

BIG BUSINESS IS ATTEMPTING TO ADOPTING THE INCONSEQUENTIAL

Or, "Hey, Man, I'm OK. Look at my sideburn!"

EXPERIENCE versus RHETORIC

This is Part Two of a talk given by Eric Mann during Orientation at the University of Windsor in 1968. Mann is a former National Secretary for the Students for a Democratic Society and is now affiliated with the radical Weathermen faction of SDS.

In Part One Mann described his frustration and disappointment as a freshman in dealing with the illusions, pressures and hypocracies of the megaversity — the frat race, the social hype of campus status, the insolular dorm, the alienating work, and the meaningless marks. Disillusioned, unhappy and bitter he intended never to return.

In Part Two of his campus autobiography Mann realizes the roots of his alienation through an analysis of what the university is and perpetuates. He quickly discovered his transition to student radicalism was only the initial step to a much larger and more radical critique of American Society.

The funny thing that happened the next year was a thing called "Berkley".

Now thousands of students at Berkley went around protesting on the issue of free speech. But besides raising the issue of free speech, they began to talk about something called the 'multi-versity'.

What they mean by multi-versity is me talking to you without knowing you, me talking through this microphone to hundreds of people, not one to one, not as a group, but as mass education, mass indoctrination.

The students began to say "Maybe"—they didn't say it to me but I knew they meant it... "Maybe Ithaca wasn't your fault. Maybe it's because that place stinks. Maybe that place wasn't built for human beings. Maybe you weren't the only guy sleeping. Maybe you weren't the only guy that hated that work. Maybe you weren't the only guy who wanted to leave in his freshman year but stayed three more years because the world needs that "piece of paper" as we are so often told.

Maybe we can't change things right away but at least what Berkley did for me was for the first time to me, "You're a person and you count and an institution that makes you feel like shit, that is the bad institution, not you."

That changed a whole lot of my feelings, about myself and the society and I began to feel a lot of different things from there. I began to think maybe it wasn't just the university that didn't care about me. Maybe I could look around and see other things.

For years we have been telling black people that all they had to do was get integrated into our good world because we had the good life. But all of a sudden some of us discovered that the good life wasn't as good as we thought it was.

Now what I want to talk about to finish up is college as an extension of the kind of life that it's preparing us for. College in many ways is a very bad place. But it's a very logical place. And it's always bad things that make sense.

I remember being told by a teacher once, "You're doing very good work, keep it up, keep it up."

Keep what up? Sitting at that desk for three hours—you know, sitting in a system of reward and punishment. Of course, there's the sympathetic principal who comes home to your parents and says, "Joan is a very promising student. But she just can't seem to apply herself. She just has no span of attention. Why don't you work with her?"

And so having been given that reinforcement, the parent begins to say, "Joan, why are you such a discipline problem? Why can't

you be a good girl like all the other girls?" So Joan begins to feel that there is a priority being placed on being a good girl. And we see how the definition of a good girl is set up.

'GOOD' MEANS 'OBEDIENCE'

A good girl is a quiet girl. A good girl is one who does the assignment.

I remember in third grade, writing a paper on Balboa. Why did I do it??? Because that teacher was going to put it up on the wall. I did one on Balboa, one on Da Gamma and one on Cabatha De Vaca. Now if you were to ask me who Balboa is, who Da Gamma is or who Cabatha De Vaca is, I couldn't tell you.

But I can tell you that all three of them were put on the wall and that's why I wrote them. I didn't write them because I cared about those three names, in fact, Cabatha de Vaca could have discovered Balboa for all I know.

The main thing is that I wasn't writing these things because I cared about these guys. I was writing because a whole system of rewards and punishment had been set up. My job was to get that thing on the board. And it's interesting to know, that the teacher placed it up so high on the board that you couldn't read it even if you wanted to. This makes it very clear why it's up there. It's not up there to be read.

So we can talk about what it's like to work in a school which produces people who do things not because it is important to do them, but because the more paper you have on the wall the better it looks, no matter what's on them.

Now, isn't this the same thing as working in a factory which produces televisions that are made not to work in about two or three years, even though we have a technology that could make them work for fifteen? Why do we make a television that we make last for 3 1/2 if we can make it last for 15?

Well, the answer is clearly because we want to sell a lot of televisions.

Now you may ask "Who's we?" You say that we don't want to sell more televisions. But you see, they have a way of talking to "we" and it makes it seem that we're all working together.

Their argument goes like this. Look, if our t.v. lasts for 15 years, then we wouldn't sell a lot of t.v.'s. Therefore, if we don't sell a lot of t.v.'s, then you would be out of work. See, you have a vested interest in selling a t.v. that lasts for 3 years because that 15 year t.v. will knock you out of a job.

Now what kind of relationship is that to work? We've all been given that American myth about American Craftsmen.

Can you imagine the American shoe-maker in the old days, making a pair of shoes, and then cutting the leather in half. I mean that's such a crazy concept, you know? I mean, theoretically, a craftsman is one who makes things for other people. And yet, industrial society makes things for a profit.

That's what I mean about things being logical—if you keep a system that's based on profit, then you might as well turn out

"Boy, these escalators are breaking a lot aren't they?" And he says to me, "You're damn right and they better keep breaking because if they don't I'm out of a job."

your own televisions because it all makes sense. If you want \$3.46 an hour or \$4.12 an hour as a factory worker, then you have to accept certain compromises.

And what are the compromises? Well, in order to make \$4.12 an hour, which is a very high wage, factory workers don't usually make that, you have to work in a company that's highly automated.

A highly automated company usually makes its money by breaking down the job into a lot of very small parts, and using a lot of technology. I met a girl who said to me, "That's a very nice toy." I said, "Thanks. I bought it for my daughter." She said "Yeh, I used to make them". I said, "Oh, you used to make this toy? It must have been a good job." She said, "Well, not really. I used to work in the inspection department. You see, when you

push the button in little Annie-Fris back up and down like this. And my arm was pre times. If it worked four times in a row, it was arm stuck, it didn't."

That was her job. Eight hours a day for 5 days a year, pushing that button, way that go up and down, up and down.

That's what we call "CRAFTSMAN" in

We have butchers, who don't learn to cut butchers who learn how to cut their own chopped meat.

We have farmers who are told, sow, the produce.

And another example: Walking by a escalator, and just take a guy fixing the escalator, and just take a "Boy, these escalators are breaking a lot" says to me, "You're damn right they are because if they don't I'm out of a job."

Now that guy's job, under the system against me. It means that I want to see the elevators that break.

The steel worker wants steel tears out that lasts.

The butcher wants meat that's good. The profit system places unstuck each

PROFIT MEANINGLESS WORK

The profit system guarantees there is less. And that just doesn't go for anything.

Some of you may say, well, yeh true, workers are." You say, "Yes sir, why I don't wanna pour blood on meat, I want a job with real responsibility, I want a make me somebody. I want a with creativity. Yes, sir, that's why you college

Well let me speak to about half the people in the I'm speaking to women.

Any aspirations you have about a career, system, will be very, very sad hope because the Now let me talk about why those are gone

One reason why they will be crushed is that our country that says that it's your job to have don't mean for nine months. I mean your don't like children too much. Man has more to do with his life. He has to go out and win the

Now you may ask "I have a college degree. I and butter." Yeh, but what makes you care of a baby with a B.A.? But you're Your job now is to be the educational conversationalist, the person who brings occasionally given some babysitting off in

But basically when you have a child, your child is one that you're going to be for 14 years before he goes off to school. If you children it's going to continue for six, n

Now I have a child. I find it very hard to be a real loving person because Lisa—takes up a lot of my time. I really want to be with her; time with her

She demands things of me that I don't want. Sometimes I'm really freaked out. I'm very But she's only a year and three months and want something, and what I say is that you

But then I realize she can't go away because I'm of times I have to take care of her, the