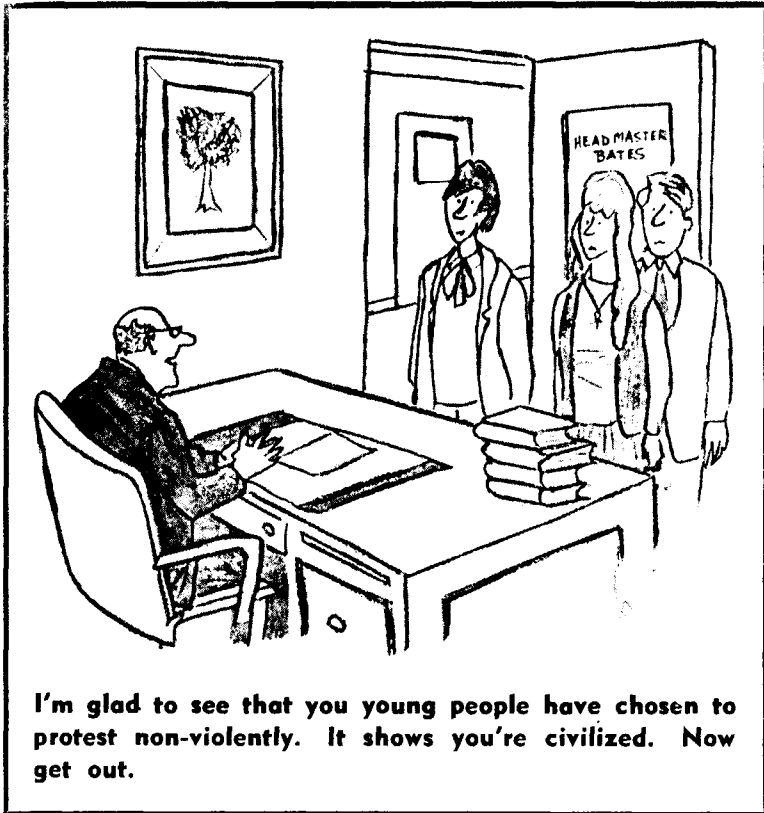


# Learning and living — yes, we are people



I'm glad to see that you young people have chosen to protest non-violently. It shows you're civilized. Now get out.

The pain of learning and maturing would not be so great, perhaps, if it were a conscious or even predictable process.

Experiences bombard you, or settle gradually upon you like tardy snowflakes at the end of a storm, and all of it sinks to the corners of your mind and settles into murky sludge.

Until something happens and suddenly the myriad of forgotten experiences rearranges and before you can wonder at what happened, you are aware of having opened another window, or closed another door . . .

. . . I am seated in the office of a high school principal. A busy secretary in the outer office has mistaken me for a student, and, being corrected, has apologized profusely for her earlier perfunctory dismissal of my existence.

I am speaking pleasantly but rather apprehensively with the man behind the desk-of-authority. He is a reasonable, intelligent, educated man who obviously takes his profession as an educator seriously. The trusted civil servant of a benevolent dictatorship.

His first reaction to our request was negative. We wondered why. Now he explains: his position is one of responsibility, as we can well appreciate. We do.

He has to be careful of the sort of influences that reach his students. (Is he responsible to his students as well as for them?)

He has had unfortunate experiences before when unfavorable influences reached his students. (What does he regard as unfavorable?)

We must realize that the trend toward more liberal at-

titudes in high schools is subject often to severe criticism. By parents. By school boards. Even sometimes by students themselves.

Yes, he will make our newspaper available to his students. We know that should there be vocal opposition, we will hear from him. We thank him sincerely, carefully smooth our Sunday-best clothes, shake hands, and walk out.

The corridors are a teeming river of footsteps and voices. Do they have minds? Did we have minds then? The air outside is fresh and we drink a long grateful drought.

. . . I glance back at the building. Suddenly it gives a silent shudder and I realize that it is held together by chalk dust, conformity and fear.

Although the direct eyes of the man behind the big desk do not show it, he is afraid.

This is totally new to me. I had always thought of the principal as the final power, the never-wrong authority. What he said was law.

But his is just another job and sometimes even when he knows in his heart that what he wants is right—after all, he is a professional in his field—he can still be very, very wrong in the eyes of the omnipotent majority.

. . . The sludge at the bottom of my mind has shifted and suddenly fragmentary experiences and thoughts crowd their way to the top and break the surface.

—A small, at the time almost humorous, furor over the 'foul language' in a Grade Twelve English text. I had thought it absurd that educators should even listen to the objections of adults who appeared to me to be even more naive than, in their opinion,

were the children they were trying to 'protect.'

—Wise parents giving me the power, at the age of thirteen, to make a decision which could potentially affect my whole life. A decision on a matter of tradition, a matter which is not often given to the mind of a thirteen-year-old.

. . . I learned, without conscious process, a very disquieting lesson about the adult world, and the whole of society.

I am a neophyte in adult society, but that does not mean that I know nothing. I know that there is something badly wrong with a society in which the individual members are so aware, so afraid, of the intangible peer group that the effects become very tangible.

Someone has badly disillusioned me—I thought that there was still such a thing as a free man's choice, an individual choice.

But the combination of a complex set of societal mores and ideals and the extremely tangible incentives for following them has salient power. The result is a fear that prevents one from making a choice other than that of following the ready-made dic-

tates of society; fear that is reluctant to present any other alternative to the young.

And now I am afraid. I am afraid to enter a world of fear.

There must be someone at the bottom of this, but I do not know where to look. SOME-ONE is everywhere and is evreyone. Help.

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## campus calendar

### FRIDAY—SEPT 26:

- FRIDAY FORUM  
SUB Theatre Lobby, 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.
- STUDENTS' CINEMA  
'The World of Susie Wong' SUB Theatre  
9:00 p.m.

### SATURDAY—SEPT. 27:

- Gronk Prix Car  
Rally & Dance

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