After boarding his bus, Edward sat behind a woman who was wearing lilac perfume. Edward’s wife had always smelled like lilacs. But, of course, Alice always had more meat on her bones than this—what would the children call her—this, “slim chick.” Above his squinted sapphire eyes, his sparsely-bristled eyebrows twitched in recollection. Leaning back and relaxing, he let his lips form a smile; Edward could hardly wait to taste his favorite grape pie promised him for dessert. It had been a good day. Perhaps tomorrow Jake and he could reminisce about the war.

The Power of a Minority

John Bigelow

Henry Thoreau has written, “A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then; but it is irresistible when it clogs by its own weight.” This statement has a great deal more merit than many people might be willing to believe. The course of history has not been, and will not be, controlled by the conscious will of the majority, but rather by small highly influential minority groups in whose hands lies the power to sway the sentiments of the largely complacent majority. “Neither current events nor history,” said Jefferson Davis, “show that the majority rules or ever did rule. The contrary I believe is true.” It is imperative that we do not overlook the potential power of a minority.

Nearly every important act chronicled in the pages of history has had at its roots the influence of at least one dedicated minority group, and often several groups working in vigorous opposition to each other. In times of strife the masses are inclined to follow any man or group of men who hold the promise of strength. It is at such times as these that minorities become particularly effective. Mussolini and the Fascist Party seized power through bringing a sense of order to the demoralized and discordant people of Italy. Likewise Hitler and the Nazi Party rose to power on a wave of public support heralded by the rebirth of German pride and industry. In later years a prime example of this type has been Charles DeGaulle of France, who gained the overwhelming support of the French government and by promising the people of France a return to the power and influence they once held in the world. Every armed conflict in modern times has taken place through the efforts of small dedicated groups of people—businessmen, aristocrats, political parties, or simply small groups of organized citizens, each group sharing either a just grievance or an unjust ambition. Americans as a whole did not want war with England in 1812 anymore than the British wanted war with America. Conflict came, nevertheless, as a direct result of grievances, either real or imagined, suffered by both countries and bandied and touted by the concerted will of an influential few. In like manner the
majority of Germans did not want a second global conflict, but remained largely passive until their potential power had been weakened to such an extent that it could no longer be used to thwart the will of the tyrannical Nazi minority. As a final case in point, it is inconceivable that a majority of Americans would have voted, had they the chance, to send their sons to Korea, a country most Americans had never heard of, to fight a war for reasons few people fully understood.

The great uncoordinated mass of people making up a majority are constantly led, pushed, repelled, and coerced by the will of the minorities. There are the advertisers who prey upon the hidden fears, frustrations, loves and ambitions of the people; the charity groups who appeal to the people's compassions, generosities, and insecurities (“You too can get cancer!”); and the political organizations whose propaganda campaigns are designed to instill in the voters feelings of distrust and disrespect toward the opposition candidates. Among the many effective minority organizations, such as the N.A.A.C.P., the John Birch Society, the American Nazi Party, and the many pacifist groups, a common advantage is shared which can be summarized in the word, unity. Each of these groups is highly organized and each has a special goal.

The mass of people comprising a majority are themselves a diverse mixture of minority classes which for the most part have long since lost all power of independent action. These minorities (if they can still be called that) have lapsed into a policy of complacency and indifference. The members of these classes have allowed their hopes and aspirations to be subverted by the will of the majority until they no longer have a conscious will of their own. They may be likened to a field of wheat in the wind, in that they find it easier to bend with the breezes of public opinion than to stand tall against these forces and voice their own convictions. What is lacking in these people is a sense of direction, a certain amount of courage, and the realization that nothing is ever achieved merely by dreaming about it. It is only those who are willing to face the issue squarely and vigorously who can have even the remotest chance of seeing their dreams and aspirations come true. Fear of criticism can be a stifling force to one who lacks the courage of his convictions, but a man who is willing to assert vigorously the dictates of his conscience will also assert his status as an individual and as a man.

A Comic Affair

Claude Pierce, Jr.

When I was seven years old, I was possessed by a deep, overpowering love. The object of my adoration could be purchased in any drugstore for ten cents, and its magic name was Comic Book. I remember standing for long periods of time hungrily