

The Spirit Of 1976

By PAUL HARVEY

Consumer crusaders and well - intentioned protectors of our national heritage fear that profit - motivated peddlers of souvenirs will profane our nation's 200th birthday party.

They insist that mercenary merchandisers of Paul Revere dolls and Martha Washington chinaware will demean the significance and turn our Bicentennial into a Buy - centennial.

So what if they do?

I don't know how the party poopers want us to celebrate next year; but if they imagine it will be enough for us to fly flags and sing praises, those are accountrements for a burial, not a birthday party.

I'm delighted that a Pennsylvania dairy is already churning out goodies called "Red Coats" and an "Uncle Samwich."

An Orlando, Fla., manufacturer is making lawn chairs in red, white and blue.

A LA Jolla, Calif., firm is peddling place mats with American designs.

Private mints are turning out all kinds of commemorative medals. Publishers are publishing hundreds of books relating to Colonial America.

The only danger I see in this deluge of Bicentennial products is that there might be a backlash of ennui, that premature promotion of related products might weary us of the subject. However, I have enough confidence in the ingenuity of American entrepreneurs to remain convinced that our jaded appetite will be jolted awake one year from now by innovations more exciting than any yet conceived.

From inside the official government agency, The American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, have come some dissenting voices expressing anxiety about "commercialism subverting the celebration."

The ARBA probably would prefer to discourage the manufacture of any item which does not bear the commission's official star-shape seal of approval if only because that seal is sold for a substantial price, thus to discourage the marketing of junk stuff.

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YET THE essence of capitalist - ism is competition, and I'd not be surprised to see some imaginative little guys come up with the most inspired and inspiring birthday doodads of all.

The companies which are financing the Freedom Train are to be congratulated.

The company which is reproducing sheet music of early American songs deserves our applause.

One company will invest half - a - million private dollars cleaning up the soot - soiled Statue of Liberty.

These are splendid gestures, entirely appropriate.

But nuts to the stiff - necked chaperons to whom anything less is unworthy.

The most pertinent stimulating and "fun" celebrations in 1976 will be local - level community efforts to outdo one another putting frosting on the cake.

Those worthless tin horns, kewpie dolls and whirlygigs you bring home from some very special outing are sometimes the dearest treasures of all.