

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CONTINUING EDUCATION OF THE OVERSTREETS

1950-1985

The early years of the 1950's saw the evolution of new political and military crises. These were the years of the Korean War in which U.N. troops came to combat with communist forces; the years of the increased development of the hydrogen bomb; and the growth of an extreme right-wing reaction to all problems led by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. World War II was over but the "cold war" between the United States and the Soviet Union had begun and was to last for more than forty years until the dissolution of the U.S.S.R. It was a period that severely tested the maturity of the American people, and it was a period during which the Overstreets found themselves in the midst of controversy. For most of the 1950s and early 1960s the Overstreets represented a liberal viewpoint both at home and abroad. Their outspoken defense of civil rights, academic freedom and democratic communities made them popular with one segment of the public but at the same time made them prime targets for bigots and right wing reactionaries. The more popular they became, the more they found themselves under attack.

During the 1950s Harry and Bonaro Overstreet were at the height of their own popularity, partially due to the unprecedented success and influence of The Mature Mind. They had always been popular, but now, if possible, they were in even greater demand, especially as team lecturers. In the nine years from 1950 through 1958 they never gave fewer than sixty lectures a year, and their popularity on the platform was not limited to any one region of the country. There were an estimated 600 lectures, symposia, colloquies, and workshops during this nine year period, and these took place before audiences in thirty-seven states, the District of Columbia and parts of Canada (including Montreal, Toronto, and Hamilton). The Overstreets gave entire series of lectures for extension services associated with the University of Michigan, University of Alabama and the University of Nevada. They spoke at churches and synagogues; at town halls; at P.T.A. conventions; at Y.M.C.A.'s and Y.W.C.A.'s and at management conferences for executives and training directors. They spoke at Men's Clubs, Women's Clubs, large industrial firms, and small organizational gatherings of every kind. More and more they were drawn to the mental health movement, and they spoke to mental health societies in Phoenix and Tucson,

Arizona; Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Jacksonville, Florida; Rock Island, Illinois; Woodstock, Vermont; Oakland, San Luis Obispo and Stockton, California. The range of college lectures included the University of Oklahoma, Southern Methodist, Brigham Young, Rutgers, Bennington, and Southwestern Missouri State.¹ The classroom of the Overstreets continued to be the entire country.

The lectures and workshops were not the only way the Overstreets were reaching the public. Throughout 1955 and 1956 the Overstreets used another avenue to communicate their ideas – a nationally syndicated column that appeared weekly in many newspapers throughout the United States including the Washington Post, Boston Globe, Detroit Free Press, Syracuse Herald-Journal, Indianapolis Star, Cincinnati Times-Star, New Orleans Times-Picayune, Houston Post, Salt Lake City Tribune, Tulsa World, Oakland Tribune, Greensboro News, Tacoma News-Tribune, Vancouver (B.C.) Province and many others. The column was entitled, “Making Life Make Sense,” and while the range of subject matter was very broad, for the most part they brought psychological insights to bear on human behavior. The column was very popular, but their very heavy schedule of lecturing and writing (particularly of their next book) caused the Overstreets to decide in the summer of 1957 that, after two years, the writing of “our ‘Making Life Make Sense’ column just doesn’t make sense, somehow, in our own life.”²

During all of this period, the colloquy especially was in great demand. The method of presentation was of interest to interviewers and comments about it often appeared in newspaper accounts. For example, a review of the printed text of a colloquy presented to the California Training Directors Association in 1954 indicated that the Overstreets had interrupted each other a total of twenty-one times. A newspaper reporter asked them about it and the Overstreets stated that they found it safe and useful to interrupt each other’s conversation. They felt that the informality and spontaneity were not apt to be as monotonous as listening to a single voice. And the audiences did appreciate this. An editorial in the Rochester (N.Y.) Democrat and Chronicle stated that the most significant news of the week did not involve Senator McCarthy or Indochina but did involve an interview with Harry and Bonaro Overstreet when they were in town to address the City Club. The Overstreet’s pleaded for adult education as “society’s great hope.”³

The Overstreets As Teachers and Learners

An article in the book section of the New York Herald Tribune referred to Harry Overstreet who was now in his eighties as an extraordinary man who has managed to keep going from one life into another. He and Bonaro were devoted to the mental health movement and the story focused on that. Not that they were through with spreading the word on the importance of adult education -- not by any means. Harry made a point of talking about adult education at every opportunity. However, the article quoted Harry saying, "You don't have to preach the doctrine of adult education any more. It's an established permeative idea."⁴ The article also mentioned that the Overstreets considered themselves learners as well as adult educators. This was one of the points they had made in their book about leaders of adult education. The teacher or leader must continue learning throughout life. The Overstreets followed this precept by studying and thoroughly researching the topics on which they spoke and wrote. They wanted to keep completely current in their areas of interest and to look into new areas and issues as well. Their intellectual honesty and concern for important social issues motivated them to a regimen of life-long learning.

Continuing Education on Civil Rights

To the Overstreets, all aspects of modern social problems were worth studying and discussing, and they did not flinch from the tough questions of the period. Always high on their list of social subjects was the injustice of religious and racial prejudice. In January, 1950, the Saturday Review of Literature presented a sharply critical article by Harry Overstreet entitled, "The Gentle People of Prejudice," in which he condemned not only the physical and beastly cruelty of hoodlums, but also the "ordinary kindly people, with their seemingly harmless streak of racial prejudice" who permit the immorality to take root by their own inertia. "He who permits evil commits evil," wrote Harry as he attacked the "gentle" people who have given the green light to prejudice and thus must bear the burden of moral guilt. These are the people who rationalize themselves out of the "age-long struggle for human dignity" and "who are inwardly corrupt because they are willing to insult without ever knowing that they insult."⁵

The article received national attention and the Saturday Review reprint of the article went through nineteen separate printings. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch wrote a warmly approving editorial on the article on January 29, 1950.⁶ The accompanying statement by the editors of the

Saturday Review speaks in praise of Harry “as an inspiring example of one who has succeeded in living out the life of the whole man” and further states that his life’s purpose is to awaken “adults to the needs of continuing their own education and furthering their intellectual and emotional maturity.”

Later in the year, speaking at a Book and Authors luncheon in New York City, Harry was on the attack again – this time opposing the anti-academic freedom efforts in sections of the country which attempted to make faculty members sign a loyalty oath before they could continue to teach. This was an especially inflammatory issue at the University of California.

Bonaro Overstreet Writes About Fear

During this period, Bonaro, in addition to their lectures, was preparing for publication what many considered to be one of the best layman’s books on the subject of fear:

Understanding Fear in Ourselves and Others.⁷ The noted psychiatrist Rollo May, author of The Meaning of Anxiety, wrote that it was the best book in print for the general public on “how to understand and overcome one’s fears. Scientifically sound and based on the contributions of contemporaneous psychologists and psychiatrists, as well as the author’s wide experience in adult education.”⁸ It was an alternate selection of the Book-of-the Month Club and was still available in bookstores thirty years after its initial printing.

The book dealt with the psychological aspect of both rational and irrational fears. The function of fear is to alert us to real dangers, and yet it can also involve people in over-reaction to fictional dangers “and thus condemn us to a living death.” The book does not suggest easy answers to the dilemma of fear, for Bonaro believed there are legitimate anxieties that help people to face reality. When healthy people recognize these fears they establish laws; learn to preserve food; study and find cures for disease; invent fire extinguishers and shatterproof glass; and do a thousand things to reduce the hazards in life. The book focuses on the illegitimate fears which obscure reality – that have the “insidious power to make us do what is not called for. . . the great disrupters of personality and interpersonal relations.”⁹

The Increasing Respect and Recognition of the Overstreets

Bonaro’s writing and individual lectures continued to gain the increasing respect and friendship of other writers and speakers. The correspondence files show friendly correspondence with authors and poets such as Stuart Chase and Archibald MacLeish, psychologists and

psychiatrists William and Karl Menninger, Gordon Allport and Abraham Maslow, politicians and statesmen such as Warren Burger, Chester Bowles, Ellsworth Bunker and Charles Bohlen, Margaret Chase Smith and Eleanor Roosevelt. She had met Mrs. Roosevelt in the 1930s during a radio broadcast in which they both participated. The two took an immediate liking to one another and enjoyed a continuing personal friendship. Bonaro was grateful for the kindnesses shown to her by Mrs. Roosevelt and for her willingness to take a shy young teacher from California and help her to feel comfortable in social and political groups. On the other hand, Mrs. Roosevelt recognized and respected in Bonaro an intelligence and special ability to shape ideas and thoughts so that people really listened and were affected. Her respect for Bonaro is evident in a letter to her on May 8, 1950 in which she wrote: "I have just read your review of my book in the P.T.A. magazine for May, and I cannot tell you how deeply I appreciate the kind things you say. Praise from you means a great deal to me."¹⁰

For Harry these years brought more and more involvement in the important social issues of the time. In 1951 he was asked by the American Friends Service Committee to form a reply to some remarks of Dr. James Conant of Harvard who had stated that the major threat in the world was clearly a military one and advocated intensified rearmament and a long-term conscription program. Overstreet's reply was broadcast over the NBC radio network. He provided six ideas for Americans in lieu of what he considered to be the basic defeatism of Conant's proposal. Overstreet believed that the dangers that the United States faced were more widespread than one of a military nature. He proposed greater trade relations with Russia citing quotes from Emerson that "the greatest meliorator of the world is selfish huckstering." He proposed greater implementation of President Truman's Point Four program because we have obligations to the "starving and oppressed millions of our fellow men." The Point Four program was "the strongest defense against imperialistic communism that we could possibly erect." Further, he stated that we must set our own democratic house in order because the failure to practice democracy "remains the strongest weapon in the arsenal of our foes." It was obvious to Harry that our failures in areas such as civil rights made this nation vulnerable to attacks from unfriendly countries. Prophetically he spoke of the proposed military solution:

If we realize that there is and can be no solution through military force alone; if we realize that even the show of greater force by permanent conscription of all our youth would gain for us at best only a meager margin above mere survival; if we realize that our

strongest weapons will be progressively countered by weapons equally strong, our hatreds by hatreds even stronger; we come to see that, hard as the task may be, we must find other approaches to peace.¹¹

The academic respect for Harry's credentials was evident in 1952 when Columbia University celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Harry Overstreet's fiftieth lecture at that institution. It was an evening of intellectual fellowship at Columbia's Institute of Arts and Sciences and a special tribute to one who had enriched the thought of so many others over the years.¹² Harry had started his lectures at Columbia in 1928. He had developed a close friendship with William Pepperell Montague who was a professor of philosophy at Columbia and head of the department at Barnard College. Like Harry, Montague was a passionate liberal who fought for causes that he believed stood for human dignity and human decency. In 1953 when Montague died, Harry contributed an article to the Journal of Philosophy in which he compared Montague to a modern Descartes because he asked questions about the importance of the mind in the universe.¹³ Harry's friendship with colleagues at Columbia continued until his death.

Harry Overstreet Looks to the Challenges of the Future

The reading public that had devoured The Mature Mind eagerly awaited Harry's next book; and they were not to be disappointed. In 1952, Norton published The Great Enterprise: Relating Ourselves To Our World. The book is a logical continuation to The Mature Mind in that it attempts to explore more fully the "maturity concept" and its importance to our social development. The first part of the book examined the basic psychological qualities that people should have if they are to grow to maturity with a healthy and constructive personality. These included having a true self-image and true images of others. One of the most important qualities Overstreet referred to was the feeling for potentiality as a measure of the richness of life. Individuals need to widen their "relations to the still possible: the not yet achieved, the not yet known, the not yet created."¹⁴ Overstreet found support for his concepts from psychiatrists such as Harry Stack Sullivan and Karl and William Menninger who were all active in the field of mental health. He also cited William James who was a great psychologist as well as one of America's foremost philosophers. James had said that to keep an open and flexible mind one should always seek alternative ideas, not take the usual for granted, not be trapped by conventions and that one should try to imagine foreign states of mind.¹⁵

Part Two of the book treated the “great enterprise” of relating this healthy and constructive personality so that it becomes the “predominating pattern of our culture.”¹⁶ Here Overstreet took full aim at the various crisis situations facing the country at the time. He wrote that, “The sword of Damocles was a joke compared to the hydrogen bomb and communist imperialism.”¹⁷ While he likened Facism and Nazism to the brutalities of a hoodlum mind, he believed that “Communism is the brutality of doctrinal minds.”¹⁸ He was also very critical of the anti-liberal policies of various congressional investigating committees , most especially the demagogic tactics of Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin. Harry described the essence of McCarthyism as the “power to do permanent damage to the reputation of people even when these people are completely investigated and cleared.”¹⁹ He found McCarthy to be totally irresponsible and his tactics typical of a totalitarian system. It had “no place in a society of free people.”²⁰ Overstreet’s attack on the House Committee on Un-American Activities was hard hitting for the times because its very concept “regarded conformity as the test of patriotism.”²¹ For Harry it was essential that citizens be given the facts necessary to face critical problems and to judge political actions as mature individuals. The Great Enterprise was an effort in adult civic education in the sense Stubblefield defined it when he wrote: “The ultimate purpose of adult civic education was to create a public opinion able to assess critically the accomplishment of government and citizens able to identify and solve common social problems.”²²

With their defense of the American democratic tradition the Overstreets were taking on new and vicious enemies – the extreme right and the extreme left. When Harry wrote this book he had little idea that in the near future he and his wife would be subjected to just such a campaign of accusations and innuendoes that would attempt to keep them from continuing their professions as writers and lecturers and would continue to crop up again and again over a number of years.

In general the reviews of the book were quite laudatory. Harrison Smith, President of The Saturday Review, stated that The Great Enterprise related to the problem of a world full of racial hatred, unspeakable cruelties of mass extermination and slave labor camps and the cancerous growth of smear tactics. He concluded his review with the statement that “Overstreet’s book would be banal if what he is saying were not so vital to the future of the turbulent and human race.”²³

Joseph Henry Jackson wrote in the Los Angeles Times that Overstreet tackled the social tensions in the world that were likely to plague us for years to come. He stated further that Overstreet's many answers to these problems are "directly fitted to today's political-ideological framework" and "the reader should go to the book where he will find them wisely and frankly set forth." Jackson, incidentally, also dealt with the charge that Overstreet was merely a 'popularizer.' In this review he made reference to The Mature Mind which was then in its 20th printing. He wrote that Overstreet "did the job so simply that he was accused of 'popularizing', which did not trouble him; he was after all writing for people. And, as it turned out, a great many people indeed discovered his book, read it and profited by it."²⁴

Not all of the reviews were favorable. In an unsigned review in Time magazine (owned by Henry Luce), the reviewer said the book's remedies "verge on the fatuous" and implied that the problem was that Overstreet was out of touch because he spent his summers near Bennington, Vermont and his winters in Mill Valley, California.²⁵ The negative review was not a surprise to Harry for the Overstreet correspondence files have copies of many critical letters from Harry to Luce and fiery exchanges of letters between Harry and Clare Booth Luce while she served in Congress and as an ambassador. Then too, Harry was extremely critical of McCarthy, and Henry Luce's award winning biographer, W. A. Swanberg, wrote that the Luce press "gave McCarthy more support than opposition throughout his career."²⁶

The reviewer's jibe at the Overstreets for being out of touch was ironic because the yearly schedule of the Overstreets' work probably took them to more varied parts of the country than anyone other than a presidential candidate. Once in response to a colleague's statement about having visited forty-six states, some admittedly just in a car passing through, Bonaro allowed that she only counted them if she had actively worked in them – which, she had done in all fifty states and a few territories.

Controversy Surrounds the Overstreets

In late summer of 1952, the Overstreets, spending the summer on their farm near Bennington, Vermont, received two letters from friends in their chosen "home town" of Mill Valley, California. The letters shocked and bewildered them. The letters were anxious, sympathetic, concerned. They noted that the Overstreets weren't going to be allowed to talk on the radio any more and they wanted to know what was going on. The Overstreets had no idea

what the letters were referring to since neither of them, except for an occasional program, had done radio work. There had been only one radio program recent enough to attract attention. In mid-May Harry had prepared and recorded, for broadcasting on July 4th, the final program in a series on “Communism and Democracy,” participated in by a distinguished group of Bay area authorities and sponsored by KNBC, San Francisco. Later it was printed as a public service by the San Francisco Examiner, with a forward by the Attorney General of California; cited for excellence by the California American Legion; and commended by resolution of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.²⁷ The Overstreets wrote to Earl Raab, the moderator of the series, asking whether he knew what the problem was to which the friends had referred, and wrote to the friends also asking them what it was about.

Mr. Raab knew nothing about the matter; it was not related to his series. But one friend sent a clipping from the Mill Valley newspaper which read:

Voice of America Halts Use of Overstreet Scripts

Use on the Voice of America program of scripts written by Dr. and Mrs. Harry Overstreet of Mill Valley has been discontinued, it was disclosed in Washington. Dr. Wilson Compton, Administrator of the information program, stated at a hearing before the Senate appropriations committee, “I don’t want the record of today’s hearings to leave an uncertain note about this Overstreet matter. There will be no use of anything contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Overstreet by any part of the International Information Administration.”²⁸

The item was baffling because the Overstreets knew they had never prepared any scripts for the Voice of America. Their only connection with the program had been one in which the International Information Administration had asked permission to use two scripts that the Overstreets had prepared months before for the CBS program, “This I Believe.”

The Scripts in Question

“This I Believe” was a popular national radio series which began in 1949 and used the most noted newscaster of the time, Edward R. Murrow, as the host commentator. He invited well-known men and women in all walks of life to present their personal philosophies in a five-minute broadcast which was then also transcribed into a 600 word newspaper article. Harry and Bonaro were invited to speak and their philosophical views were presented separately on different weeks. Other well known people used included Thomas Mann, Pearl Buck, Dag Hammarskjold, Helen Keller, Justice William Douglas, Eleanor Roosevelt, Arnold Toynbee, and

Jackie Robinson, to name a few. As far as can be determined, the Overstreets were the only related couple to present their individual philosophies. In addition to the CBS network, 196 local stations throughout the country carried the program and the 600 word articles were printed in 85 leading daily newspapers. The State Department sent the scripts to ninety-seven different countries to be used in foreign language newspapers. One hundred of these statements were collected into a book, This I Believe, edited by news commentator Edward P. Morgan. (The Overstreet's personal copy of the book is inscribed on the flyleaf, "For Prof. Harry A. Overstreet in whose debt I stand," signed, Ed Murrow.)²⁹ All of this wide distribution was in addition to the request to use their statements for broadcast by the Voice of America Radio to stations overseas.³⁰

The Overstreets' presented clearly and concisely their basic philosophy of life and learning. Harry talked about the hidden world around us, and said, in part that ever since he had read him as an adolescent Socrates had been one chief master of his thinking. What Socrates believed still seemed to be "indispensable for carrying on an intelligent and responsible life." Harry referred to the "hidden realities all around us" in both the physical and human world. "If I am foolish enough to think that I see all there is to be seen in front of my eyes, I simply miss the glory." He concluded:

Socrates gave no finished catalogue of the "truths" of the world. He gave, rather, the impulse to search. This is far better, I feel, than dogmatic certainty. When we are aware that there are glories of life still hidden from us, we walk humbly before the Great Unknown. But we do more than this: we try manfully to increase our powers of seeing and feeling so that we can turn what is still unknown into what is warmly and understandingly known. . . . This, I believe, is our great human adventure.³¹

Bonaro based her philosophy on the Golden Rule which she termed the "Law of Shared Investment." She wrote that she believed "that to do to others as I would have them do to me is not simply a law of duty, it is also a law of health that we violate at our own risk. Where we violate it, we injure ourselves; inhibit our powers . . ." She concluded:

I do not believe it is possible, except superficially, to think well of ourselves and ill of our human fellows, or to think well of them and ill of ourselves. Our attitudes toward ourselves and toward others is one: it is our attitude toward human nature.

As an extension of this, I believe the best situations for us to live and grow in are those geared to equality: equality of respect; equality of rights. I do not believe we can attain our psychological stature, our real human stature, either by leaning on others or by

trying to outdo others and gain power over them. I am for the level look of equality and the cordial look of friendliness between man and man.³²

In reading these statements one is hard pressed to see the danger in sending them out over the Voice of America. The Overstreets could not understand it either. They wrote to CBS who had asked them to write the scripts and to a friend in Washington who, though not connected with the Voice of America, would probably know what was going on. Their answers reported that some individual in Mill Valley, seeing an announcement that the Overstreet scripts were to be used on the Voice of America, had written a protest to Senator Knowland based on his reading that Harry had been “listed” by the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Senator Knowland passed the letter to the Senate Appropriations Committee and Senator McCarron had questioned Dr. William Compton about the matter when the Voice of America budget was under consideration. Dr. Compton then made the statement that was printed in the Mill Valley paper. The Overstreets later learned that Dr. Compton’s promise was so inclusive that not only were the two scripts to be dropped, but the Overstreet books were to be withdrawn from the overseas libraries (where they had been for several years), and the translation of The Mature Mind into various languages by the State Department was to be stopped mid-way. The Overstreets obtained the published “Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Appropriations, United States Senate, Eighty-second Congress, Second Session,” and read what had actually taken place at the hearings. The Overstreets wrote to Dr. Compton for clarification and received an answer from him in which he wrote that he did not at present have the time to go into the matter thoroughly but that the purpose of his letter to them was “merely to say that the reference in a committee hearing of which you speak involves no reflection of any kind, merely a policy of the Department to avoid getting drawn into public controversies.”³³ They wrote again only to receive word that Dr. Compton was overseas but had left word to tell them that it was simply a matter of policy to avoid the use of any material which has been or could become a subject of public controversy.³⁴

During the time they were trying to straighten out what they felt was a misunderstanding due to misinformation, the Overstreets headed into a busy Fall schedule of work: at the University of Michigan, in New York, in Ohio, in Virginia, Alabama and Texas. In December they returned to their home in Mill Valley. They had decided to write *finis* to the matter of the Senate hearings. Later events, however, revealed that the subject had not been closed.

The Continuing Right-Wing Campaign

The Overstreets willingness to write and speak out on the important issues of the period resulted in increasing activities on the part of right-wing groups to discredit them in order to prevent them from reaching their large public audience. Through innuendoes, lies, and half-truths (such as references to organizations to which Harry had contributed many years earlier and which had since been cited as communist “front”), the right-wing elements raised doubts in the minds of some Americans who knew little about the Overstreets and who had not read their works.

An example of this extremist activity was the cancellation of a lecture the Overstreets were scheduled to give to the Dallas Health Museum without prior notice or discussion with the Overstreets. Some people had charged to some members of the Board of the Dallas Health Museum that Harry had “belonged” in the past to several communist or pro-communist organizations. The magazine, The Churchman, presented an editorial entitled, “Witch-hunting in Dallas,” which said satirically that there were many thousands of Americans who had read and heard the Overstreets who must also be dangerously infected. The editorial ended with the statement that “Deep in the Heart of Texas there must be an illness which requires the attention of a psychiatrist.”³⁵

In the next issue of The Churchman there was a lengthy letter from Bonaro in which she provided more details of “the whole story” and in which she defended the many people in Dallas “who showed themselves to be vigorous in emotional health and courage.” She described the visit to Dallas she and Harry had made “to learn the score” and of their meeting in a Unitarian church where a large audience had gathered to hear what the Overstreets had to say. Bonaro wrote that they had met with an audience of some three hundred persons and described them “as fine and responsive an audience as we could have wished.” She described the whole experience as heartwarming and reassuring and said that if they had been “going out with a lantern, like Diogenes, looking not only for honest folk but for mentally healthy folk, we would know just where to look in Dallas – as well as in countless other communities of this basically sound land.”³⁶

The Overstreets Clear Their Name

The harassment the Overstreets were encountering continued to increase and included attempts of the right-wing to get cancellation of scheduled lectures as much as six months in advance, attempts to get Bonaro removed from the editorial board of the national P.T.A. magazine, etc. Until the spring of 1953 the Overstreets had done nothing about it except to exchange letters with the International Information Agency. In May, however, during a visit to Washington, friends arranged a series of meetings with congressional aides, Thomas Beale, the Chief Clerk of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and others who advised Harry to submit an affidavit to Congressman Harold R. Velde which defined his past affiliations with the groups on the “list” and fill out the record in any way he felt to be relevant. Harry prepared and sent the document and indicated his willingness to testify in a public hearing.³⁷

The Overstreets received, on July 24, what they considered to be “a document of democracy: a letter that would never have been written in any totalitarian country.”³⁸ It was a letter from Dr. Robert L. Johnson, Dr. Compton’s successor in the International Information Administration. He wrote that it had been an unfortunate chain of circumstances led to the withdrawal of their books for a time from their overseas libraries. He stated that “a great injustice has been done to you and the books have been fully restored.” He added that he realized no apologies could off-set the hurt that was done them, but “knowing of your faith in the democratic process, I also know that what concerns you most is that injustices can be eliminated under the mechanism of open error and open correction.” He concluded the letter by writing:

Both of you have had distinguished careers and I am certain that you will continue for many years to work together in helping more and more Americans to understand what it really means to be ‘grown up.’

Again, my heartfelt apologies for the injustice to you and my continuing good wishes for all your good work.³⁹

And under date of October 7, 1953, Harry received a letter from Congressman Harold H. Velde that expressed appreciation of the steps he had taken to clear up the matter of the list and that indicated that the Committee saw no reason for a hearing, “believing that the sworn affidavit will serve to act as clarification and completion of the Committee’s records.”⁴⁰

The Overstreets Address The Search For Emotional Well-Being

Throughout 1953 the Overstreets worked together on a book dealing with the search for emotional well-being. The Mind Alive was published in January of 1954, and it too was a best

seller, going through many printings over a period of ten years from the original publication. It, too, was an alternate selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club.

The book asked questions regarding the characteristics needed to enjoy life's possibilities to the fullest extent. There is an epigraph by the poet, E. E. Cummings, which sets the theme of the book: "We can never be born enough. We are human beings, for whom birth is a supremely welcome mystery, the mystery of growing: the mystery which happens only and whenever we are faithful to ourselves . . . Miracles are to come. . ."⁴¹

The Overstreets focused on the idea that emotional health is not really a mystery, but an "understandable gift of growth" – the clue to health being the "right functioning of the recuperative powers."⁴² In emotional health as in physical health, there is a capacity for self-healing. This gives a person "license to go toward life and become involved in its hazards and possibilities instead of merely trying to play safe and ward off danger."⁴³ It does not mean that the emotionally healthy person is always "happy," but indeed, often feels more pain and sorrow than the self-centered individual. However, he or she also feels more joy, more quiet delight, more amazement, and more amusement. "He is, quite simply, more *alive*; more engaged with experience."⁴⁴

The book presented some of the first accounts of the viciousness of the behavioral treatment in the Soviet Union slave labor camps and compared them with the inhumane treatment of people in Nazi concentration camps. This cancerous behavior had the object of demonstrating that adults can be turned back mentally and emotionally into distorted children. The Overstreets also prescribed ways for the creative handling of conflict situations which included the "art of introducing reason and good will into a situation that has been structured by hostility."⁴⁵ It requires the individual to keep alive a broader sense of reality than conflict usually induces. The Overstreets believed the biblical example of "turning the other cheek" is not sentimental nonsense but symbolic of how we "can move out of the static condition of reciprocal hostility; into the creative condition of an improving relationship."⁴⁶ An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth may seem like justice but it adds nothing creative to the situation and is "powerless to heal psychological wounds."⁴⁷ The peacemaker, however, is not someone who simply tolerates the intolerable but one who feels "through and beyond conflict to the possibilities of a new unity – and takes a chance on the possibilities."⁴⁸ The Overstreets believed

that an important attribute of mental health is the individual's capacity to receive what the world has to give "through its sights and sounds, its color and form, its mind-stretching spaces and its incredibly intricate detail."⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, this brought the Overstreets to the revelation that adults can be active learners and that much of the capacity for keeping the "mind alive" can be achieved through the adult education movement. The book ended on a note of hope that soon every community would have its own mental health society and, with what the Overstreets believed was even more important, the evidence of a new climate of opinion which is bringing together people from all walks of life who are interested and wanting to understand life better and to "be more alive in their response to it."⁵⁰

Bonaro Overstreet Publishes Another Book of Poetry

Throughout all of these years, Bonaro had never ceased writing poetry, a form of writing she believed was a source of 'adult education' for many readers. In 1955, a collection of her poems was published under the title, Hands Laid Upon The Wind. Many of these poems had been published previously in magazines such as The Saturday Evening Post, The Ladies Home Journal, Better Homes and Gardens, and Progressive Education; and in newspapers such as P.M. and The New York Sun. The book contains nearly one hundred poems which celebrate nature in its many aspects, man in society, and the beauty and significance of small events in our lives. There are thoughts on the new atomic age that were troublesome in the 50's and are still meaningful today, such as these lines from the poem, "Grave Victory: Hiroshima,"

Let man, this day, look gravely on man's face,
Searching to read the future written there.

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Let man, this day, look gravely on the face
That looks back from his mirror, eye to eye.

Or lines from "Twentieth Century Moon,"

Under the moon, the glazed white cities lie,
Across the moon, the dark-winged bombers fly,
Under the moon, the ruined cities die.

Or the opening lines of "No Room At The Inn,"

There is never room at the inn. . .

There is never room
In the warm, well-lighted hostel for those who come
Poor, unrecommended, without connections

Seeking a place to bring a new dream to birth.

Then there is a short poem that softly reveals the philosophy of the Overstreets as they crossed and recrossed the continent speaking and writing on the important social issues of the day. It is that responsible citizens speak out and act on what they believe no matter how little power or influence they may have. The poem is entitled, “Stubborn Ounces,” and it has a subtitle which dedicates it (To One Who Doubts the Worth of Doing Anything if You Can’t Do Everything):

You say the little efforts that I make
will do no good: they never will prevail
to tip the hovering scale
where Justice hangs in balance.
I don’t think
I ever thought they would.
But I am prejudiced beyond debate
in favor of my right to choose which side
shall feel the stubborn ounces of my weight.⁵¹

After the publication of this book many of the poems were reprinted in newspapers and magazines throughout the country. This was Bonaro’s last book of poems before a collection was published in 1978 under the title, Signature. If there were any regrets from Bonaro it was that her demanding lecture schedule and continual research took time away from her writing of poetry. Since childhood, poetry had been an indispensable companion to her and she was always comfortable when discussing its various styles and structures. She had a poetic gift of taking a simple observation and envisioning something more universal like Whitman on a leaf of grass, Frost on a tuft of flowers or Wordsworth on watching a cloud drifting by. She wrote on “Floating Things” as she watched a water lily and a canoe riding on a green lake and thought of the earth

That holds the water lily,
that holds canoe and green lake,
that floats, proud and clean,
through a blue silence,
cutting a furrow of stars.⁵²

This poetic gift was evident in all of Bonaro’s writings and lectures.

The Overstreets’ Book on Dealing With Extremism and Hostility

Between the writing of the weekly articles and the heavy lecturing schedule, the Overstreets had managed to find the time to write and publish, at the end of 1956, another book, The Mind Goes Forth. It also was a best selling book. The primary objective of the book was to try “to come to grips with what we feel to be the central problem of our time: the growth among us of extremisms and hostilities.”⁵³ Although by this time Senator McCarthy and his infamous campaign of innuendo and intimidation had been censured by the United State Senate, there were still many vestiges of McCarthyism in American life. In the book, the Overstreets claimed that it is vital to learn how to make living space for one another’s minds and opinions. In so doing, they pulled no punches in attacking the demagogues “who have found that fear and suspicion are marketable commodities.”⁵⁴ The Overstreets pointed out that the extremists of the far right were often much like the Communists they despised. Their pattern of thinking was similar, with disregard of personal liberties and destructive preoccupation with tearing down society which led them to be anti-intellectual; anti-scientific; anti-labor; anti-Semitic; anti-foreign; anti-Negro; and, at times, either anti-Catholic or anti-Protestant.

The great need, according to the Overstreets, was for people to give “life a chance; room to grow; to experiment; to make mistakes and try over again.”⁵⁵ The job for human beings to accomplish is to make living space for others as well as for themselves. There are some organizations which could be called space-making institutions, and high on this list would be community groups working in the mental health movement and in adult education councils.⁵⁶

The Overstreets Explain Communism

After the second World War the two dominant political entities were the United States and the U.S.S.R. If one looked at a map of the world it was obvious that significant areas was under communist domination. The appeal of communism to many third world nations lay in the fact that the U.S.S.R. had developed into a world industrial power in less than thirty years and the hope was that communism could do the same for them. Of course the power of the Soviet Union had come at a huge cost in freedom to nations in Eastern Europe which were under U.S.S.R. domination as well as to Soviet citizens who soon learned that communism could not support divergence from official opinion. Nevertheless, even in American there were those who felt that the tide of history favored communism.

In June, 1957, the magazine, Adult Leadership, published by the Adult Education Association of the U. S.A. devoted an entire issue to a single article by Bonaro. This was the first time that this had been done. The editors wrote that “we have departed from precedent in order to present to our readers the thoughts of a distinguished adult educator on one of the critical issues of our day.” The article was titled, “The Adult Educator and the World Communist,” and was close to 25,000 words. Bonaro held that educators had a special responsibility to teach the dangers inherent in totalitarianism and to develop their critical thinking regarding the ideological principles and methods that threaten our freedoms. The world event that sparked this clarion call was what Bonaro referred to as the Second October Revolution of 1956 in which Hungarian freedom fighters were attacked by overwhelming Soviet armaments. The world watched impotently and could not come to grips with Soviet aggression and terror. She challenged American educators to take on the job -- “The *educational* job – of so clarifying the nature of Communism that its old dogmas will no longer serve, its old appeals no longer attract, its old divisionary tactics no longer confuse and divide us.”⁵⁷ The First October Revolution in 1917 laid the foundations of international communism and Bonaro believed it was up to us to see that the Second Revolution of 1956 started the destruction of the system.

The question remained of how deep a “popular” educator could delve into such a complex political issue. One of the responses to the article was from the noted philosopher, Sidney Hook, who had been a student of Harry’s at City College of New York. Hook’s early books, Toward the Understanding of Karl Marx and From Hegel to Marx had been called “the best expository, interpretive, historical and critical studies of Karl Marx’s thought ever written by an American philosopher.”⁵⁸ Hook wrote to Bonaro that it was “a magnificent job of summation and an eloquent appeal to American educators to do something about a subject and a field they have long neglected. It gathers relevance and poignancy in the light of the news of the intensified campaign of bloody reprisals launched by the Kadar regime against the schoolboy Hungarian fighters for freedom.”⁵⁹

It was during this time that the Overstreets were preparing for a serious book on Communism for the ordinary mature citizen. They thought of this as a natural development from their interest in the mental health movement because of the type of world the Communists

wanted to create, the psychological consequences of communist materials and the confusion and hesitation communism was inducing in our own democratic society.

An examination of how the Overstreets researched and wrote this book shows their discipline and teamwork. It was a work routine they had developed over the years since they began to write books and articles jointly. They rose at 5:00 a.m. and worked until 1:00 or 2:00 in the afternoon, each in their separate studies. They delved over the works of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung and Trotsky. They also poured over communist and non-communist periodicals and pamphlets. Each typed their own drafts and then they exchanged them for editing and comments by the other. During meals and walks and errands they discussed their material. Bonaro typed the corrected “drafts” since she was the more proficient on the electric typewriter. One important aspect of the writing was the reading aloud of each chapter. It was their desire that any portion of a book would be simple and straightforward enough to be understood when “heard.” Bonaro said that they would imagine a man sitting in his living room at night, tired after a long day’s work on the farm, in the factory, or in an office. His wife would be reading an Overstreet book and say, “listen to this.” And as she read the passage to her husband, the message would be communicated with ease. Thus the Overstreets would read the drafts of chapters aloud to one another to see if they could be understood clearly without difficulty.

The Book Seen on Newspaper Front Pages, News Magazines and Television News

The book, What We Must Know About Communism, was published in October, 1958 and later as a paperback by Pocket Books in 1960. It dealt with the roots of communist ideology in Russia and elsewhere. The book examined the ideology of Karl Marx and how that ideology was transformed by Lenin and Stalin. There are sections on Khrushchev’s tactics and the need to compete with the Soviet Union to obtain the good will of other peoples and other nations. The message of the book is that communist verbiage which is divisive should not obscure the importance of telling the peoples of the earth that they have “a human right to *both* food and freedom – not simply one or the other.”⁶⁰

The Overstreets pointed out that our country had long been in a state of unreadiness with regard to the central tenets and aims of communism. In the name of Marxism-Leninism the U.S.S.R. had built a monolithic state “practicing totalitarianism at home and piecemeal conquests

abroad while offering itself to the world as the vanguard of ‘peace’, ‘liberation’ and ‘anti-imperialism.’”⁶¹

The book examined in detail the philosophical roots of Marxist theory and of Lenin’s adaptation of these ideas to a ruthless revolution in Russia in 1917. A key point made with regard to Lenin was that among those who knew him and worked with him “there is a singular unanimity on one point: namely, that his pursuit of power was not motivated by personal ambition so much as by a fanatic conviction that he was an agent of ‘history.’”⁶² When Stalin took power after Lenin’s death there was a long period of totalitarian ruthlessness. At the time the book was written, Khrushchev was in power and the Overstreets were of the opinion that “one compelling reason, now, for us to study *Leninism* is that *Khrushchevism* is cut from the same cloth.”⁶³

The book raised and answered searching questions which could make it possible for the free world to cope with Khrushchev in the arena of action and negotiation. In a chapter titled “Negotiating with Our Eyes Open,” the Overstreets wrote that the Soviet empire rests on broken promises and we should not, therefore, negotiate an agreement so binding that we relax and call the problem settled. Nevertheless, our country believes in negotiation and some limited agreements on such things as some mutual disarmament could be worthwhile. Because of the Communist ideology with regard to historical inevitability they were “less likely to go off half-cocked and create a crisis on impulse.”⁶⁴ This belief was to our advantage because “paradoxically, their conviction that we are fated to pass from the stage of history becomes an asset to us. It gives maximum usefulness to the free world’s every show of firmness and strength.”⁶⁵ It took thirty years, but the demise of the Soviet Union proved the Overstreets to be correct.

The bibliography of the book was impressive as a resource for continuing one’s education about communism. It included communist sources, non-communist sources, and public sources which the reader could use to delve further into this complicated subject. In addition it listed a number of research centers here and abroad for use by serious students.

The reviews were very favorable and in some instances extraordinary. A number of newspapers reprinted the book in installments. One newspaper editor wrote that “hundreds of thousands of books have been written about Communism but in our opinion and in the opinion of

our top diplomats in Washington, this is one of the most important books that has been published.”⁶⁶

The columnist Roscoe Drummond, writing in the New York Herald Tribune, called it, “the most mature, perceptive, clearheaded, radiantly illuminating work on this subject I can imagine.” He said that the book was a “must for President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles, for Lyndon Johnson, Adlai Stevenson and Hubert Humphrey, for Richard Nixon and Governor Rockefeller – for you and me.”⁶⁷ It is unknown if all of the notables mentioned above became familiar with the book; however, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles did read it and provided a copy of the book to President Eisenhower who was photographed in major newspapers across the country both carrying it and reading it. This, of course, did not hurt the sales of the book, nor did it hinder its already considerable influence.

The U.S. News and World Report of February 27, 1959, contained an article on the subject, “Ike’s Latest Reading: The Psychology of Communism” which outlined the main points the Overstreets made in the book with regard to negotiating with the Kremlin.⁶⁸

Although the Overstreets were pleased about the public response to the book and the publicity attending the President’s perusal of it they were nevertheless surprised when they received a letter on March 16, 1959 which read:

I am sending you under separate cover the copy of your book on Communism which is the copy the President borrowed from me. It contains on the flyleaf his pencilled notation to return the book to me. I felt that it might be of some interest to you to have in your library that particular volume in view of the wide attention attracted by the incident.

Sincerely yours, .

/s/John Foster Dulles⁶⁹

Eisenhower had a rule that he would not autograph a book other than his own since that might indicate that he approved of the statements in the book. But, as his personal secretary, Ann C. Whitman wrote, in the case of the Overstreet volume, with the association the book had with Foster Dulles, he was glad to make an exception.⁷⁰ Thus there is a hand written notation in the book:

To Harry and Bonaro Overstreet,
With best wishes,
/s/Dwight D. Eisenhower

There are many books written every year with the interest or hope of having some impact on public policy or public awareness. Very few do so, no matter how well written or how many copies are sold. When the Secretary of State recommends a book to the President and, by chance, the public is made aware of this, it may be argued that the book achieves a maximum impact. Such was the case of What We Must Know About Communism.

Thus another major aspect of the Overstreets' lives was yet to unfold. They would be strong liberal voices who would educate the public on the political dangers of the far left and the far right in both this country and abroad.

The Education of the Public on Communist Ideology

After the publication and generous critical reception provided to What We Must Know About Communism, the Overstreets were acknowledged to be worthy scholars of communist philosophical ideology. For some this may have seemed an odd change from their enormous interest in the field of adult education and mental health. To the Overstreets, however, this appeared to be a normal extension of their past work. In a letter, Bonaro responded to a question involving the book's genesis in this manner:

As for why we have become sufficiently interested in Communism to write a book about it (and, I might say, to spend three intensive years and two less intensive years in preparatory research), we'd say that we had to become interested. It wouldn't make sense to be concerned about the growth of the human personality and the conditions that influence this growth and not be concerned about the most gigantic effort in history to condition people into becoming obedient servants of a super-State. Also, I might say, we got tired, some years ago, of hearing ourselves make comments about Communism that seemed merely to come from the surface of our minds and the daily papers. We don't like to bore ourselves with our own remarks! So we decided we had better dig in and learn the facts that lie below the surface of the daily news. Those three years of intensive research were the result; and the book has been the further result⁷¹

The book was translated into seven languages and the Overstreets were now requested to speak to a wider range of audience groups throughout the world. Their lecturing pattern which had been built up since Harry's retirement from CCNY was never quite the same again. Instead of the typical sixty to ninety lectures and workshops across the United States each year, in 1959 they spoke about fifty times (some of which were three to four day or week long workshops) in twelve different states and the District of Columbia.⁷² While this might not seem up to the norm

of their typical schedule, it must be borne in mind that from the end of July until mid-December they traveled around the world on an enjoyable trip, but one that could hardly be called a holiday since it involved both extensive research and lecturing. They had turned their attention to a continued pursuit of the psychological study of Communist ideology and Communist methods and of the response of free people everywhere. They wanted to find out how the free mind functions. Their trip took them to England, France, West Germany, Denmark, Austria, Turkey, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Vietnam and Japan.⁷³

While in London and elsewhere they spoke to emigres from many East European countries (Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, etc.). Although they had gone primarily to be listeners and not speakers, they were invited to speak on many occasions including in Orleans, Athens, New Delhi, Bangkok and Tokyo. One theme in their talks was that the strength of the free world lay in its many sided nature as contrasted with the monolithic rigidity of communism.

On the last leg of the trip they stopped in what was now the state of Hawaii where they had enjoyed many wonderful experiences with the adult education movement. They had never abandoned their interest in adult education, and they were happy to speak to the Hawaii Adult Education Association. The topic was “Trends in the Free World: The Implications for Adult Education.”⁷⁴ For a time, at least, they were back on the theme of their first love – adult education.

The Importance of Adult Education Continues to be Stressed in the 1960s

In truth, there never was a period when the Overstreets stopped emphasizing the importance of adult education. Numerous lectures, colloquiums and workshops during the sixties focused on adult education. In 1960, Bonaro was invited to speak to the convention of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers Association at Philadelphia. She emphasized the importance of adult education to the assembly of 3,000 delegates. She said that adult education “must give the free person a way to feel that he is paying his social keep,” and, ever the social activist, she urged adults to “acquire learning that is related to human hope in terms of economic and political affairs.”⁷⁵ It was important to get an education in “the types of problems government is having to cope with in today’s world.”⁷⁶

Bonaro’s remarks were carried in great detail over the United Press International wire service, and thus provided a wide coverage for her message throughout the nation’s newspapers.

For example, on May 24, 1960, a Boston Globe headline read, “Adult Learning Held Key to Future of U.S.” and, on the other coast on the same date, a headline in the Los Angeles Herald and Express was, “Nation’s Fate Rests on Adult Education.”

In 1960, Harry and Bonaro did a series of six television programs for Channel 9-TV in Washington, D.C., entitled, “What Free Men Can Do.”⁷⁷ They also did a number of training films for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on emotional health and on personnel management and had thirty-five speaking engagements throughout the United States (including the Agricultural Extension Service of Virginia Polytechnic Institute).⁷⁸

The Overstreets Examine the “Cold War”

The Overstreets’ continuing interest and research in the subject, together with the critical and popular success of their first book on Communism, led to the writing and publication of another in-depth study in 1961 entitled, The War Called Peace: Khrushchev’s Communism. The emphasis of this book was on the tactical differences and dangers exhibited by Communist strategies under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev. The premier of the U.S.S.R. was a master at changing his moods, and at times his political maneuvers kept the entire non-communist world off balance. Under his leadership, U.S.S.R. policy was Stalinism downgraded and Leninism upgraded. However, even in its new disguise, it remained devoted to communist tactics. The Overstreets stressed that while Khrushchev’s tactics were different, he was perhaps even more subtly dangerous and undoubtedly his objectives included the collapse of the western democracies. They emphasized that we must not be ashamed or embarrassed about using the terms “freedom” and “free world,” although it was of utmost importance to Khrushchev’s tactics to make us feel confused and guilty because the imperfect free world was also “pockmarked with despotism.” They reminded the readers that our nation’s political philosophy is “based on Jefferson” and has no need of Marx. Jefferson knew that men were “created” equal, not “manufactured,” and that governments must “derive their just power from the consent of the governed” and not from some stunted image called “communist man.” The Overstreets noted that our leadership must point up the human cost of communist methods and also note “what the Soviet economy owes to the despised capitalism of the United States.”⁷⁹ Excerpts from The War Called Peace were used extensively by Freedom House in a strong membership drive.⁸⁰ The Overstreets had been members of the organization since its inception in the 1940’s, and Bonaro

was particularly active as a member of the Board of Directors from February, 1961 until her death.⁸¹

After the publication of the book in 1961, Harry and Bonaro again traveled abroad with a ten-week trip to western Europe. They visited England, France, West Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Italy and Greece. They held a seminar in Paris on “The Outlook of Freedom: A Psychological Approach,” and they had long interviews with the American Committee For Liberation in Munich. They did numerous jobs speaking and meeting for the United States Information Service, for Radio Free Europe, NATO, and the Mental Health Society of Italy. While more often than not they spoke about various aspects of communism, they were consistently on demand in their overseas visit to talk also about emotional health.⁸²

In 1962, they were back on familiar ground lecturing, participating on panels, and conducting workshops in all parts of the United States. If it was not at the full, fast pace that used to be the norm, it was still reminiscent of the range of topics and the variety of audiences. They spoke at Northwestern University on the fostering of creativity; at Detroit on the divergent views of democracy and communism; at the Pennsylvania Conference on Social Welfare on the topic “Man is Man’s Hope.” Other speaking engagements took them to the University of Florida, the University of Colorado, the United States Air Force Academy, and State P.T.A conventions at Memphis, Indianapolis, and Portland, Oregon. They were also taking on more and more management training assignments for government agencies such as the U.S. Army Map Service, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Agriculture.⁸³

On some occasions the Overstreets were still attacked by the far right. Major General Edwin Walker, in a hearing before a Senate Committee on February 23, 1962, was critical of their book, What We Must Know About Communism. However, when questioned by Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri, he admitted that he had never read the book and that all of his information was hearsay. Senator Symington said that he had read the book and suggested that General Walker do so.⁸⁴

Continuing the Books on Communism and the Cold War

Throughout this period the Overstreets had been busy researching material for the third book in the series on communism. The first in the series, What We Must Know About Communism, was a survey of Marxist and Leninist principles and present day policies. The

second, The War Called Peace, clarified what Khrushchev meant by co-existence with the western world, and now was published the third book, The Iron Curtain: Where Freedom's Offensive Begins, which explained the ambiguity of the words used by the communists speaking from behind their self-imposed barbed wire. Like the other books, The Iron Curtain attempted to bring the facts of the communist system, in a literate, readable manner, to the mature individual who wants to read the facts in order to make up his or her own mind.

The Overstreets wrote that communism cannot afford to live side by side with a system of liberty under law, and must erect a wall between such a system and its own. The communist system cannot achieve its objectives in an "open" world where the weaknesses are apparent for all the world to plainly see. Communism, they pointed out, had failed in the satellite East European states, and the evidence of the failure was in the one-way tide of refugees which had been almost exclusively away from communist rule. The authors were also among the few who, at that time, believed that "the Sino-Soviet conflict. . . is *real*."

The Overstreets proposed that "world attention should be focused upon the Iron Curtain by every possible means" primarily because that is precisely what Khrushchev does not want to speak about at all. It was their theme that the concept of the Iron Curtain" contained the seeds of its own collapse, especially if we helped "to forge world opinion into a force against which the barricades cannot stand."⁸⁵ The book was the monthly selection of the Kiplinger Book Club.

In 1963, the Overstreets again went to Europe, and also spent some time in Tunisia in North Africa. They again spoke for the Voice of America and conducted colloquies in Berlin and London on "The War Called Peace" and "The Iron Curtain."⁸⁶ While having lunch at the U. S. Embassy in Tunis, Bonaro found herself seated next to the Soviet Ambassador. He took her to task for not having visited the Soviet Union. "And why have you and your husband not visited my country?" he asked. She smiled and replied, "Because you would not grant us a visa." Bonaro found the ambassador's embarrassed reaction delightful to watch.⁸⁷

During that year Harry and Bonaro continued to lecture to groups in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Wisconsin. They held special sessions at Morgan State College in Maryland, and for the Institute of Rural Affairs at V.P.I. and S.U. They also did a number of executive management training workshops for the Harry Diamond Laboratories of the United States Army.⁸⁸

While the pace of lecturing had slowed down somewhat (still including, however, programs for extension services such as the Universities of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Georgia; the national P.T.A. convention in Chicago and state P.T.A. conventions in West Virginia, Georgia, and Wisconsin; a meeting of the National Council of Churches in New York City, and a number of mental health programs), the pace of the writing did not slacken at all. They worked diligently on another major collaborative work dealing with extremism.

The Overstreets Examine Extremism

Interest in the Communist Left led the Overstreets to a parallel interest in the Radical Right and during 1963 and 1964 they made an intensive study of the organizations and tactics of the Right extreme. The year of 1964 saw the publication of The Strange Tactics of Extremism with the thesis that the radical right, because of the methods it employed, threatened both the security and the integrity of the nation. The Overstreets, who had often had the experience of being the targets of attacks, were now on the offensive. The first part of the book had a detailed and definitive analysis of the John Birch Society and its leader Robert Welch. After having reviewed vast amounts of source material, the Overstreets came to the conclusion that the John Birch Society was not a "conservative organization" as they pictured themselves, but "an exponent of anarchic radicalism of the Right."⁸⁹

The second part of the book examined in detail other groups that held similar beliefs, including Edgar Bundy and the Church League of America, and Billy James Hargis and his Christian Crusade. The last part of the book suggested appropriate methods of defense for a free people to use against radicals of the right or left. The Overstreets' advice to the reader was, among other things, "Don't be afraid of controversy," and most importantly, "Don't be afraid of the concept of democracy. In a book review for the Saturday Review, Roscoe Drummond wrote, in part, that the Overstreets had the credentials, the temperament and the talent (for documentation without dullness) to turn an incandescent light on the tactics of extremism. He stated that they had earned their credentials "with all thoughtful people as wise, compassionate and alert commentators on American society." He stressed that they had by their words and deed and their writing and actions firmly established themselves as "implacable and effective opponents of Communism. He concluded his review by saying

. . . the Overstreets' appraisal of what they call the "doom-shaped" world of the Extremist Right cannot be fairly attacked on the ground that the authors

are soft on Communism. It will be well to bear this in mind, because, together with their great personal and professional integrity and their respect for others' opinions it is their impenetrable shield. I suspect they'll need it.⁹⁰

Drummond was, of course, alluding to the three recent books on Communism, and the fact that the Overstreets were among the few people in the country who had the scholarly credentials to expose both extreme political viewpoints. He also anticipated further attacks on the Overstreets by the extreme Right.

In 1965, when Harry was ninety, the Overstreets were back on a nearly full lecture schedule. At Pawtucket, Rhode Island, more than eight hundred people heard them speak on "The American Community versus Extremism." They said "the problem of extremists is not their ideas but the methods to which they resort to reach their goals."⁹¹ At Grand Rapids, Michigan, they spoke to an enthusiastic audience of four hundred people while a handful of demonstrators picketed the lecture. In addition to a story on the lecture, the Grand Rapids Press published an editorial in support of the Overstreets' work in which it stressed that it was understandable why the John Birch Society would want to discourage people from listening to the Overstreets since "Their kind of organization can't thrive wherever men gather opening to discuss freely such matters as Americanism, extremism and national unity and security."⁹² The Overstreet colloquies brought them to such diverse places as Alfred, New York; Dayton and Columbus, Ohio; Brandeis University (Massachusetts); Detroit (where they addressed the University Center for Adult Education); College of San Mateo (California); St. Louis, Missouri; Baltimore, Maryland; and St. Petersburg, Florida.⁹³

Harry and Bonaro took part in an intensive three day seminar May 16-19, 1965 on national security entitled "The New War For Freedom" for the Steel Service Center Institute in Miami Beach, Florida. Also involved in the institute was the well-known economist and Executive Director of the Research Institute of America, Leo Cherne, who, in addressing the audience, spoke of the Overstreets and how he had been enriched by the opportunity to know and work with them for a number of years. He said he felt there were very few people in America more worth listening to than the Overstreets. He stated that he knew about the controversy adhered to them and he knew something about them. His introduction concluded:

I doubt that there are ten people in the entire world, including the Soviet Union, who know communism as well as they do, or who know the means of prevailing against it with a wisdom and subtlety that they command. The fact that they have been invited to

address you is itself an indication of the awareness you have of the continuing consequence of this new war.⁹⁴

On each of three successive days, Harry and Bonaro presented a colloquium on the topics “How To Talk About Freedom,” “The Dangers Freedom is Facing,” and “The Kind of People Freedom Needs.” They also participated in a review question and answer session on “The New War For Freedom.” To the group of executives they presented the dangers and struggles that freedom faces and the kind of mature, knowledgeable people needed to make freedom work. Harry mentioned that one of the fundamental aspects of a free society was its provision for change. “Every civilized country has to have orderly change. . . it mustn’t come by violence.” He also stressed the necessity of the conception of law as an “instrument to which even the most powerful must submit their wills.” He stated that “law is the binding force” that is essential to an understanding of “our whole history.”⁹⁵

At the annual convention of the National Education Association on July 1, 1965 Bonaro gave the major address, entitled, “Strengthening the Bulwarks of Democracy.” She spoke of extremism and what we needed to do in order “to build a strong liberal-conservative community of thought and action.” She said that it was profoundly disturbing to have organized extremism, of Left and Right, “capitalizing on our perplexities and exploiting our discontents to set us against one another.” She went on to say that it was even more disturbing to have persons who belong in the liberal-conservative center “lose their heads and act like extremists.” She believed that each individual would have to work out “a code he can count upon to abide by in the face of crisis and pressure.” She concluded

. . . Speaking for myself, I can only say that I think the best way of learning what we want such a code to embrace is to think through the problem of what we want to have carried forward in our society. . .⁹⁶

A Gradual Slowing of Pace Begins

During 1966 and 1967 the Overstreets curtailed their lecture and workshop schedules to approximately twenty-five each year. Still, they managed to move about the country and even added a couple of trips to the Panama Canal Zone. They moved about Kentucky, Missouri, Kansas, Georgia, Michigan, and Colorado. In April of 1967 they were in Massachusetts, Utah, Colorado, and then tirelessly traipsed through five speaking engagements in Montana (Great

Falls, Billings, Bozeman, Missoula, and Helena).⁹⁷ Harry seemed in remarkable spirits at a conference in May where he and Bonaro presented a colloquy, “The Citizen’s Task is to Grow Up” at the annual conference of the Adult Education Association of Virginia.⁹⁸ However, soon after that, he decided to accept no more lecture dates, and on June 23, 1967, at a Methodist Church in Oxford Mississippi, Harry Overstreet took part in his last public lecture. He was nearly ninety-two years of age.

Bonaro accepted only a few speaking engagements outside of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area during the next three years in order to remain at home with Harry. She did a number of training workshops for the Department of the Army in Washington, spoke regularly for the Department of Agriculture Graduate School, and served on the Advisory Council of Women for Humphrey in the presidential campaign of 1968.

While the strain of travel and lecturing was difficult for Harry, he was able to engage in research for another book. In 1969, Harry and Bonaro enjoyed the publication of their last joint effort as authors, The F.B.I. In An Open Society. It was an appraisal of the structure and performance of the enforcement of laws by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.⁹⁹

In August of 1970, Harry A. Overstreet died, not long before his ninety-fifth birthday. His last words, spoken to Bonaro, were, “It’s been wonderful, hasn’t it?” Certainly his had been a remarkably full life as a professor, author, platform speaker and adult educator. It had been a lifetime devoted to championing the major reform movements of the twentieth century. He had been a supporter of Settlement Houses, a promoter of the Pure Food and Drug Act and Workmen’s Compensation laws, a strong advocate of women's suffrage, and a staunch opponent of anti-Semitism and anti-Negro actions wherever they occurred. In addition, he was a defender of civil liberties and a proponent of legislation and executive action involving these liberties. He energetically attacked extremists from the far left and far right. Karl Menninger of the Menninger Foundation said there was no greater supporter of the mental health movement.¹⁰⁰ Underpinning all of these actions was his firm belief that the education of adults is essential to the perpetuation of a democracy and to the emotional health of its citizens. Every book, published article, and recorded lecture and colloquy firmly expressed that belief. One would be hard pressed to find any greater voice more influential for the adult education movement in the United States during this period than that of Harry Overstreet. For the author he remains the

ideal model of the mature citizen in a democracy, for he never grew too old to stop growing intellectually.

Bonaro Overstreet Carries On

After Harry's death, Bonaro carried on with the work they had begun together. She continued lecturing and teaching classes -- regularly for the University of Virginia until 1985 -- and throughout the nation for adult education and mental health groups¹⁰¹ In 1973, The Adult Education Association of Virginia presented her with the Kurt A. Schneider Award "for outstanding service to adult education,"¹⁰² and in 1974, the Adult Education Association of the U. S. A. gave her its Pioneer Award "For her dedicated commitment to the cause of adult education and her untiring efforts in behalf of increased participation by all citizens in the democratic process." And NAPCAE gave her its Social Justice Award.¹⁰³ She took on assignments overseas for the United States Information Agency, with a three-month around the world speaking tour in 1973 which included Kenya, Italy, Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand.¹⁰⁴ She lectured each year for the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas; spent a two weeks each year speaking at Berry College where she was invited to sit in on classes in every discipline and then speak to each class on relating what they were learning to the world they in which they lived; spoke often at state and national adult education conferences; and enjoyed speaking engagements in Texas, California, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Alaska, and elsewhere particularly on mental health, citizen responsibility and poetry.¹⁰⁵ In 1978, she published another book of new and selected poems entitled, Signature.¹⁰⁶

Bonaro continued her interest in the growth of adult education throughout the world particularly with the work of the International Council for Adult Education and one of its United States' affiliates, the International Associates. She joined the delegation to the UNESCO Fourth International Conference on Adult Education in Paris in the spring of 1983 at which she was a speaker and co-leader of a workshop on "Identifying and Developing Leaders in a Community."¹⁰⁷ During 1983 and 1984 she continued her attendance and participation in adult education conferences, her lecturing at the Menninger Clinic and Berry College, and occasional lectures elsewhere if they did not require too much travel. She had received a heart pacemaker and had been advised by her cardiologist to cut down on travel and limit it to the same time zone.

During the spring of 1985 her health deteriorated and her doctors advised her that she should no longer live alone at her home. She entered a nursing home where she enjoyed a comfortable room furnished with some of her own furniture and where she could enjoy visits and occasional outings, such as drives, picnics, and visits with friends. She suffered a stroke in late August and slipped into a coma soon after a last visit from the writer. Bonaro Overstreet died on September 3, 1985.¹⁰⁸ Interment beside Harry's grave in the memorial garden in Falls Church, Virginia was private and attended only by the minister, a step-daughter-in-law, the author and her husband, and two close friends. An invitational memorial service attended by several hundred people was held on September 18 at the Annandale, Virginia, Congregational Christian Church. Friends shared memories, Bonaro's poems were read, and after Bonaro's poem, "Talisman" was read, each person attending received one of the many stones Bonaro and Harry had collected from around the world.¹⁰⁹ The author carries one in her pocket or purse every day.

For all of these years (1950-1985) Harry and Bonaro were two prime examples of the vitality of the continuing education movement. They were mentally alert and capable of working untiringly in this field despite increasing age. Only infirmities and death ended their efforts in the education of adults. Like Dylan Thomas' poem for his father, they did "not go gently into that good night." They lived as his poem exhorts:

Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.¹¹⁰

NOTES

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- ²⁹ Edward P. Morgon, ed., This I Believe. (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1952), Overstreet Personal Copy.
- ³⁰ Ward Wheelock, "The Power of an Idea," in Edward P. Morgon, ed., This I Believe, viii-xix.
- ³¹ Harry A. Overstreet, "The Hidden World Around Us," in Edward P. Morgon, ed., This I Believe, 131-132.

- ³² Bonaro W. Overstreet, "The Law of Shared Investment," in Edward P. Morgon, ed., This I Believe, 129-130.
- ³³ Dr. Wilson Compton letter to Harry A. Overstreet, September 13, 1952, Overstreet Personal Files
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- ³⁵ Editorial, "Witch-Hunting in Dallas," The Churchman, December 1954, 1.
- ³⁶ Letter to the Editor, Bonaro Overstreet, The Churchman, January 1955, 2.
- ³⁷ Bonaro W. Overstreet, "Two People, Three Cities, And An Age," 39-51.
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- ⁷³ Overstreet World Tour Itinerary, Overstreet Personal Files
- ⁷⁴ Hawaii Adult Education Association Flyer, November, 1959 and Honolulu Advertiser, November 21, 1959, clippings in Overstreet Personal Files.
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