

# Where do you fit?

The federal report, entitled "It's Your Turn," says that putting youth in a class by itself is a "pointless exercise, since this age group exhibits all the heterogeneity of any other age group."

"Young people perceive themselves as a distinct group, not on the basis of age, but on the basis of the commonality of their situation and attitudes."

The purpose of the report is to demonstrate that youth dissatisfactions and attitudes are not a function of age, but are a forecast of larger societal changes. The

major objective must be to deal with their criticism in terms of the whole society.

"To treat their convictions as a 'youth problem' and respond only by the formulation of a 'youth policy' or a 'youth department' would be to further isolate and frustrate youth by precluding their efforts to affect and alter the whole of our rapidly changing society."

"Youth perceive social institutions differently from adults; this difference in perception is one of kind rather than degree. For example, youth question traditional

family patterns while experimenting with other communal relationships such as co-operatives or communes.

"Young people in Canada," the report explained, "show every indication of joining the great refusal taking place throughout the world. Their confidence in the existing order is being undermined on two fronts; not only are they forced intellectually to challenge many of the values inherent in our society, but also the traditional motives or incentives for participation in the 'system' are increasingly unavailable."

## Family Unit in decline

"The young people seen by the team represented the first generation of Canadians totally socialized by means in addition to, or other than, the family. While it is generally accepted that a highly industrialized community begins to take over various developmental processes from the family, nevertheless the family has been left with at least three basic responsibilities; procreation, primary maturation and socialization.

"It is in the area of maturation and socialization that the team feels there has been a role loss by the family and theretofore the development of a more than usual abnormal growth pattern on the part of the young people. As well, families themselves are on the receiving end of pressures brought to bear by changing societal values, rapidly developing technologies and, as a result, an overwhelming preoccupation with problems of work, economics and life style has occurred.

All of these have affected the nature of the interpersonal relationship between young and old in families and between peer members of those families."

In Sydney, youths complained that there was nothing to get involved in and

that they had "no sense of belonging" to which the adults responded "go to school" and "prove your maturity".

Another young person told the team of how his parents flipped out when he told them he was on drugs. He subsequently left home and lived with other drug users.

"This confusion on the part of the parents may well denote a basic fault in our societal lines of communication in that there seems to be very little direct or meaningful feed of information and support to parents in those areas where they require assistance in order to function effectively. Family life education seems to be non-existent."

Despite the lack of understanding between youth and parents, the study revealed that one person in five did "get along" with their parents. Family break-ups due to separation or divorce also served to undermine some of the youth.

One of the major problem areas concerned the "business" of the parents. In one hearing, "a relatively secure young girl of sixteen whose family is solidly middle class and fairly involved in the community, stated, I know my Mom and Dad love me but they're both so busy with all their committees that I don't feel as if there's anything left for

me after they've finished the day..."

"Traditions play a very important role in family life in Nova Scotia. Traditionally conservative and close — many groups (ethnic) have found the rapidity of change to be a major force in the decomposition of family life and strengths.

"Specifically significant is the breakdown in the structure of Acadian families. Historically, the family and the church were the matrix of the cultural heritage. There has been an observed obvious decline in the influence of both family and church upon the preservation of that heritage."

Socialization and assimilation (in Halifax and Dartmouth the rate of assimilation is 70% and 65% respectively) by the mass media and the surrounding non-Acadian community have widened the rift between parents and children.

## Class distinctions

"Any family is influenced as well by the community in which it is located... One moves within a community amongst carefully defined systems of power and prestige. Our communities have a life nearly two centuries old. Within these realities are pressures of change which are influential in enabling new options and eroding former life styles.

"While allegedly creating better educational options, at the same time busing to school erodes community identity for many youth. Therefore, there appears to exist side by side a rural, inhibited, stratified, and highly traditional community.

"Amongst adults in Nova Scotia — growing restiveness and forces for a changing life style. Amongst youth — more and more get values not from church, home or state but from the world."

In smaller centres, students from different high schools cannot get together as a group because school principals and parents won't allow it. The report observed that parents still behave in a very authoritarian manner, but some youth felt dependent on their parents for guidance.

"Class distinctions exist between the have and the have-nots. In Truro it was evident, as it is in Halifax, the blacks were assigned a stereo-typed role by the communities' attitude... Acadian people have a high rate of school drop-outs in males, as do blacks because they have few options to participate in the wider community."

In small communities where one industry controlled the bulk of its

economic life, there was frustration as to how to make any changes. "Young people in Liverpool were deeply concerned with pollution — as are young in Boat Harbour. But whereas the population of Liverpool is about 3,700 and 900 adults are employed by the pulp mill, they were powerless and frustrated in knowing how to make changes to improve the quality of life."

Adults also seemed unwilling to become involved in working with youth. They would become involved in handicraft or sports programs but they were apprehensive when it came to helping out in Drop-in centres. "Adults appear generally paternalistic and unwilling to give responsibility to youth, to see them as persons or trust their resources. In Kentville and Sydney, shouting sessions between youth and adults occurred. There were outstanding exceptions but not nearly enough to meet the constant search of youth for adult understanding and friendship."

Recreational and socializing programs were also found to be lacking by the team. There was duplication of effort between such groups as the Y, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, 4-H, and Red Cross, as well as smallness of funds and "strictures placed by the expectation of adult advisory boards."

Some organizations were totally institutionalized and were under adult supervision allowing no opportunity for the people to get really involved in any project or activity.

"The team found a considerable lack of maturity in youth in the area of social awareness. Most had little knowledge of community institutions and how to use them to work for change. School and community programmes seem to disallow development of such maturity and for the minority who attempted involvement they were neither heard, accepted or if accepted reinforced."

The desire for travel was universal in youth, and there were suggestions for youth housing to make up for the lack of home environment. "Workers in the Nova Scotia Mental Hospital, and young patients themselves felt this to be a high priority need."

Most of the Acadian are of fishing families, says the report, and they earn less than the British descendants. The economic opportunities are almost nil; there are few organizations of any sort; adult participation is very low, and there is just a lack of involvement socially as a class.

There are only three youth associations at work — one each in Pubnico, Church Point and Petit de Gras.



Tomorrow's guerrillas?

Macpherson, the Toronto Daily Star