

## 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