

FEATURE

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A 60's demonstration? No way. Students of the U of A marching on the legislature in 1979.

responded to the economic realities of the times. They are more sophisticated than their naive counterparts of the '60s who believed they could change the world. But this sophistication is a double edged sword, for today's students are less aware of the past than a decade before.

In the early '60s, American groups such as Students for a Democratic Society incorporated Marxist ideologies into their own philosophies. They demonstrated an informed grasp of the different currents of thought that had run through history. But today, such is not the case.

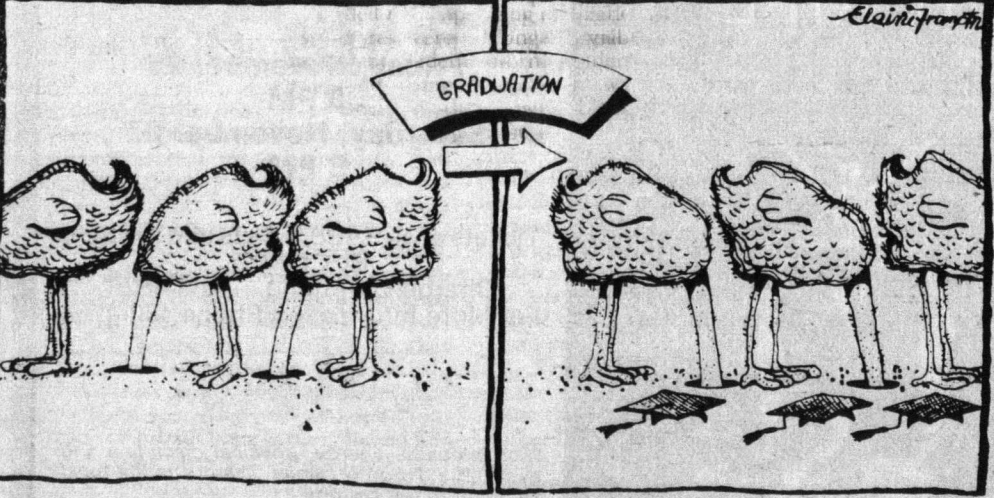
"Students today don't seem to have a sense

Those who have learned the lessons of the '60s look back on their involvement with wiser eyes. In a March 28 *Toronto Star* story, Leora Proctor Salter, an early '60s activist at the University of Toronto said "We used to be grossly romantic. Now we have become serious instead of spouting rhetoric. We're more useful now and less quotable." Tom Faulkner a leader of the students' administrative council at the U of T during the '60s, said "When I think back on it now, it was always possible to get people out for a demonstration. The real problem was what to do for organization afterward. That's when

The swing from 'radicalism' to 'conservatism' is not altogether healthy.

of history," said Lawson. "The members of the McMaster Students Movement on the other hand were reasonably well-read. When they attacked capitalism it was from a knowledgeable Marxist perspective."

you lost a lot of the excitement." Bob Spencer, then president of the SAC and now 33 year-old chair of the Toronto Board of Education, added, "No individual can change things by himself. We accept that now as the



Do students bury their heads in the sand?

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rule, but ten years ago it was revolutionary. The group process is the basis of change, and the '60s were a test of fire for group action."

The swing from 'radicalism' to 'conservatism' is not altogether healthy, for it resembles more of a reaction to confusion and uncertainty than a coherent restatement of beliefs.

There has not been a sense of learning from the '60s or of maturation on the part of today's students. Rather, there has been reaction and a digging-in of the heels. The social impulse of the '60s has surrendered to an understandable concern with careers. Students have become more self-oriented than conservative.

But attitudes are hard to trap on paper.

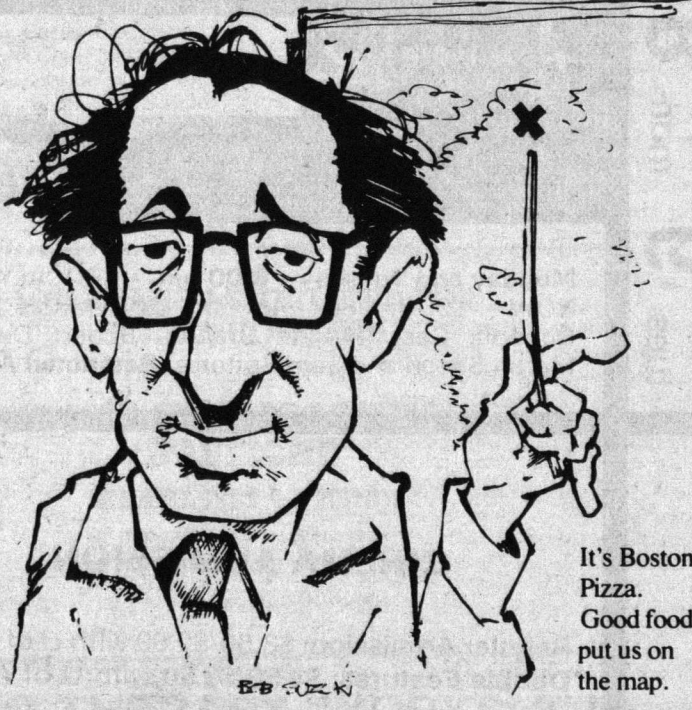
I'm going to get a good job, make a lot of money, and live in a nice house.

They are dynamic and can never be gauged with complete accuracy. Perhaps the attitude of today's student can best be expressed in the following fictional exchange between a modern student and an interviewer, taken from *Change* magazine:

Interviewer: Will Canada be a better or worse place to live in the next ten years?
Student: Canada will definitely be a worse place to live.
Interviewer: Then you must be pessimistic about the future?
Student: No, I'm optimistic.
Interviewer (with surprise): Why?
Student: Because I have a high grade point average and I'm going to get a good job, make a lot of money, and live in a nice house.

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