

# The American youth—the inept generation

by Martin L. Gross

I must confess that I suffer from what might be described as the World War II Syndrome.

The symptomatology is common: at its core is a gnawing but carefully-secreted opinion that the current generation of young Americans is truly inferior.

The denigration of youth, history tells us, is an age-old phenomenon engaged in by adults in the first throes of incipient middle-age. This is probably correct, but my history does not confirm it.

MANY IN MY "older generation" sat virtually open-jawed in admiration as we pitched in to help conquer a depression, contributed the willing manpower to fight fascism, then created the now-fashionably-dispensed material affluence.

The present young generation and those metaphysical adults who share (and often direct) their profound ineptness, stir a different range of emotions. More than prior generations, this one strives mightily to perform in the arenas of intellect, the arts, politics, love, life style and simple happiness.

Despite their highly-touted educational revolution, they have faltered in each, creating more visible energy than successes. If one were to take a harsh look at observable reality, their failures

would be seen as pathetic monuments to their life style: actions and results exactly the opposite of their hastily-conceived goals and values.

IN THE ARENA of politics, they have seized on the successful 35-year-old social democratic revolution in America and helped to prevent it so that it no longer works. While rational liberals fight against the outrageous legal separation of the races, they strive toward ennobling the crudest concepts of racism — concepts which violently conflict with their claims of supra-morality.

The ineptness of their support of black separatism on campus is magnificently highlighted in the recent federal government warning to Antioch College that their segregated "black studies" program and all black dormitory are in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Despite argument by concerned students (and by the older, inept administration) the government has reportedly ordered "desegregation" by summer under penalty of the loss of federal aid.

In life style, young people have inadvertently fashioned a similar debacle. Their frenetic quest for "insight" has made neuroticism their very way of life. Determined to find the obviously indefinite "truth" about themselves, they have probed and probed inward with neither profundity nor maturity, and have found only the obvious: a mild

case of gastro-intestinal distress.

In sex, their passion for "freedom" — an apparent cross of rationalized promiscuity and spiritized "meaningful relationships" — has produced a hang-up that makes the older generation's supposed Puritanism seem gayly hedonistic by comparison.

IN THE ARTS, we hear the constant acclaim of their creative accomplishments. Upon close examination, what is meant is the near-mass participation of lumpen-talents in the creation and marketing of pubescent finger dabbles and anti-life drama, movies and literature, the products of pretentious put-ons that bear no similarity to the universal struggles and rewards of humans.

In intellect, they have decreed that since rational thought has not "cured" all of mankind's problems in this instant of history, that thought is therefore the enemy of progress. Their preoccupation with "feel," especially as perceived through their inadequate emotional sensors, has created a movement of anti-intellectualism which endangers the maintenance of free societies.

On "love," we have heard a great deal and seen little. Neither charity for Biafra nor pretentious expressions of moral pseudo-superiority erases that immutable feeling that the younger generation neither cherish nor understand love. The use of

"love" as a hateful blandishment in propaganda reminds one of the non-loving efforts of Protestant missionaries carried out in Jehovah's name.

Youngsters may maintain that they have an anti-clerical soul, but they have inadvertently founded a new religion in which their contemplation of love (and life) is as miserably as that which we suffered under medieval conformity. There is little joy in their love, only a self-indulgence that is too capable of converting mortalizing to hate.

AM I SWEEPINGLY convicting an entire generation? And what of the obvious cause for this youthful ineptness — the parents?

Inferiority is always fashioned from someone's weakness. In this case it is the by-product of a guilt-ridden parental generation, generally able to cope with their own life, but unable to direct the next generation into more fruitful paths. What was latently stupid in the parental generation has become actual and deadly in their children.

This should neither excuse the young, nor does it violate the generational generalization. Need I prove that the malady of ineptness involves two, 10, or 70 percent of youth? Hardly. It is the stamp, the brand of our time, and even the innocent carry is as visibly as those who fashioned it. They too, like all of us, suffer the modern mark of Cain, the ineptness of a strident generation.

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## Slightly irreverent

... by John Fryar

There is a phenomenon at the University known as the five-year man. Labeled by some as "super seniors," these individuals are taking one or two extra years to complete a four-year program.

Lounging around the Union or the Lincoln taverns, these sages have perfectly refined the arts of when to cut classes and renew pleas to local draft boards.

LEFT OUT in the shuffle of 20-year-olds drinking and bubble gum cheerleaders last weekend, the old-timers resorted to their favorite game, "Remember when."

"You call this a winter?" one will ask. "I remember the blizzard of '65 when it snowed 23 inches and they called off classes for two days."

"Remember the bowl games?" another demands. They all sigh.

A balding regular wakes up from his nap long enough to cry, "Ha! I remember the first high-rise dorm." They stare at him in awe as he dozes off again.

THEY GAZE sympathetically at a graying journalism major who circulates among the tables, asking feebly, "Where are the parties tonight?"

Sometimes the remember game takes the form of single words or phrases, evoking nostalgic reactions only apparent through a raised eyebrow or sleepy nod by the old codgers.

"Pla-mor." "Greek-Independent split." "Dennis Claridge." "The Astronauts." "Red Ram." "Freshman ROTC." "Three-date rule." "Carl Davidson." And an occasional "PSA" or "ASUN."

A sophomore, one of Tieman's Tots, wanders by with his first beer. "The Astro-whats? Oh, yeah, surfer music and Elvis and all that."

SOMETIMES THE remember game takes a more personal basis: "Just heard Joe married Susan you know that one he met in Marysville and Sam and Martha had their second kid funny he's been overseas for a year now but did you get a look at those Class A cheerleaders makes me want to be three or four years younger."

There is, to all appearances, a generation gap. One of the wrinkled war babies considers, "1950. The freshman this year were born in 1950. Why, I remember 1950."

Several senior University citizens place their hands over their hearts as "Louie, Louie" starts on the juke box. "First time they've played anything but that psychedelic stuff all day. Punks. What ever happened to Chubby Checker?"

THE ELDERLY are not being neglected, however. Several candidates for the ASUN presidency are looking for the geriatric vote. They have promised to implement major programs to retrain these social liabilities and pay them their deserved recognition for helping to mold today's University.

Among the proposals are free medical care to student health for diseases of the aged such as cirrhosis and obesity, special dorms with intensive care designed to meet the needs of gaffers set in their ways, and social programs with an eye to bring pleasure in the declining years.

Reactionary forces may prevent these reforms, though. The parents of these golden agers are demanding instead that they be graduated and get jobs. They call this the "self-help" approach to the problem.

## CAMPUS OPINION

Dear Editor

I am a Junior in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Nebraska. When I first came to the University I expected to meet students who were interested in their classes and who had, by virtue of intellectual enlightenment, quite forgot prejudices and gone above violence.

I wanted to be certain I was identified with people who thought as I did and so I grew my hair long and grew a moustache, just like the other non-conformists, and I talked to people who had forgot prejudice and violence, and they said—

THAT THEY were hated by men in grey suits, red ties, oppressed by short-

haired people who favored appearance to intelligence and the individual worth; and they said not to trust anyone over 40, 30! 25! Too bad they all replied to me that everyone is not as free of prejudice as they themselves.

But they had a solution to stop these evils and that was to combine all opposition under one heading, they called it Establishment, then allow that some physical manifestation represents that Establishment. Then they would attack and destroy this manifestation, but non-violently, using rocks in place of guns.

Now learning that prejudice applies only to another's, never to one's

own, opinions, and that non-violence is that violence which is directed towards something other than self, was all very upsetting to me. I guess I had some ideals which someone threw-up on when my back was turned. But one thing did come to me as a happy surprise—

FOR THE Daily Nebraskan presents those views I had so hoped to find, and, presented thoughtlessly though they may be, uninspirationally repetitious, dilute, perhaps only a cry for the sake of hearing an echo, the Daily Nebraskan must be thanked for at least presenting, even if only as a stereotype, a whisper of the words I had hoped to hear.

Adam Craft



"We find no evidence of conspiracy in the sentencing of James Earl Ray."

## Maintaining the dialogue of death

By FLORA LEWIS

Saigon — In Paris there are peace talks. Here there is war. But the two are closer than geography and mortars make it seem.

American intelligence estimates that the third phase of this spring's Viet Cong offensive is currently going on, and that it is likely to reach its peak with the heaviest attacks in the next few days, when the moon is darkest.

However, measuring the best analyses of what Hanoi hoped to achieve against what has happened so far, the offensive has already about fulfilled its purpose.

THE MOST STRIKING aspects of Viet Cong action here in the past two weeks are that the attacks have been aimed primarily at Americans (doubling U.S. casualties) and that they have been mounted with strict economy of resources. That indicates that a prime purpose of the offensive has been to put some pressure on President Nixon through American public opinion.

There has been no military pattern in the attacks. It must be judged then as a completely political offensive, through military means with a definite effort to keep down military cost to the Viet Cong.

Top American military officials are inclined to think what might be called this "bargain-base-

ment approach" is due to the erosion of enemy strength. But that isn't at all clear.

It may be that Hanoi is husbanding the power at its command in South Vietnam to support a drive for political advantage if the Paris talks do move toward peace, or for a renewal of much bigger fighting if the talks break down.

PRISONERS AND captured documents show that the Communists are telling their men that the current attacks are directly linked to Paris. Driving up American casualties really doesn't affect the battlefield situation at all. It does affect U.S. opinion, which, it is well realized, has turned its attention away from Vietnam in recent months. The offensive has succeeded in that sense, forcing President Nixon to hurry along with some show of his policy on Vietnam.

There is also impressive evidence that the offensive is meant to test not just Nixon but the U.S. as a political entity — just what do Americans mean by an understanding such as the one on which the bombing halt was based? How far will Washington bend an understanding to keep the Paris talks going? Does the U.S. really want to negotiate a settlement or to gain time for Saigon by talking and fighting, as it accuses Hanoi of doing?

Americans may feel the answers are obvious. Viet Cong activity here shows that Hanoi wants to find out for itself, by provoking American deeds — or non-deeds — instead of mere words in reply.

IT WAS RISKY; it might have led to renewed bombing of the North. But it was also a carefully controlled risk. The rocket attacks on the cities were certainly a violation of the understanding but not a huge one — enough to test, without demonstrating gross defiance.

Nixon seems to have found the right response, carefully tempered, aware of longer-range consequences without yielding to immediate impulse. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird revealed it here when he said it could be a diplomatic response, not necessarily military. If the rocket attacks taper off now, it will show Hanoi has understood that Nixon does want to bargain and that Hanoi does too.

It is desperately cruel that these simple messages are being exchanged in blood instead of in words. To some extent that is probably inevitable. It is a price of going to war. But the price could be reduced by more direct words. Private American-North Vietnamese talks are starting in Paris again.

We won't know what is said, but hopefully, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge will be instructed to remember that what is left unsaid, or said unclearly, will then be expressed in another way in the continuing dialogue in Vietnam, the dialogue of death.

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## The lonely crowd

... by Dave Buntain

Nebraskans over 20 may be adults, but all University students are still children.

This, the paradox of student maturity, was enunciated with frightening clarity by Nebraska's Unicameral and NU's Board of Regents in separate actions last week.

Even as the lawmakers were giving final approval to LB 167 which lowered the legal age to 20, our Board of Regents slapped the hands of NU graduate students by denying their proposal for coed visitation.

WHEN CONSIDERED against the backdrop of the Legislature's action, the absurdity of the Regents' edict defies description.

Both decisions came suddenly. Few, if any, students had taken legislators seriously when they introduced the bill lowering the majority age to 20. They expected it to die a swift death after legislators took the opportunity to laud the "fine, responsible young people of Nebraska."

Those students who had been counting the days until that magical 21st birthday had to pinch themselves to make certain they weren't dreaming.

TO WARD off their initial shock, newly emancipated 20-year-olds flocked to the local apothecaries — Myron's, et. al. — for medicinal relief.

Although the legislators' action will undoubtedly be viewed by many as a simple lowering of the drinking age, its impact should run much deeper once the initial shock wave has worn off. But even greater than its legal implications is its symbolic value. LB 167 is a small indication that Nebraskans are beginning to see the 18 to 21 age group as the adults they are and to give them their appropriate rights and privileges.

If the legislators sincerely want to answer the charge of "tokenism" which student lobbyist Dave Piester leveled at them during a committee hearing, they must view the bill as a prelude to other legislation.

They must work toward the day when both the contract age and its partner, the voting age, are both lowered to 18, the age at which most Nebraska youth are ready to assume the obligations of adulthood.

IF THE Unicameral is only beginning to emerge from the wilderness, the Board of Regents is still circling futilely deep in the interior.

Not only are our Regents unwilling to acknowledge that 20-year-olds should be treated as adults, they refuse to concede the adult character of Nebraska's graduate students (whose chronological ages range from 20 to over 50).

Such is the gist of the Regents' sudden move last Monday to kill the graduate students' bid for a moderate program of coed visitation in their dormitories.

With no prior warning and with no consultation of the students concerned, the Regents dismissed the proposal on the shabby pretext that it might set a precedent which their other wards, the undergraduates, might wish to copy.

THE ISSUE of coed visitation is a dead one on many American campuses — it has already been resolved in favor of the students.

In fact, on a number of campuses the undergraduate enjoys more freedom than our graduate students were requesting in their proposal.

At these campuses the trustees have realized that a student should have the right to entertain members of the opposite sex in the place where he lives, much as an apartment dweller is able to do. They have recognized that students are mature enough to accept the responsibilities which this privilege entails.

In the case of NU's graduate students, the Regents' paternalism becomes particularly absurd. Their action implies a view of the graduate student community as immature and irresponsible.

AN ENGLISH instructor, three nuns, a doctoral candidate in his fifties, and many teaching assistants and tutors are among those graduate students who lack "the necessary maturity," the Regents seem to say.

Thus, in its most absurd extreme, married residents of the graduate dormitory are unable to entertain their spouses in their rooms during summer school.

There are many who would argue that the issue of coed visitation (like that of women's hours) is a minor one, not worth the fuss that it engenders. After all, there are so many more important things with which we should be concerned.

But the gut-issue of these and other student concerns is the question of freedom and individual rights.

As long as the University denies in fact what the state asserts in law, the paradox of student maturity will fan the fires of tension between the rulers and the ruled.

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