

XVI.

"The Liberal Takes A Look At The Past"

Event

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Pages 1-3

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THE LIBERAL TAKES A LOOK AT THE PAST . . .

I take a look at the hippie of today and, utilizing the prerogative of age, intuitively react, "we didn't act this way when I was young."

Now what have I said? Absolutely nothing. My group were the hippies of the Thirties - we were concerned - and make no mistake about it, so are these youngsters of today. Our situation was much easier, and I think that the middle-aged intellectual of today who is critical of these youngsters is not viewing the situation in its proper perspective. We were much more doctrinaire. We wanted the same positive answers that youth always demands, and the Marxian doctrine provided just that. The dialectical and materialistic interpretation of history, as presented by Marx, viewed history in terms of economic determinism. Any problems that existed within the society could easily be corrected if we would but change the economic system - we were more smug because we were more sure. Our frustration began when the economic situation, percentage wise, that is, improved most dramatically from the mid-Thirties through the Fifties. To the thinking intellectual of the Thirties it became apparent that man's quest for happiness was not to be determined by economics alone; the problem evidenced itself as one which required simultaneously man's striving for having not only his belly filled, but his heart and his soul, too, all simultaneously.

So this young hippie of today looks with disdain on Marxism, and he's right, because it doesn't provide any significant answers: it doesn't tell you how to stop the war in Vietnam, or provide any answers for riots, it doesn't reveal why man has become more soulless as his affluence increases. So, obviously, these young hippies are attempting to understand the incredibleness of the kind of society that their elders have created. Try though they might, they can't penetrate, they can't understand.

They look with disdain upon government, labor and management; viewing all three as being cut out of the same cloth. Government, to them, represents tens of thousands of bigoted and pontifical little people; labor represents the same kind of bureaucracy, plus zealous men asking for more and more, and not for the good that it does those who will receive it, but rather to maintain themselves in their sanctimonious positions; management represents to them a group which expostulates the protestant ethic which can be summarized with the greatest good to the greatest number is achieved by the individual doing what's best for him, plus having this so-called eternal truth supported by the protestant concept of truth which is ever too static.

These kids wonder about these things, and they try to talk with us. We don't talk back...we don't talk with them...we don't reason with them...we simply ward off their remarks with wornout cliches. When they don't accept these answers, we dismiss their disgust with, "well, they'll understand when they're older." The result? They start marching -- still, we don't listen...so, what's next? Disobedience? Resistance?

Though I am not an anarchist --and, probably, not even a revolutionist any more, for I'm old and tired-- I do understand this, that the establishment of government, labor and management as we understand them today have protected themselves with the respectability of law - there's no shaking it without resort to civil disobedience. I am not espousing the cause of civil disobedience, but I am trying to understand it. No form of government has ever been successfully change^d in the history of man --not really-- without civil disobedience. One of the most significant demonstrations of civil disobedience occurred during the 1770's - and this was against a firmly entrenched king.

Could it be that these young hippies of today are reflecting more seriously about American history than any previous generation? Does it have more

meaning to them than it did, perhaps, for us? Are they impelled with greater desire than we were?

All, of course, is not well with them. One of the manifestations that concerns me most is their tendency toward withdrawal, as well as non-involvement.

These will be interesting times --if we live through them.