

experience

worrying and joined the revolution

Now about this time, I got pretty proficient at sleeping—I had it worked out pretty much to a science—but every once in a while I would have little academic spurts.

I remember going to some professor who would say to me stuff like, "Look, you're doing good work. You just showed up for two straight classes, why don't you start coming more often?" "I mean like it's not too late. You still have five weeks left in the semester. I'd really like to help you. Why don't you do your work. I mean if you'd start doing your work, I think you could come out with good grades. And if you pulled good grades I think you could get into a good graduate school."

And I remember on one of those rare instances when I was talked to by a faculty person feeling fantastically exhilarated, running home—I mean literally running—back to the fraternity, picking up a book, saying "Man, I'm really gonna do it this time", and I would read.

I'd read the first five or six pages and then read the next nine, this is really fantastic. And then about the 37th page I'd start getting sleepy again. And I couldn't figure out what it was. You know?

Well, after a couple of those starts it became clear that the same basic theme was developing that I couldn't face . . . I don't like school.

So not only was I unhappy, but slowly I came to feel that I wasn't really very smart after all—that there were people in college who were better than me.

The people I respected were the people who could work 8, 9, 10 hours a day.

There were pre-meds in my fraternity who would go off at one o'clock in the morning. We'd call them the Goldwyn-Smith Boys, because they'd go to this building called Goldwyn-Smith Building in ten below zero weather with these big clodhoppers on at one o'clock in the morning to study, after having studied all day.

I mean, they were just very serious guys. Like it's late at night and you say "Where ya going", and they would say "I'm going to study". And they would trudge off in the middle of the night to find this old building.

And I remember not just feeling that it's o.k. for them, but feeling very much like, "Why can't I be like them? Why can't I be one of the Goldwyn-Smith boys? Why can't I have their dedication? Why can't I have that concern for knowledge?"

Well, I got out of college, graduated, I think as a mutual favor. They wanted me out and I wanted to be out and when it came down to some last minute credits, they gave me some government credits toward my biology 12 major, we were all happy and I left.

My basic conclusion about college, but it just wasn't for me. College was that it's a pretty good. And I remember I left Cornell the day after my last final—I didn't go to graduation; I literally left Ithaca three minutes after I put down that pen. I shut my eyes and drove straight to New York, didn't wanna come back, and a very funny thing happened the next year.

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

Now thousands of students at Berkeley 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



CLASS TIME KIDDIES

. . . and remember, no discussions allowed in the lecture hall

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 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 Berkeley did for me was for the first time say 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 that 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.

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 pro-

duces 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 3½ 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. They 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.

We have butchers, who don't learn how to cut meat, we have butchers who learn how to cut fat, pour blood on it, and call it chopped meat.

ESCALATION

We have farmers who are told, somehow, that they're paid not to produce.

And another example: Walking by an escalator, I look down at a guy fixing the escalator, and just to make small talk I say to him, "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."

Now that guy's job, under the profit system means that he is against me. It means that I want elevators that work and he wants elevators that break.

The steel worker wants steel that wears out and we want steel that lasts.

The butcher wants meat that's cheap and we want meat that's good. The profit system places us against each other.

Some of you may say, well, that's true, but you know how workers are." You say, "Yes sir, that's why I'm going to college, I don't wanna pour blood on meat, I don't wanna raise that arm, I want a job with real responsibility.

I want a job that's going to make me somebody. I want a job with great insight and creativity. Yes, sir, that's why you go to college."

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

Any aspirations you have about a career, under the present system, will be very, very sad hopes because they will be crushed. Now let me talk about why those things are going to be crushed.

One reason why they will be crushed is that we have a system in our country that says that it's your job to have children. Now I don't mean for nine months. I mean for your life. You see, men don't like children too much. Man? He has more important things to do with his life. He has to go out and win the bread and butter.

Now you may ask "I have a college degree. I can win the bread and butter". Yeh, but what man is going to sit home and take care of a baby with a B.A.? But yet, you're expected to do it. Your job now is to be the college educated wife, the good conversationalist, the person who is brought to parties and occasionally given some babysitting time off in the evenings.

But basically when you have a child, your relationship with that child is one that you're going to have for at least those first six years before he goes off to school. And if you have two or three children it's going to continue for at least six, nine, ten years.

The first thing you've been told is that it's an evil thing not to want to be with your kids all the time. What do you mean you don't wanna be, you're told, did you ever see Ozzie and Harriet? When did you ever see Harriet not want to be with her kids.

After all, every mother you've seen on television loves her kids all the time. The good mother is

the one who wants to be with her kids all the time. She loves every minute of it.

O.K. models are held up for us, models that are destructive, models that are unreal, models that speak emotionally that we can't possibly meet and that force us to feel lousy because we just think, "Man, I'm just not as good as old Harriet," instead of saying, "God-damn Harriet. You're a liar. You're a fraud."

So maybe people should help us. Maybe they should say that kids should be brought up in some way, collectively, not by the state, but by a group of people who get together and figure out different ways of taking care of kids.

I have friends who aren't married, who are living together and who are having kids.

I have five or six friends living in what they call the collective, where they bring up a couple of kids together. Some of them are separated. Some of them aren't. Some of them have very happy marriages.

I have friends who believe it's right for you to sleep with anybody you want to.

I have friends who believe you should only sleep with one person, not because it's a rule, but just because they don't want to sleep with other people.

What I'm saying is that I'm amazed that we live in the type of society where society tells us that one form of organization is the only way to bring up kids; that one form of organization is the only way to have a marriage when in fact, if you look at the average marriage, you see it's not working.

Yet society won't look at itself and say, "something's fishy. We gotta admit that ours isn't the only one and maybe, in fact, is one of the most ludicrous ones."

O.K., so much for a society which makes it very hard to love your own kids.

Now I imagine what a lot of you are saying is "He's interesting and kind of funny, but man he's so sick. He is so depressing. He's painting a distorted picture. In fact a lot of people aren't really that unhappy. I know a lot of people who beat the system. He's one of these professional revolutionaries who's trying to stir me up. He's trying to get me mad. He's probably some kind of misfit. I'm going to handle it. I'm going to make it. Some people don't make it. But I'm going to make it."

I think the only way you can make it is by saying that the idea of really doing what you want is Utopian—that the idea of really enjoying life all the time is a nice idea but isn't practical.

What you're saying is "Despite the fact that we've been told that Canada is a democracy and America is a democracy, down deep we all know that we can't change these God-damn countries. We know people more powerful than us make the decisions."

As a result, we don't even want to think about the kind of questions I'm raising, because if I'm right then that means what is expected of you—to help yourselves—is to become radicals.

If I'm right about how the system treats people then it means that we have to overthrow it and put in its place a society which centres around people not property.

And if I'm right about what I said then what it means is that you don't just say to the people who run the big companies, "Well see, I listened to this guy who comes from S.D.S. and he explain-

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