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Patriotism run amok?

One has to assume that editorial writers mean what they say, and so I find full-bore patriot Tom Gray's "Patriotism in America" (Daily News, July 4) rife with "the thing that liberals like to call jingoism."

Of these, the most serious is the implication that personal honesty and patriotism are incompatible: "... admissions of equality with others, ... may be honest, but they aren't patriotic."

As one of Gray's "liberals," I can attest that even honest criticism of the United States is considered to be "unpatriotic."

On this basis, how are we to judge men like Dr. Charles Clements, 2nd in his class in the Air Force Academy, and former U.S. Marine and C.I.A. case officer John Stockwell? Clements had flown 50 missions in Vietnam as a cargo pilot when he decided that the deceptions about the war violated his own moral standards. He requested non-combatant duty in the States, which got him nine months in a military psychiatric ward. After receiving an honorable discharge, he became a medical doctor, and spent a year in El Salvador treating civilian victims of the Salvadoran government's counter-insurgency program (designed in Washington).

Clements now heads an organization opposed to Washington's insistence on military solutions for Central America's problems. John Stockwell ran the covert Angola operation in the mid-70s, and now also speaks out against U.S. militarism. When they enlisted, Clements and Stockwell were patriots; should we say that they are no longer patriots? 6/8

Gray acknowledges that his view of patriotism "carries the potential for cruelty and monstrous misdeeds," but this is dismissed as "the great irony of any great love," as if the experience of patriotic emotion itself is more valuable than the elimination of cruelty and misdeeds.

I suggest that any rational definition of patriotism should include the desire that our nation survive the long term, and that such patriotism necessarily includes honesty and a concern for the

well-being and empowerment of all the world's peoples.

Gray's jingoism is perfectly compatible with the dictionary definition (boasting of one's country's military preparedness; favoring a bellicose or blustering foreign policy), and in this age of nuclear weapons, threatens not only our survival, but that of the world as well.

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