

Introduction: Agenda for a Generation

Every generation inherits from the past a set of problems--personal and social--and a dominant set of insights and perspectives by which the problems are to be understood and, hopefully, managed. The critical feature of this generation's inheritance is that the problems are so serious as to actually threaten civilization, while the conventional perspectives are of dubious worth. Horrors are regarded as commonplace; we take universal strife in stride; we treat newness with a normalcy that suggests a deliberate flight from reality.

How can the magnitude of modern problems be best expressed? Perhaps by means of paradox:

With nuclear energy whole cities could easily be powered, but instead we seem likely to unleash destruction greater than that incurred in all wars in human history;

With rockets we are emancipating man from terrestrial limitations, but from Mississippi jails still comes the prayer for emancipation of man on earth;

As man's own technology destroys old and creates new forms of social organization, man still tolerates meaningless work, idleness instead of creative leisure, and educational systems that do not prepare him for life amidst change;

While expanding networks of communication, transportation, integrating economic systems, and the birth of intercontinental missiles make national boundaries utterly permeable and antiquated, men still fight and hate in provincial loyalty to nationalism;

While two-thirds of mankind suffers increasing undernourishment, our upper classes are changing from competition for scarce goods to revelling amidst abundance;

With world population expected to double in forty years, men still permit anarchy as the rule of international conduct and uncontrolled exploitation to govern the sapping of the earth's physical resources;

Mankind desperately needs visionary and revolutionary leadership to respond to its enormous and deeply-entrenched problems. But America rests in national stalemate, her goals ambiguous and tradition-bound when they should be new and far-reaching, her democracy apathetic and manipulated when it should be dynamic and participative.

These paradoxes convey tensions which demand the attention of every individual concerned with the future condition of man. The newness of them demands intellectual self-reliance from a younger generation that fears to be its own leadership. The complexity of them requires a radical sense of appreciation, of facts and values, that few thinkers want to undertake. The dangers in them, that this

is the first generation to know it might be the last in the long experiment at living, call not for detachment and retreat but for humility and initiative, not for hypnotic adoption of the politics of past and ranking orders, but for reflective working out of a politics anew.

We are people of this generation, in our late teens and early- or mid-twenties, bred in affluence, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit.

We are dismayed by the timidity of our elders and the privatism of our peers. The organizations we know, in which we are to be socialized as citizens, are unradical, in that they treat only of symptoms, not roots, or unpolitical, in that they are impelled more by outrage and static protest than measured analysis and assertive program, or simply hesitant, skirting the issues and blurring them with rhetoric, rather than admitting of problems both intellectual and political and nevertheless seeking a broad analysis of social issues.

We write, debate, and assert this manifesto, not as a declaration that we have the Final Cure, but to affirm that problems must be faced with an expression of knowledge and value, and in action. In this affirmation we deny that problems can be faced by claiming they don't exist anymore, or that the government through expertise will solve what problems there are.

We do this as a basis for an organization, because as students we feel that only as we find some structured way of working together, sharing ideas, formulating program and engaging in action will the left become visible and responsible in America.

Our form is tentative--it will change as a response to growth, as we extend beyond our own age group--as we find ways to work with those whom the academic structure identifies as our teachers, as bridges can be extended to labor, the church, the liberal reform and socialist political groups, as we form the necessary amalgamations with other liberal and radical centers on the campus and beyond. Our goal is to stimulate a left--new and, we think, young.

We seek to be public, responsible, and influential--not housed in garrets, lunatic, and ineffectual; to be visionary yet ever developing concrete programs--not empty or deluded in our goals and sterile in inaction; to be idealistic and hopeful--not deadened by failures or chained by a myopic view of human possibilities; to be both passionate and reflective--not timid and intellectually paralytic; to vivify American politics with controversy--not to emasculate our principles before the icons of unity and bipartisanship; to stimulate and give honor to the full movement of human imagination--not to induce sectarian rigidity or encourage stereotyped rhetoric.

On this basis we offer this document: as an effort in understanding the new, but an effort rooted in the ancient, still unfulfilled conception of man as a being struggling for determining influence over his circumstances. That man should creatively encounter the forces new and old, challenging his reason and menacing his freedom, is the hope underlying this paper, which is our beginning--in argument, in identifying friends and opponents, and most essentially in carrying on our own education--as democrats in a time of upheaval.

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The Students

In the last few years, thousands of American students demonstrated that they at least felt the urgency of the times. They moved actively and directly against racial injustices, the threat of war, violations of individual rights of conscience and, less frequently, against economic manipulation. They succeeded in restoring a small measure of controversy to the campuses after the stillness of the McCarthy period. They succeeded, too, in gaining some concessions from the people and institutions they opposed, especially in the fight against racial bigotry.

The significance of these scattered "movements" lies not in their success or failure in gaining objectives—at least not yet. Nor does the significance lie in the intellectual "competence" or "maturity" of the students involved—as some pedantic elders allege. The significance is in the fact that the students are breaking the crust of apathy and overcoming the inner alienation that remain the defining characteristics of American college life.

In truth, student movements for reform are rareties on the campus. What is commonplace on the campus? How do "apathy" and "inner alienation" manifest themselves? The real campus, the familiar campus, is a place of private people, engaged in their notorious "inner emigration". It is a place of commitment to business-as-usual, getting ahead, playing it cool. It is a place of mass affirmation of the Twist, but mass reluctance toward the controversial public stance. Rules are accepted as "inevitable", bureaucracy as "just circumstances", irrelevance as "scholarship", selflessness as "martyrdom", politics as "just another way to make people, and an unprofitable one, too".

According to recent studies, almost no students value being active as a citizen. Passive in public, they are hardly more idealistic in arranging their private lives: Gallup concludes they will "settle for low success and won't risk high failure." There is not much willingness to take risks (not even in business), no setting of dangerous goals, no real conception of personal identity except one made in the image of others, no real urge for personal fulfillment except to be almost as successful as the very successful people. Attention is paid to social status, the quality of shirt collars, meeting people, getting wives or husbands, making solid contacts for later on); much, too, is paid to academic status (grades, honors, the med school rat race). Neglected generally is the intellectual status, the personal cultivation of excellence of the mind.

"Students don't even give a damn about the apathy", one of us has said. Apathy toward apathy begets a privately constructed universe, a place of systematic study schedules, tow nights a week for beer, a girl or two, and early marriage; a framework infused with personality, warmth and under control, no matter how unsatisfying it may be.

Under these conditions, university life loses all relevance to some. Four hundred thousand of us leave college every year.

But apathy and alienation are not simply attitudes; they are products of our social institutions, of the structure and organization of higher education. The extracurricular life is ordered according to in loco parentis theory, which ratifies the Administration as the moral guardian of the young. The accompanying "let's pretend" theory of student extra-curricular affairs transforms student government into a training center for those who want to spend

their lives pretending politically, and discourages initiative from more articulate, honest, and sensitive students. The bounds and style of controversy are delimited before controversy begins. The university "prepares" the student for "citizenship" through perpetual rehearsals and, usually, through evisceration of what creative spirit there is in the individual.

The academic life contains reinforcing counterparts to the way in which extracurricular life is organized. The academic world is founded in a teacher-student relation analogous to the parent-child relation which characterizes in loco parentis. Further, academic life is founded in a radical separation of student from the "object" he studies. That which is studied, the social reality, is "objectified", theory divorced from the stuff of practice, the unity of human understanding submitted to compartmentalizing, specializing, and the quest for little questions. Thus is the student divided from life by his professor, as the anxious administrator attempts to do through in loco parentis.

The academic bureaucracy—the administrators and their pervading systems—extends throughout the academic and extracurricular structures, contributing to the sense of outer complexity and inner powerlessness that transforms so many students from honest searching to ratification of convention and, worse, to a numbness to present and future catastrophes.

Almost invisibly, too, huge foundations and other private financial interests shape the money-hungry universities, making them more commercial, less disposed to diagnose society critically, less open to dissent. Defense contracts, too, bring many universities into tacit cooperation with the interests supporting the arms race. In summary, the actual intellectual effect of the college experience on the student is barely distinguishable from that of any other communications channel—say, a television set—passing on the stock truths of the day. Students leave college somewhat more "tolerant" than others, but basically unchanged in their values and political orientations. This is unsurprising, since the real function of the educational system—as opposed to its more rhetorical function of "searching for truth"—is to impart the key information and styles that will help the student get by, modestly but comfortably, in the big society beyond.

Look beyond the campus, to America itself. That student life is more intellectual, and perhaps more comfortable, does not obscure the fact that the fundamental qualities of life on the campus reflects the habits of society at large. The fraternity president is seen at the junior manager levels; the sorority queen has gone to Grosse Pointe; the serious poet burns hopelessly for a place any place, to work; the once-serious and never-serious poets are at the advertising agencies or the slick magazines. The desperation of people threatened by forces about which they know little and of which they can say less; the cheerful emptiness of people forced to close their identities to modern stress; the hostile surrender of people "giving up" all hope of changing things; the faceless polled by Gallup who listed "international affairs" fourteenth on their list of "problems", but also expected thermonuclear war in the next few years; in these and other forms, Americans are in withdrawal from public life, from any collective effort at directing their own affairs.

Some regard this national doldrums as a sign of healthy approval of the established order—but is it approval by consent or manipulated acquiescence? Others declare that the people are withdrawn because compelling issues are fast disappearing—perhaps there are fewer headlines in America, but is Jim Crow gone, is there enough work and work more fulfilling, is world war a

diminishing threat, and what of the new peoples and their aspirations? Still others think that the national quietude is a necessary consequence of the need for elites to resolve complex and specialized problems of modern industrial society--but, then, why should business elites decide foreign policy, and who controls the elites anyway, and are they solving mankind's problems? Others, finally, shrug knowingly and announce that full democracy never worked anywhere in the past--but why lump qualitatively different civilizations together, and how can a social order work well if its best thinkers are sceptics, and is man really doomed forever to the domination of today?

There are no convincing apologies for the contemporary malaise. While the world tumbles toward the final war, while men in other nations are trying desperately to alter events, while the very future qua future is uncertain-- America is without community impulse, with the inner momentum necessary for an age when societies cannot successfully perpetuate themselves by their military weapons, when democracy must be viable because of its quality of life, not its quantity of rockets.

The apathy here is, first, subjective--the felt powerlessness of ordinary people, the resignation before the enormity of events. But subjective apathy is encouraged by the objective American situation--the actual structural separation of people from power, from relevant knowledge, from the pinnacles of decision-making. Just as the university influences the student way of life, so do major social institutions create the circumstances in which the isolated citizen will try helplessly to understand his world and himself.

The very isolation of the individual--from power and community and ability to aspire--means the rise of a democracy without publics. With the great mass of people structurally remote and psychologically hesitant with respect to democratic institutions, those institutions themselves attenuate and become, in the fashion of the vicious circle, progressively less accessible to those few who aspire to serious participation in social affairs. The vital democratic connection between community and leadership, between the mass and the several elites, has been so wrenched and perverted that disastrous policies go unchallenged time and again.

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American Politics

Historically and currently, American politics are built on a desire to deploy and neutralize the "evil drives" of men. Paradoxically, they have instead tended to diminish general interest in citizenship and have encouraged the consolidation of irresponsibility at higher levels of government. Politics today are organized for policy paralysis and minority domination, not for fluid change and mass participation. The major parties contain broader differences within them than between themselves. What exists instead of two parties is an undeclared "third party" alliance of Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans, blessed by a seniority system that guarantees Congressional committee domination to conservatives (10 of 17 committees in the Senate and 13 of 21 in the House are currently chaired by Southern Democrats). For one hundred years the going bargain has given the liberals the Presidency, the conservatives the Congress, and the general public a system of unrepresentative government. Confusion necessarily is built in to political discussion. Relevant issues are not raised and debated in a way that affords the voter a genuine political choice: politics of personality transcends the politics of issues. Calcification (under the name of "responsible progress with stability") dominates flexibility as the principle of parliamentary organization. Frustration is the expectancy of legislators intending serious liberal reform. In a world demanding rapid change, Congress becomes less and less central in American decision-making -- in foreign policy Congress has but a minor role since World War II.

Outside of Congress, the parties view themselves not as vehicles for debate but as machines seeking power, not as outlets for individual work but as dispensers of rewards and elevators to status. But politics go beyond congressional flexibility and party power lust. Involved, too, is the expanding force of lobbyists, predominantly representing business interests, spending hundreds of millions annually in a systematic effort to conform facts about our productivity, our agriculture, our defense, our social services, to the interests of private economic groupings.

In this contest of organized stalemate, party contradictions, insulated power and privilege, and deliberate falsifications, the most alarming fact is that few, if any, politicians are calling for a change. Rather than protesting conditions, the politicians aggravate them in several ways.

While in practice they go about rigging public opinion to their own interests, in word and ritual they enshrine "the sovereign public." Their speeches and campaign actions are banal, based in a degrading conception of what people want to hear. They respond not to dialogue, but to pressure: and knowing this, the ordinary citizen feels even greater powerlessness. Perhaps the most criminal of political acts is the trumpeted appeal to "citizenship" and "service to the nation" which, since it is not meant to really rearrange power relations, only increases apathy by opening no creative outlet for real citizenship. Often, too, the appeal to "service" is justified not in terms of idealism, but in the crasser terms of "defending the Free World from Communism"--thus making future idealistic impulses impossible to justify in any but Cold War terms.

The Economy

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American economic life is not as it once was. Capitalism today advertises itself as the Welfare State. Ours is the first generation to comfortably expect pensions, medical care, unemployment compensations, and other social services throughout our lives. In many places, workers need not experience the sweatshop conditions of the Thirties, the unrepaired machines, the unrestrained bosses. Most of our top unionists have assumed the roles and rhetoric of business leaders--a requisite of good bargaining, of course. Although our productive capacity is one-fourth idle, two-thirds of all Americans make enough to live in utter comfort, were it not for the nagging incentive to "keep up". As they say, we are "making it pretty well".

But we are younger, raised in the Boom of World War II. We take for granted the existence and desirability of the New Deal reforms, and we look with anger at the legacies, the unfinished reforms, of our liberal ancestors.

The American economy, moreso than the political structure, is organized so that the individual "unit", the consumer, is systematically excluded from the decisions affecting the nature of his work, his rewards, his economic opportunities. The modern concentration of corporate wealth is fantastic. The wealthiest one percent of Americans own more than 80 percent of all personal shares of stock. From World War II until the mid-Fifties, the 50 biggest corporations increased their share of manufacturing production from 17 to 23 percent of the national total, and the share of the largest 200 companies rose from 30 to 37 percent. Profits rise inexorably: United States Steel shipped half a million fewer tons of steel in 1957 than 1956, yet earned \$419 million in net profits against the \$348 million of the year before--even after suffering a strike and a grant of \$180 million to the steelworkers in new wages!

To think that the decisions of these economic elites affect merely economic growth is delusion: their "economic" decisions affect all facets of social development. Foreign investments influence political policies in underdeveloped areas. The drive for sales spurs phenomenal advertising efforts: the "ethical drug" industry spent more than \$750 million on promotions in 1960, nearly four times the total amount available to all American medical schools for their educational programs. The arts are organized considerably according to their commercial profitability. The tendency to over-production, to commodity gluts, requires the deliberate creation of pseudo-needs in consumers, and introduces inherently wasteful "planned obsolescence" as a permanent feature of business strategy.*

*Statistics on wealth reveal the "have" and "have not" gap at home. Only 5 percent of all those in the "\$5,000 or less" bracket own any stock at all. In 1953, personally-owned wealth in the U.S. stood at \$1 trillion. Of this sum, \$309.2 billion (30.2 percent) was owned by 1,659,000 top wealth-holders (with incomes of \$60,000 or more). This elite comprised 1.04 percent of the population. Their average gross estate estimate was \$182,000, as against the