker's Association

3

We face today a dreadful threat from foes who would destroy us'
Of something called "Security" they prate in accents joyous.
Security? Its cost alone would drive us to perdition;

Besides, it kills initiative and suffocates ambition.
Security breaks down the will, the urge that keeps men free,
It stifles effort, starves the soul—except in men like me.

Chorus:

Then hail we now Free Enterprise,
Extol and give it praise!
While Marsh and Beveridge theorize
Their deadly bolshevistic lies
Are poisoning Free Enterprise—
The enterprise that pays.

Solo: The President of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce

4
At periods when Free Enterprise may not provide employment!
We dread the thought of hungry men—it lessens our enjoyment;
The government must then step in, with this consideration:
That any public works proposed do not increase taxation.
Depressions, after all, my friends, much as we may deplore them,
Are acts of God. Who ever heard of blaming business for them?

Chorus:

Then hail we now Free Enterprise,
Extol and give it praise!
Of course, when profits shrink in size,
To lay men off is only wise;
We dearly love Free Enterprise
But only when it pays.

Solo: The President of the Advertising Association

5
Conspirators on every side Free Enterprise have slandered,
Forgetting that it's given us the world's best living standard'
We eat and drink supremely well at Royal York and Rideau.
And no one drives more Cadillacs or bigger ones than we do.
How blind the socialist who plots this way of life to shatter!
Free Enterprise brings wealth to all—at least to those who matter.

Chorus:

Then hail we now Free Enterprise,
Extol and give it praise!
The working man must recognize,
That, if in want he lives and dies,
It's just his lack of enterprise—
The enterprise that pays.

Solo: The President of a Very Large Corporation

6

Free Enterprise, does not, of course, mean actual competition,
And cutting prices—God forbid! That's treason and sedition.
A "Gentleman's Agreement" is the best of all devices
To stabilize our dividends, our markets, and our prices.
For taking risks we've little love; we set our whole affection
On something like monopoly, with adequate protection.

Chorus:

Then hail we now Free Enterprise,
Extol and give it praise!
In it the world's salvation lies
Without it every freedom dies;
O glorious Free Enterprise
O wonderful Free Enterprise,
O marvelous Free Enterprise—
The enterprise that pays.

J. D. KETCHUM

THE SERVICE CLUB (p 43)

1

The Service Club, on Wednesday noons,
Put on their tags, and shouted tunes—
All songs of noble theme and style,
As, "Pack your troubles up and smile".

These "angels" never sang hosannas
But chanted, "We have no bananas."
The air was thick with "Bill" and "Jack",
And each man thumped the other's back.
A bowl of soup, a slab of beef
Went swiftly sliding down each throat:

Their mastication would bring grief
To ostrich, pelican or goat,
Then cigarettes came out to heal
All memories of their awful meal;
And some to ease digestion's scars
Smoked wheezy pipes and fat cigars;
For dinner at a service club
Is strong on smoke and short on grub.

2

The president then rapped a gong,
And chairs scraped back in raucous song;
And with a monumental boost
The speaker then was introduced.
And, when he started in to tell
Them only things they cared to hear,
Like blurring ghosts in cloudy hell
They gave him an attentive ear.
The famous orator was brought
Because he never dislodged thought.
And if the interest seemed to lag
He praised the clergy and the flag
He lauded surgeons and their knives,
He blessed all mother and all wives.

His talk was like a soothing drug
That made men want to kiss and hug;
Or give one hundred thousand bucks
To under-privileged woodchucks.
Who got this way, now here's the rub,
Because the motto of this club
Was ever this—the thought quite missed 'em—
That no one must destroy the System.

3

The speaker paused; he knew his speech
Had not disturbed a soul in reach;
And so he brought his gifts to rally
In one magnificent finale,
Wherein he spake, with raised hand:
“We live in God's anointed land,
The world is fine, the weather's grand!”
And at this most amazing truth
He took his chair and picked his tooth.
And all the ghosts in cloudy hell
Cried “Bravo, bravo, all is well.”

And when their wild applause had died
Men rushed in torrents to his side
And told how they were edified.

4

Next Wednesday noon, at half-past twelve,
These men to Barnum's Inn will go
To keep the vacuum of their days
In one sublime perpetual flow.

WILSON MacDONALD

From Comber Cove, 1937.

Psalm 23 (p 113)

Revised Version

The Christian's my keeper; I shall not want.
He letteth me to eat rock in pastures;
He slaketh me beside the salt waters.
He visas my soul;
He heedeth me with the stamp of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yes, though I crawl through the alleys of the countries of death,
I will feel no sanction: for thou art with me.
Committee and staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a paper about me in the presence of mine enemies:
Thou anointest mine-ear with words; my cup runneth over.
Purely Aryan blood-cells may flow for all the days of thy life,
But I will dwell in the blood of the Lord forever.

RALPH GUSTAFSON

THE SCEPTIC (p 85)

My Father Christmas passed away
When I was barely seven,
At twenty-one, alack-a-day,
I lost my hope of heaven.

Yet not in either lies the curse:
The hell of it because
I don't know which loss hurt the worse—
My God or Santa Claus.

Robert W. Service

Spiritual Passages:

Isaiah 10²

1 Woe to those who make unjust laws,
to those who issue oppressive decrees,

2 to deprive the poor of their rights
and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people,
making widows their prey
and robbing the fatherless.

3 What will you do on the day of reckoning,
when disaster comes from afar?
To whom will you run for help?
Where will you leave your riches?

... for I was hungry and you gave Me food;
I was thirsty and you gave Me drink;
I was a stranger and you took Me in;
I was naked and you clothed Me;
I was in prison and you came to Me.

Assuredly, I say to you,
inasmuch as you did it to one of
the least of these My brethren,
you did it to Me.

Matthew 25:35-40

John Watson, *The Interpretation of Religious Experience*.

“... the only church which can possibly guarantee truth is the invisible church, the spirit that works in humanity as a whole. ...The only defense of any form of religious ritual must therefore be its adequacy to express in symbol the ideas and emotions of the human soul. ...The work of that rational spirit which constitutes the essential nature of man [and which has resulted] ...in the formation of the family, the industrial community, the state...is therefore to build up social and

² New International Version (NIV) Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society
<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/index.php?search=isaiah%2010:1-3&version=31>

political institutions, which free him from the tyranny of his immediate impulses and make him a member of a whole larger than his individual self.”³

“...the operative question never has been “Is there a God?” but always “Who is authorized to speak for God?”⁴

³ John Watson, *The Interpretation of Religious Experience*. The Gifford Lectures, University of Glasgow 1910-1912. (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1912). See in particular: Lecture Thirteenth, “The Invisible Church and Immortality,” 304, 299. The argument implicit in the ‘syllogism’

1. Economics is a religion—a set of secular beliefs
2. The religion of economics has a god
3. The god of the religion which mainstream economists worship is the market, and specifically market efficiency.

may be viewed against that of John Watson in *The Interpretation of Religious Experience*. For example: • 298

“Evil, as we have seen, marks the transition by which man advances to good, and in this sense it is a necessary condition of good. This transition cannot but take place, because man’s true nature is that towards which he is progressing, not his first or original nature. In man the clear spirit of God is immanent, and when he comes to a clear consciousness of himself, he learns that only in identity with that spirit can he overcome the evil in the world and in himself.” •298 “The process by which man comes into union with God is not one which belongs purely to the individual, but is made possible only by the combination of men in society.” •298 “We must ...be careful to distinguish between the church as a special organization and *the true or invisible church, as composed of all who aid in the never ceasing warfare of good with evil.*” Italics added. •299 “[the will of God] ...is practically embodied in all the agencies which help him [man] realize his true nature. ...it is the invisible church, which must be identified with the Kingdom of the Spirit. The invisible church comprehends the whole of life.” ...•300 “...identification with the universal good.” •299 “The work of that rational spirit which constitutes the essential nature of man [and which has resulted] ...in the formation of the family, the industrial community, the state...is therefore to build up social and political institutions, which free him from the tyranny of his immediate impulses and make him a member of a whole larger than his individual self.” •300 “Religion is life in the spirit, and the spirit specializes itself in all the agencies which tend to uplift humanity.” •301 “Science art and religion are all essential to the complete development of humanity, and the perfection of any one of them is made possible only by the perfection of the others.” •302 “The invisible church is not a community of slaves but of free men, and therefore men must be allowed freedom of action, even if it leads ultimately to evil. In no other way can a spiritual community be developed. ...Compulsion and freedom are incompatible, and not less compatible are compulsion and spirituality.” •302 “...the invisible church... is eternal; but its eternity is that of a living, growing and developing organism, which never loses its identity, and yet is perpetually undergoing change.” •302-303 “The invisible church had its beginnings in the first gleam of the higher life that presented itself to the obscure vision of primitive man, and it can never perish, because it is the expression of the divine spirit as it works in the inner being of man. ...the principle upon which it is based can only suffer development, never complete abrogation. That principle is the essential identity of man and God—a principle which is ever receiving a deeper and wider application, but which always preserves the same fundamental character.” [This means, I, take it, that God is an all embodying character, “wholism” is holism. If man and God are identified according to Watson, then the ultimate nature of man is to embody holism in his being and living expression. So transcend disciplinarity, be sustainable.] •304 “...the only church which can possibly guarantee truth is the invisible church, the spirit that works in humanity as a whole. ...The only defense of any form of religious ritual must therefore be its adequacy to express in symbol the ideas and emotions of the human soul.”

⁴ F. C. Thayer, *An End to Hierarchy and Competition: Administration in the Post-Affluent World*, Second Edition, (New York: New Viewpoints, 1981), A-14.

DOVER BEACH
MATTHEW ARNOLD

<http://www.usp.nus.edu.sg/victorian/authors/arnold/writings/doverbeach.html>

The sea is calm to-night.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand;
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Agæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night

THE SQUALL⁵
MILTON ACORN

When the squall comes running down the bay,
Its waves like hounds on slanting leashes of rain
Bugling their way ... and you're in it;
If you want more experience at this game
Pull well and slant well. Your aim
Is another helping of life. You've got to win it.

When you're caught in an eight-foot boat – seaworthy
 though –
You've got to turn your back, for a man rows backwards
Taking direction from the sting of rain and spray,
How odd, when you think of it, that a man rows backwards!

How odd, when you think of it, that a man rows backwards.
What experiences, deduction and sophistication
There had to be before men dared row backwards
Taking direction from where they'd been
With only quick-snatched glances at where they're going.

Each strong backed wave bucks under you, alive
Young-muscled, wanting to toss you in orbit
While whitecaps snap like violin strings
As if to end this scene with a sudden exit.

Fearfulness is a danger. So's fearlessness.
You've got to get that mood which balances you
As if you were a bird in the builder's hand;
For the boat was built in consideration
Not only of storms ... of gales too.

Though you might cut the waves with your prow
It'll do no good if you head straight to sea.
You've got to make a nice calculation
Of where you're going, where you want to be.
What you need, and possibility;
Remembering how you've survived many things
To get into the habit of living.

⁵ Milton Acorn, *Dig up My Heart: Selected Poems, 1952-83*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 156-157. Italics added.

WHAT I KNOW OF GOD IS THIS⁶

What I know of God is this:
That He has hands, for He touches me.
I can testify to nothing else;
living among many unseen beings
Like the whippoorwill I'm constantly hearing
But was pointed out to me just once.

Last of our hopes when all hopes past
God, never let me call on Thee
Distracting myself from a last chance
Which goes just as quick as it comes;
And I have doubts of Your omnipotence.
All I ask is ... Keep on existing
Keeping Your hands. Continue to touch me.

The following 3 items were written by my father, RW Needham.

A SON OF THE BEACH (Circa 1935-1940)

by
Robert William Needham (1911-1967)

I sella da feesh, I sella de crab,
I notta so good, and notta so bad,
I leeve in da shack var da sea gull he scratch,
I am Dago Peroni, a sonna de beach.

I guess maybe you teenk I'm one beeg fool,
Cause I never been go to Canadian school,
An' I don't know so good da American speech -
I'm joost Tony da Dago, a sonna da beach.

Dey say to me, Tony, wat for you stay hear,
You maka more mon eff you sella da beer,
I say: I don't care eef I nevair be reech,
I rather just be poor sonna da beach.

Las' week I hear fellar dat talk on da sand,
Bout fellar called Hitler, beeg Dictator man:

⁶ Milton Acorn, *Dig up My Heart: Selected Poems, 1952-83*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983), 181.

I don't hear so good wat dey say in da speech
But it sound like he too is a sonna de beach.

Now, I don't tink they means he?s a feller like me,
Cos he don't live on de beech by da sea,
So I don't onnerstan, maybe he and me each
Be two different kind of a sonna da beach.

Vell I'm, joost Tony da Dago, an damn glad I am,
I'm glad I?m not wot you call dictator man,
Cause some day ven I die, an Heaven I reach,
They'll say: "Tony come in, you sonna da beach."

-30-

Carefree
by
Robert William Needham (1911-1968)

He's a Devil-may-care who can joke and can laugh
In the face of Depression and Strife,
He's a Devil may care who can conquer
The troubles and worries in life.

With never a thought for the future,
And only a smile for the past,
To the Devil-may-care with the lingering smile,
Let us say - "Good luck. May it last!"

He's a Devil-may-care who can alter
The cares of the day to real joy,
Who transforms the wearisome workday.
He's the man with the heart of a boy.

-30

Let Me Look Back
by
Robert William Needham (1911-1968)

When grey old age creeps slowly on
And the sun of life has set,
Let me look back on the life I've left
Without one sad regret,

When the dusk of evening shadows fall
And the cold long days approach,
Let me look back on the life I've left
Without remorse, reproach.

And when the pale of Twilight glows
Before Night's final screen,
Let me look back on the life I've left,
With a conscience, clear serene.

-30