

# THE PROMETHEAN

Symposium for Liberal Religious Youth

The Adolescent Mystique — December, 1965





# THE ADOLESCENT MYSTIQUE

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(Cover design -- courtesy of Columbia Broadcasting System)

“The student protest movements of the 1960’s are largely the result of 20th century economic security”

“The post war economic boom has released us from many loyalties.”

“A Unitarian Universalist minister in the midwest once characterized LRYers who number among this fraternity as ‘bourgeois nihilists’.”

“What about this ‘campus existentialism’?”

“Commitment, not coolth, should be the password for LRY in this decade.”

The PROMETHEAN is a symposium by LRYers across the Continent welcoming diversity of opinion from both youth and adults. Please send any contributions to Henry Koch, 508 A Carman Hall, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027.

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## Introduction and Credits

Perhaps we should make it clear from the outset that the Adolescent Mystique we are speaking of in this issue does not correspond exactly to characterizations of the "aloof generation" or the "cool generation" or any other kind of generation in the plethora of glossy magazine features on today's teenagers. Our subject is not an entire generation, but two extremes of a generation. One extreme can be conveniently labelled activists or committed individuals--civil rights workers, marchers for peace, people who create or, perhaps, people who are still looking. On the other extreme are the people who realize all is not right in America, but are too overwhelmed to do anything; they have withdrawn and assumed the hip posture.

The Promethean Quest appeared in the first issue of The Promethean as an explanation of the new name for the magazine. It is reprinted here not only because it seemed appropriate to include it in the first issue of each year as the ethos of this magazine and in a certain sense of L.R.Y., but also because it pertains to the theme we are discussing. Blair Dean was the first Promethean editor.

Kris Ostrand is an L.R.Y.'er from Norwell, Massachusetts and Vice-President of Bay Shore Federation.

SO was written by Margret Haynes, an L.R.Y.'er from Okemos, Michigan. The accompanying sketches of Bob Dylan and Mick Jagger were done by a former L.R.Y.'er.

Gregory Wright is a Unitarian student from Encino, California.

Mods, Rockers, and the Revolution is excerpted from an article in the Winter 1965 issue of The Rebel Worker, a quarterly journal of the Chicago Branch of the General Recruiting Union of the Industrial Workers of the World.

The excerpt from Let Us Now Praise Famous Men by James Agee is printed by permission of Houghton Mifflin Co. Let Us Now Praise Famous Men is a study of the lives of three Alabama tenant families in 1930 with photographs by Walker Evans.

David Pitt's Graduation Address was delivered at the Stockbridge School in West Stockbridge, Massachusetts on June 13, 1965. David is presently a freshman at Brandeis University.

The photographs of Bob Dylan constituting the cover design are printed by courtesy of Columbia Records, a division of the Columbia Broadcasting System.





## THE PROMETHEAN QUEST

During each successive chapter in the story of civilization's development, men have sought the answers to the basic questions regarding their existence and purpose as a race. Often, their solutions have found expression in the symbolic language of mythology. The present generation, as intellectually restless as its predecessors, must create a synthesis of the spiritual resources of the past and the aspirations of the future in order to formulate a value system adaptable to its current needs.

LRY, in trying to maintain the intellectual and spiritual ferment that nourishes this process, must remain in a state of constant flux--organizationally and programmatically. To characterize the basic premise upon which LRY is founded -- an unrelenting quest for principles attuned to the demands of life in modern society -- its organ for artistic and ideological expression has been entitled The Promethean, after Prometheus, a figure in the Greek myths of creation.

Prometheus, whose very name means "forethought," is a symbol of defiance against a recognized, arbitrary authority--an idealist in conflict with the malevolent will of Zeus for the benefit of mankind. After man had been equipped by his creator with an inferior set of physical tools, in order to subjugate him beneath the yoke of divine bidding, Prometheus stole fire from the sun and gave it to man. In addition, he taught the usage of light and heat in cultural endeavors, liberating the creativity then still dormant in mankind. Zeus, too late in discovering the theft and its subsequent results, vengefully punished Prometheus for his insurrectionist activities by chaining him to a rocky gorge. . . Thus, the legendary founder of idealism was martyred, but his efforts were rewarded by the aspiration toward light and reason within the spirit of humanity.

As heirs to this tradition of unremitting search, the new generation, of which LRY is an integral part, must seek to refurbish the fuel for the "perpetual light." Rather than accepting the suppositions of previous cultures, it must challenge the premises for an ordered civilization. However, it must also substantiate its challenges with a coherent basis for improvements, reaffirm, after minute examination, those values which relate to present needs, and strike accord between these systems, to create a foundation upon which to build an applicable blueprint for the future.

--Blair Dean



## YOUTH - The Sleeping Potential

In today's society we, youth, have gained the upper hand. We have the generation before us at our feet; they succumb to our every wish. When an adult expresses his views to a body of us we can literally "rank him to the ground" and drive his words to hell. They shrink from our mockery and our silly laughter. The problem? The adults have lost their authority, and in their doing so, we have lost our respect for them and our fellow men. A recent example of the older generation's failure to draw the line is the Free Speech Movement led by the student body at the University of California in which they seized a building on the campus; therefore ceasing all activity at the university, bringing about the arrest of more than 800 students, and compelling the governor of the largest state in the Union to appeal for a solution to the problem. The students took violent action destructive to a learning atmosphere. What did the faculty do? Not a thing and by not condemning the students' action they, in a sense, condoned it. Something more shocking about the U.C. students' behavior is that it was contrary to democratic principles. The students completely by-passed their representative body, the Student Association and sought violent action. If they had decided to act democratically the Student Association would have met with the faculty to come to a peaceful solution of the problem. Instead their action was an excuse to spew off pent up physical energy.

Last year our L.R.Y. Federation received a speaker, an adult, who expressed his views on Christian love and the brotherhood of man. We did not "receive" him appropriately, however. This intelligent man was presented with an audience of cynical, unruly teenagers. We laughed at his views on love because we could comprehend nothing but its sexual aspect. Finally the man found it necessary to interject such words as "hell" and "damn" in his speech in an effort to get our attention. I have no respect for his having used this device to appeal to our tastelessness; if he had had any dignity he would have walked out in the beginning. Nevertheless, this situation points up the gravity of youth's dilemma and the need for the instillment of respect.

In both cases we see that if adults continue to lack authority and fail to demand respect, youth's demands will become greater and their conduct more unreasonable.

What is the reason for the lack of authority on the adults' part and the youth's lack of respect? It is due, in part I believe, to society's increased scientific advancement within the past two decades. I believe that adults fear youth's power, its increased knowledge. Secondly, society and the older generation have given us everything; education, material wealth, and plain old "good time" a time to "hack

around and enjoy''. Post war youth have never known the poor conditions that some people must live under. We are in every respect the sheltered generation.

But where does the solution to this problem rest? We have been afforded every opportunity for our own pleasures, our own personal advancement. You, you the adults who have given us your all; your ideas, your support, your material wealth, let us have the opportunity to give; to give to you who have given us so much; to give to the blind, the poverty stricken; to contribute to the smooth functioning of democracy. I do not speak on hearsay. Giving is a possible and realistic solution to this problem.

We are the children of society. Society affords us its problems as well as its advantages; we must seek opportunities to dedicate ourselves to facing the problems of society. In a democracy we have the right to shape our own destiny; may we use that right.

We must work to instill a sense of brotherhood in the hearts of men; for if it dies then no constitution nor court of law can restore it; no court of law can enforce the dignity of man.

If we endeavor to do this we will earn the respect of the previous generation and thus achieve the highest goal in our individual development.

--Kris Ostrand





SO

I am an,  
I am and,  
I am no  
thing





## The Universal Debt

Outside of society, an isolated man owing nothing to anyone, has a right to live as it pleases him: but in society, where he necessarily lives at the expense of others, he owes them in labor the price of his maintenance; there is no exception to this rule. . . Rich or poor, powerful or weak, every idle citizen is a rogue.

--Rousseau

I have two hands, a mind, and the material benefits that society and the progress of man have provided me.

The possession of these things by an individual (and this includes nearly the entire population of the United States, and very largely that of the Free World) demands, at the very least, the partial use of the first two to pay for the extensive benefits of the third that so many people around him have made possible. The artists, doctors, scientists, writers, teachers, and architects that have enriched the person's life offer their works as a mass, but create them as individuals.

This demand for societal reciprocity is moral, and is enforced by but conscience and motivation; monetary aggrandizement can be but a maintaining factor. The lawyer who would rather help shape our government policies, even for a short time, rather than amass a fortune handling celebrities' divorces; the writer who would rather write an influential political paper than a half-hour horse opera; the citizen who would spend a half hour reading his Voter's Handbook rather than watching that horse opera; these are the people to whom the rest of us owe so much of our fine circumstances; these are the people we can become.

It is to the very good fortune of those who consume, but who do not contribute to our society, that not everyone has to expend effort or put forth contributions to keep our horn of plenty full, our welfare secure, and our pleasures possible. But this is still a world of want, as our newspapers each day remind us. Consumption in such a world necessarily represents the using up of quantities, concrete or abstract, that could sustain or benefit someone else, possibly a someone who is helping or would help society. The consuming non-contributor's evil is made a fact not by his own character of consumption, but by the possible character, of he who is necessarily deprived, of contribution. The non-contributor's consumption not only helps to deprive the would-be contributor of the resources necessary for potential work (not to mention his just reward for such), but deprives too the society which would benefit from the latter's efforts. What else can follow but that the consumer should correct this imbalance of "societal debts" by honestly trying, to the extent allowed by his inherent abilities, to create good for beings external to himself? The simple arithmetic of consumption minus contribution should suffice to indict the non-contributor as one who is not just existing uselessly in the midst of society's bustle and interaction, but as one who is actually taking down from society. He denies to others, through consumption, that which he himself is not willing to give.

--Gregory Wright



## Mods, Rockers and the Revolution

Wobblies, and true revolutionaries in general, are much less interested in the vague longings of college professors and Nobel prize-winners for a "better world" than in the day-to-day struggles of our fellow workers, not only the direct struggles against exploitation by the bosses, but the struggle to live some sort of decent life against all the obstacles presented by a society divided into classes. Thus it is essential that we concern ourselves not only with the job situation and economic questions (though these, of course, are the major issues) but also with more "Superstructural," anthropological factors: working class culture.\*

In this connection, the significance of rock-'n'roll, and popular adolescent culture in general, has for too long been ignored. That rock'n'roll is one of the most important working class preoccupations (among the young, at least) is clearly evident. That it has been ignored in the "Left" press is additional testimony to the isolation of the "socialist" intellectuals from the class in whose name they so often enjoy speaking. Certain unfortunate souls, including many of traditional "Left" orientation, even suggest that it is imposed (!) on working class adolescents by Madison Ave., etc., as a form of exploitation through cheap talent, record sales, and juke-boxes. To them rock'n'roll is a sign only of the "decadence" of contemporary capitalist society. They can neither take it seriously as a form of music, nor see in it anything other than a possible "reliever of tensions" which they feel might better be expressed in more constructive activity. Thus Marshall Stearn's in The Story of Jazz, thoroughly puts down rock'n'roll as a form of music but claims that by offering "release" to anxious kids it actually contributes to

the decrease of juvenile delinquency. This rather uneasy, semi-intellectualized, patronizing anti-rock'n'roll "theory" is, amusingly enough, shared by Stalinists, liberals, Presbyterians, conservatives, fascists, bourgeois, sociologists, etc.

We must have done, once and for all, with this kind of evasive excuse mongering, and look at the situation as it really exists. Rock'n'roll must be recognized not only as a form of music (which for its players and listeners, is clearly as "serious" as any other) but also as an important expression of adolescent preoccupations.

As music, rock'n'roll is certainly "primitive," but this must not be assumed to mean that it is therefore inferior. No one is less able than musicologists and other prisoners of academic limitations to situate this problem into its proper context. For the importance of rock'n'roll lies not only in the music itself but even more in the milieus which has grown up with it. It is characterized above all by delirious enthusiasm, a frenzy which is no stranger to tenderness, which undoubtedly appears scandalous to the easily-outraged watchdogs of bourgeois morality. Much could be said for the influence of rock'n'roll on the emergence of a new sensibility (intellectual as well as erotic and emotional). Much could be said, too, of its unconscious quality, which with its roots in automation (and thus in the class struggle) lends to it its "subversive" aspect. For Rock'n'roll is, more than anything else, a latent cultural expression of automation. Indeed, a study of the psycho-analytical and anthropological implications of automation might well make rock'n'roll its point of departure. Witness the fact that almost all of the popular rock'n'-

\* The editor has chosen not to edit this article or correct typographical errors, much of the underlining is ours.



roll groups are from the most highly automated cities: in the United States, Chicago and Detroit; in England, Liverpool where one out of every fifteen "Liverpudlians" between the ages of 15 and 24 now belongs to a rock'n'roll group. As for those sad people who insist on dividing rock'n'roll into "white" and Negro" varieties (which, like all over-simplifications, says nothing) I prefer to let them choke on their own banalities. That there are differences between Negro rock'n'roll or rhythm and blues and white rock'n'roll is obvious to even the most casual listener, but too often these categorizations are used to justify rock'n'roll for Negroes (because of its derivation from blues) and discredit it for whites who are supposedly without "cultural foundations" in it. But rock'n'roll cannot be explained away in strictly racial terms. The influence of automation and an increasingly complex urban environment are far more significant.

The best of the new groups--Martha and the Vandellas, Marvin Gaye, the Jewels, The Supremes, The Velvettes, Mary Wells (all from Detroit), and The Kinks, the Zombies, Manfred Mann and, of course, The Beatles (all from England) have brought to popular music a vitality and exuberance--and rebelliousness--which it has never seen before. The Beatles are the most successful group in entertainment history. Their flippant replies to interviewers, their wild, raucous behavior, their insulting sense of humor remove them far beyond the pale of "respectable entertainers." Their First movie, A HARD DAY'S NIGHT, will remain one of the greatest cinematic delights of 1964, a lone cry of uninhibited freedom and irrationality in the cold wilderness of "seriousness" and pretentiousness. The legendary quality which can almost be called mystical necessity, of the Beatles, has not failed to attract the critical attention of some of the more perceptive commentators. Consider this judgement from the pen of Jean Sheperd, who inter-

viewed The Beatles for Playboy magazine (February, 1965); "In two years they had become a phenomenon that had somehow transcended stardom--or even showbiz. They were mythical being, inspiring a fanaticism bordering on religious ecstasy among millions all over the world. I began to have the uncomfortable feeling that all this fervor had nothing whatsoever to do with entertainment, or with talent, or even with the Beatles themselves. I began to feel that they were the catalyst of a sudden world madness that would have burst upon us whether they had come on the scene or not. If The Beatles had never existed, we would have had to invent them. They are not prodigious talents by any yardstick, but like hula hoops and yo-yos, they are at the right place at the right time, and whatever it is that triggers the mass hysteria of fads has made them walking myths. Everywhere we went, people stared in openmouthed astonishment that there were actually flesh and blood human beings who looked just like the Beatle dolls they had home. It was as though Santa Claus had suddenly shown up at the Christmas Party."

Another British group, The Rolling Stones, has risen to popularity more recently, bringing with them a more disquieting, more sinister, more violent attitude into the rock'n'roll arena. The Stones are significant, too, because they are the first major British group to devote themselves entirely to the rhythm-and-blues side of rock'n'roll.

It is in England today where the adolescent revolt (of which rock'n'roll is only one, albeit the most important---culturally speaking---constituent element) seems to have assumed its largest proportions. In England today the kids are categorized into two "tendencies": Mods, fashionably (often bizarrely) dressed, and who are associated with motor scooters; and the Rockers, who prefer black leather jackets,



bluejeans and motorcycles. In both cases the boys wear their hair long, considerably longer than in America, and according to a New York Times writer from Britain, the word in London and Liverpool is that male hair is going to get longer and longer. The hair itself deserves comment, particularly since long hair is growing in the United States as well as elsewhere in Europe. The social implications of hair fashion have been inadequately studied if studied at all. Some psychologists and sociologists have confined themselves to brief, unexplained remarks on "sexual confusion," "identity problems," and the like which help very little. Others, it is true, have gotten a little closer to the heart of the matter, but without by any means being thoroughgoing in their analyses. Thus the New York Times writer referred to above mentions that, "The sociologists, always a pessimistic lot, look on our jungled tresses and prophesy a future filled with indulgence and rebellion." For it is an undeniable fact that short male hair has always been characteristic of submission to authority. The police, prisons, the army, schools and employers are all in agreement in insisting upon short hair and regular haircuts. Also, crew-cuts are the symbol, almost, of the Goldwater menagerie. Before making unfounded judgments on the "identity problems" of today's kids, one might consider the problems of a culture so obsessed with keeping male hair short.

The riots and brawls of the Mods and the Rockers have also called attention to another aspect of the rock'n'roll revolt: That rock'n'roll represents the only significant protest music today, another reason why it deserves study and sympathetic appreciation by revolutionaries. Jazz has entered the colleges, become respectable and academic. Developments in jazz of the last few years (Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, Charlie Mingus, Roland Kirk, etc.) are evolving into a form of musical expression (the so-called "Third Stream") far removed from the obvious protest character of Charlie Parker, Thelonius Monk and Coltrane, (It is useless to point out that, Musically, jazz is ten thousand times superior to rock-

'n'roll: this is not the point.) Contemporary classical music is strictly limited to the academies. As for "folk" music and its derivatives (country-and-western, bluegrass, etc.) these have become the official expressions of today's college fraternities. (Real folk music is primarily of historical interest.) Those unhappy souls of the traditional "Left" who try to pretend that the "folk revival" has some sort of revolutionary content only reflect their sentimentality and intellectual superficiality. I do not mean to imply that there is not much that is beautiful and important in the folk music tradition, and certainly it deserves serious study. But it can no longer be assumed to have anything to do with the contemporary working class. At any rate, working class kids are bored by it.

There can be no doubt that the present development of rock'n'roll, and the milieu of young workers in which it thrives, is more consciously rebellious than it has ever been before. But to be revolutionary, of course, is to be more than rebellious, for a revolutionary viewpoint necessarily includes some sort of alternative. And popular adolescent culture is pregnant with revolutionary implications precisely because it proposes alternatives (although crude, undeveloped and unconscious) to the ignoble conditions now prevailing. Songs like "Dancing In The Streets" by Martha and the Vandellas and "Opportunity" by the Jewels show that the feeling for freedom and refusal to submit to routinized, bureaucratic pressures, are not confined to small, deflated band of conscious, politically "sophisticated" revolutionaries. They are the almost instinctive attitudes of most of our fellow workers in industry. Presently these feelings are to a great extent repressed, and are sublimated into bourgeois politics, baseball, television, etc., It is our function as disrupters of the capitalist system and union organizers to heighten consciousness of these feelings, to encourage rebellion, to do all we can to liberate the intrinsically revolutionary character of the working class. Rock'n'roll, which has already contributed to a freer attitude toward sex relations, can contribute to this liberation.



Excerpt From Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

If I could do it, I'd do no writing at all here. It would be photographs; the rest would be fragments of cloth, bits of cotton, lumps of earth, records of speech, pieces of wood and iron, phials of odors, plates of food and of excrement. Booksellers would consider it quite a novelty; critics would murmur, yes, but is it art; and I could trust a majority of you to use it as you would a parlor game.

A piece of the body torn out by the roots might be more to the point.

As it is, though, I'll do what little I can in writing. Only it will be very little. I'm not capable of it; and if I were, you would not go near it at all. For if you did, you would hardly bear to live.

As a matter of fact, nothing I might write could make any difference whatever. It would only be a "book" at the best. If it were a safely dangerous one it would be "scientific" or "political" or "revolutionary." If it were really dangerous it would be "literature" or "religion" or "mysticism" or "art," and under one such name or another might in time achieve the emasculation of acceptance. If it were dangerous enough to be of any remote use to the human race it would be merely "frivolous" or "pathological," and that would be the end of that. Wiser and more capable men than I shall ever be have put their findings before you, findings so rich and so full of anger, serenity, murder, healing, truth, and love that it seems incredible the world were not destroyed and fulfilled in the instant, but you are too much for them: the weak in courage are strong in cunning; and one by one, you have absorbed and have captured and dishonored, and have distilled of your deliverers the most ruinous of all your poisons; people hear Beethoven in concert halls, or over a bridge game, or to relax; Cezannes are hung on walls, reproduced, in natural wood frames, van Gogh is the man who cut off his ear and whose yellows became recently popular in window decoration; Swift loved individuals but hated the human race; Kafka is a fad; Blake is in the Modern Library; Freud is a Modern Library Giant; Dovschenko's Frontier is disliked by those who demand that it fit the Eisenstein esthetic; nobody reads Joyce any more; Celine is a madman who has incurred the hearty dislike of Alfred Kazin, reviewer for the New York Herald Tribune book section, and is, moreover, a fascist; I hope I need not mention Jesus Christ, of whom you have managed to make a dirty gentile.

However, that maybe, this is a book about "sharecroppers," and is written for all those who have a soft place in their hearts for the laughter and tears inherent in poverty viewed at a distance, and especially for those who can afford the retail price; in the hope that the reader will be edified, and may feel kindly disposed toward any well-thought-out liberal efforts to rectify the unpleasant situation down South, and will somewhat better the more guiltily appreciate the next good meal he eats; and in the hope, too, that he will recommend this little book to really sympathetic friends, in order that our publishers may at least cover their investment and that (just the merest perhaps) some kindly thought may be turned our way, and a little of your money fall to poor little us.

Above all else: in God's name don't think of it as Art.

Every fury on earth has been absorbed in time, as art, or as religion, or as authority in one form or another. The deadliest blow the enemy of the human soul



can strike is to do fury honor. Swift, Blake, Beethoven, Christ, Joyce, Kafka, name me a one who has not been thus castrated. Official acceptance is the one unmistakable symptom that salvation is beaten again, and is the one surest sign of fatal misunderstanding, and is the kiss of Judas.

Really it should be possible to hope that this be recognized as so, and as a mortal and inevitably recurrent danger. It is scientific fact. It is disease. It is avoidable. Let a start be made. And then exercise your perception of it on work that has more to tell you than mine has. See how respectable Beethoven is; and by what right any wall in museum, gallery or home presumes to wear a Cezanne; and by what idiocy Blake or work even of such intention as mine is ever published and sold. I will tell you a test. It is unfair. It is untrue. It stacks all the cards. It is out of line with what the composer intended. All so much the better.

Get a radio or a phonograph capable of the most extreme loudness possible, and sit down to listen to a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony or of Schubert's C-Major Symphony. But I don't mean just sit down and listen. I mean this: Turn it on as loud as you can get it. Then get down on the floor and jam your ear as close into the loudspeaker as you can get it and stay there, breathing as lightly as possible, and not moving, and neither eating nor smoking nor drinking. Concentrate everything you can into your hearing and into your body. You won't hear it nicely. If it hurts you, be glad of it. As near as you will ever get, you are inside the music; not only inside it, you are it; your body is no longer your shape and substance, it is the shape and substance of the music.

Is what you hear pretty? or beautiful? or legal? or acceptable in polite or any other society? It is beyond any calculation savage and dangerous and murderous to all equilibrium in human life as human life is; and nothing can equal the rape it does on all that death; nothing except anything, anything in existence or dream, perceived anywhere remotely toward its true dimension.

Beethoven said a thing as rash and noble as the best of his work. By my memory, he said, "He who understands my music can never know unhappiness again." I believe it. And I would be a liar and a coward and one of your safe world if I should fear to say the same words of my best perception, and of my best intention.

Performance, in which the whole fate and terror rests, is another matter."

--James Agee



## The Right To Protest - Graduation Address - 1965

Some weeks ago, the valedictorian of Columbia College delivered a commencement address in which he was sharply critical of students who participated actively in political affairs. Demonstrations and boycotts similar to the ones held recently at Columbia are not only "spiteful" and "ugly" said he, they "consume time and energies which should have been used to increase academic excellence". He went on to point out that while it was incumbent upon a student to take advantage of the academic opportunities afforded him at school, "involvement in political activities does anything but further this aim." To the astonishment of many in the audience accustomed to the traditional solemnity of a graduation ceremony, the valedictorian, on leaving the rostrum, was met with a chorus of boos and hisses, which allegedly all but drowned out what vigorous applause he did receive. \*

Although his criticism was directed primarily at college students, the fact nevertheless remains that the valedictorian had ventured into an essential and explosive topic, one that is being just as heatedly discussed among high school students as among collegians. Students are in school to get an education, one side of the argument runs, nothing more. How do they reserve the right to protest?

Distrust of the commitment that students have shown to politics - a commitment which has been greatly strengthened as a result of recent developments in Viet Nam-- is more widespread than is immediately apparent, but for some reason, many critics prefer to keep their true feelings as little known as possible. The valedictorian at Columbia, for example, admitted that his opinion had been seething inside him for three years before he took a public stand.

Yet knowledge of the existence of this distrust, this fear, this lack of faith in the motives of students who openly speak their opinions on current events is profoundly disturbing. It is disturbing because the American student community is as much an agent of public opinion as it is an object of it, and criticism of its participation in politics therefore questions the fundamental nature and role of public opinion in a democracy today.

The former British Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel once described public opinion as a "compound of folly, weakness, prejudice, wrong feeling, right feeling, obstinacy, and newspaper paragraphs." He was, in his own era, perhaps right. Heretofore, public opinion has always been what Walter Lippman regarded as "external"-- rather than expressing an opinion, the public merely aligns itself with a particular side of an issue. Because, for example, it lacks the channels of inside information to which the executive branch of the government alone has access -- the public -- the term meaning just that part of the citizenry interested in a situation -- can only make a judgement on the basis of what knowledge and speculation it might receive from the likes of a newspaper or the television set, and those sources might not necessarily reveal the whole story.

The worsening of the crisis in Viet Nam changed all that. At first, no one, seemingly even in the administration, appeared to know what kind of a policy the United States was preparing to follow in that country, and when the war was escalated to the point of our carrying offensive raids north of the 17th parallel, a disquiet which had been steadily growing in the public suddenly burst forth in an intensified wave of picketing and petitioning that has led some observers to call this "The Year of the Demonstration".

\* The Underlining is ours.



Much of the discontent has been emanating from the academic community, where an impressively large number of professors have assumed as active a role as their students. Many of these educators realized that a new system for the exchange of facts and speculation was needed, and thus the "teach-in" was born. As a result of the search for, and utilization of, additional knowledge, public opinion had begun to move toward being "internal" - and it is to the students' attitude of persistent questioning that much of the credit is due.

Why didn't all this happen sooner? What has so suddenly shaken the younger generation out of the complacency it has been submerged in for so long?

The question is difficult to answer entirely. Certainly the most obvious, if not the most important single event that led to the student commitment of the 60's was the civil rights struggle--a non-political clash between out-dated prejudice and present-day principle, so far-reaching in its implications and promise that many students, on fully sensing its presence, eagerly abandoned the long maintained silence they had shared with many of their elders, and with nothing more than cardboard, intelligence, paint, and courage, initiated the student "movement".

It was during one of our last school meetings here that someone got up and asked why it was that the ideals of Stockbridge seem always to be represented by political activists, public figures who openly challenge the status-quo instead of by intellectuals who sit with quiet disinterest in the world's immediate problems, pondering theory rather than practice.

One person, in the space of about thirty seconds, gave the sort of rewarding and inspiring reply that makes the school meeting the valuable institution it is. He said-- I believe in all honesty--that he doubted that people came to Stockbridge just to be gently taken by the hand and shown the path of righteousness; that most, if they have been here long enough to sense what the nature of the ideals upon which Stockbridge was founded are, will, if they truly are what someone called "whole" human beings, inevitably find themselves thinking and talking and acting not with the sole intention of satisfying their personal ambitions, but with the notion of somehow assisting others.

A member of a younger generation, long before he joins the older, needs convictions and a calling that transcend his personal ambition. There are a number of reasons for this. He may, on the one hand, have a psychological craving that drives him to search out a purpose and a direction, regardless of how radical it might be; he needs, in the jargon of the psychologists, an "identity", and the opportunity to fully recognize it. He may, on the other, have purely intellectual pangs for knowledge, for a means of resolving the bafflement and doubts that so often arise in our disordered world. And, if his elders are unable to provide him with a definite purpose, then he will either provide it for himself, or, as happens all too often, go through life without one.

Whatever the motives, however, the need for a student to take an actual position--any stand, on any issue, is as pressing as his inherent duty to study and to contemplate. The idea that man must first learn how to live before he actively lives is false. No one can begin to understand truly the complexities of human affairs until he actually experiences them, for the process of education is complete only when theory and practice are combined.



There was much justification for the valedictorian to plead for the furtherance of academic excellence--but for him to attack the very concept of student participation in politics--and the principle behind it--was both unfounded and unfair.

When, after finishing the greater part of this address, I saw a copy of the New York Times in which a story about graduation speakers throughout the country praising student political activity was given front page billing, I became hesitant--my topic seemed suddenly a cliché. But when I stopped to realize that even this very day, speakers are saying much the same thing I have, the sheer number of similar messages show the urgency and importance of the question--and when a subject attains such a status, it is no longer a cliché.

My fellow seniors, if we can resist the temptation to lose perspective from time to time, if we leave here today with a sense of honesty and resolve, then in our attempts to meet our present obligations as students we shall not fail; then in our strivings to become more thoughtful, more constructive human beings, we shall not falter.

Thank you.

--David Pitt



### Editorial Summary

The strident protest movements of the 1960's are largely the result of 20th century economic security. It would seem obvious that insecurity, not security, would be conducive to revolution, but oppressed people have very seldom been the initiators of a revolt. The manorial system of the middle ages lasted only as long as the serfs were living at a subsistence level, the bourgeoisie or an intellectual elite were the initiators of the French, Russian and American Revolutions. Oppressions and economic insecurity, then, produce a strange kind of forced loyalty--an allegiance of necessity.

Our generation is largely independent; the post war economic boom has released us from many loyalties. The Negro Revolution, advances in civil liberties, protest against the war in Vietnam and the concern for the future of American universities evident in the Berkeley fracas are all results. Admittedly, there are many students who are deeply committed to social action, but there is another group sometimes associated with student protest that is so totally uncommitted it is nihilistic. These are the disaffected, the disavowed. They have abandoned their loyalties to mother, apple pie and the flag, but substituted no other values.

A Unitarian Universalist minister in the midwest once characterized L.R.Y.'ers who number among this fraternity as "bourgeois nihilists". He went on to explain that he meant "bourgeois" in the pejorative sense (they are part of our safe world of middle-class leisure and luxury even while they disavow it) and nihilism as negation or total rejection of purpose and tradition. The Adolescent Mystique of this issue's title could just as well be called Bourgeois Nihilism. I see the Adolescent Mystique in the slavish followers of Bob Dylan, surfers, greasies, teeny beats, potheads, and all the other members of the cult that call itself Hip. But the center of any cult of hippies is not the crucial point. It is not the affectations which are disturbing; it is the vapid disinterest in all other things, ideas, and people with which the cultists pursue their goal of total assimilation into or conformity to their particular cult. Furthermore, it's not Bob Dylan, it's not Mick Jagger, it's not Barry McGuire, and it's not marijuana that caused this spirit of negation. They are only products of the ultimate human-vegetable cult, "campus existentialism."



Perhaps it's all due to cold war-bomb hysteria or disillusionment with communism. Perhaps it's a result of the disappearance of a fascist threat or the impersonal efficiency of educational beauracracies. Whatever it's cause "campus existentialism" is a jarring note in a country where there are revolutions in progress on every front, both humanistic and technological. Commitment not coolth, should be the password for L.R.Y. in this decade. But all too often L.R.Y.'s creed is best expressed by Bob Dylan, "I looked around and saw all these people pointing fingers at the bomb. But the bomb is getting boring, because what's wrong goes much deeper than the bomb. What's wrong is how few people are free. Most people walking around are tied down to something that doesn't really speak, so they just add their confusion to the mess. I mean they have some kind of vested interest in the way things are now. Me, I'm cool."



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And the wonder of it all . . .



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