

"Our economic system must create men who fit its needs; men who cooperate smoothly; men who want to consume more and more. Our system must create men whose tastes are standardized, men who can be easily influenced, men whose needs can be anticipated. Our system needs men who feel free and independent but who are nevertheless willing to do what is expected of them, men who will fit into the social machine without friction, who can be guided without force, who can be led without leaders, and who can be directed without any aim except 'to make good'.

"It is not that authority has disappeared, nor even that it has lost in strength, but that it has been transferred from the overt authority of force to the anonymous authority of persuasion and suggestion. In other words, in order to be adaptable, modern man is obliged to nourish the illusion that everything is done with his consent, even though such consent be extracted from him by subtle manipulation. His consent is obtained, as it were, behind his back, or behind his consciousness."

— Erich Fromm

Graduation: now you get your white canes

It is rather sad to see what is being attempted here today. It reminds me of a group of doctors who have messed up an operation and who now are frantically trying to cover up by washing their hands of the affair, by changing into clean gowns, and by trying to cover the wound with wax. How much of the failure was their fault is difficult to establish — for they attempted the operation blind. They too have had their eyes burned out in the university. They have merely tried to 'cure' patients so that they will emerge from the operation in the likeness of those who have 'cured' them.

We are those patients. What is happening today is that some of the patients are being presented with their white canes. Today, some of us are being told: "Come children, and kneel at our feet in your gratitude, for you are to be equipped today with the white canes which you have earned and with which you will be able to stumble your way into the outside world.

"You are now ready. You have lived for three or four years at a place where you have been granted the power of acting out the dictates of your conscience (but only when those dictates agree with ours). You who have not gained enough of our respect for us to allow you to control your own tiny environment today, are by some miraculous transition (the possession of a white cane, perhaps?) going to become the leaders, the hopes, of the world tomorrow."

As the blind lead the others into blindness. As the world crumbles around them.

This university, like any other university in North America, is functioning as a monolithic contradiction. You are here to learn how to become critical, knowledgeable citizens of society and you learn just about everything but that.

Canada is not only being swallowed up, but digested within the economic and political grasp of the United States. Meanwhile, we study the 'perfect market system', the nonexistence of which, even the standard text admits.

White Canadians destroy the two original cultures of North America, while we are instructed by 'value-free' sociology that racism does exist, but that one must not become emotional in dealing with it, that one must understand both sides of the story.

However, when we begin to rumble about this 'two sides to a story' thing, we find out that the

economic and ideological foundation for well over one-third of the people on this planet can be examined, at best, as a side-light in the mainstream of political science, history, economics, and philosophy.

There is no doubt that major changes in our educational system must be brought about. Yet York University President Murray G. Ross virtually said in a speech yesterday that despite the work of agitators paid by 'outside organizations' York students have decided that things are so good at York that their faith in the system there has not faltered. What Dr. Ross has really said is that either York is vastly better than any other university in North America or that York students have not the ability to notice its faults without the aid of agitators from 'outside organizations.'

At Glendon College last year we did begin to show our discontent. Principal Escott Reid, the same man who had told us that Glendon students should get "fire in our bellies" informed us that



"We can't wander through the forest much longer without some smart-alec teaching assistant or student asking us where we are going."

now that we did have "fire in our bellies", we didn't belong at Glendon College.

Universities today are perpetuating a kind of 1984 "newspeak" (cf. Orwell) with which people who have shown their anger at a world system which carries out slaughter, structuralizes chaos, and allows mass starvation, who want a world in which none of this exists, are called "disrupters", "terrorists", or "outside, paid political agitators".

The Carter Commission report has pointed out that an unfairly large portion of Canadian taxation is placed upon the people who can afford it least. Very few poor children in Canada get into university. This points out a situation whereby people who are paying a disproportionately large amount of the taxes are very much under-represented in universities. No real confrontation of this issue has been undertaken within or by universities in Canada.

Who cares?

Not very many people at Glendon seem to care enough to confront any of these points which I have mentioned, much less do anything about them. Too many of you people, the first graduates of Glendon College don't care, or don't know about these problems, or both.

That says little for a college which claims to educate people who, upon graduating, will actively reflect a concern for the affairs of their society.

Pick up your white canes, people. The battle may have been lost on you already. Even if you ever do begin to reflect this concern, which certainly has lain dormant for your three years here (and there are too few exceptions to this generalization), you will do so despite Glendon College, not because of it.

Please think about it.

For those of you who feel anger at the way in which the world spirals today, and who hunger for change for the better — keep it, develop it. The people of the world need this kind of educated anger and hunger.

— Bob McGraw

Bob McGraw, who served as president of the Glendon College Student Council February, 1969 to October 1969, never actually got to make this speech to Glendon's first graduating class last May 31. When he attempted to speak — unscheduled though he was — William Farr, secretary of the university, cut off the sound and declared an impromptu end to the ceremonies.

Provocation crystallizes thought, emotion

"In reality, everything hangs on the use of provocation in the crystallization of thought and latent emotion. Provocation is not a 'weapon of war' except in special circumstances. It can only be used to arouse feelings that are already present, albeit submerged. In our case we exploited student insecurity and disgust with life in an alienated world where human relationships are so much merchandise to be used, bought and sold in the market place. All we did therefore was to 'provoke' students to express their passive discontent, first by demonstrations for their own sake, and then by political actions directly challenging modern society. The justification for this type of provocation is its ability to arouse people who have been crushed under the weight of repression. Now, to speak of 'repression' in the case of an institution such as a university

which has no physical means of repression may seem ridiculous. But repression lies in the very function of that institution, in its blinding of the student to the fact that he is daily being spoon-fed with poisonous rubbish. Most students, as we saw, are willing to swallow it all, for the sake of a privileged position in the future, and because they believe that a rigid hierarchy is necessary for the efficient functioning of society. As a result, they lose all real desire, every ounce of creative spirit, all expression of life. The use of provocation is to drive this point home to them and to show how empty their lives have become.

"We show them first of all that the petty hostel regulations are an impertinent infringement of their personal liberty, that learning is no substitute for the warmth of human companionship. In learning to

question these regulations, the student is forced to explore repression in general and the forms it takes in the modern world. Open physical repression with the point of a bayonet, as it was seen in the nineteenth century, is now reserved strictly for the suppression of the Third World. A complex and sophisticated industrial bureaucracy cannot function efficiently with a resentful proletariat. What it needs is apathy — just this apathy against which we are agitating. If we in the universities can show factory workers how authoritarianism and the official hierarchy can be overthrown in our own institutions, they will not be slow in applying similar methods to theirs. Hence the panic of the authorities — they do not mind criticism, however radical, but they cannot afford to let us express our disgust in action. Our threat is that we offer students real

liberty by overthrowing, not only in theory, but in practice, the class-based university system. We do this by our boycott of lectures dispensing 'pure' and 'objective' knowledge and, worst of all, by our determination to carry the debate from the lecture hall into the streets and the factories. Our first task is to make the students themselves more politically conscious. In practice, this means developing new ways of communication: improvising meetings in the various faculty common rooms, occupying lecture halls, interrupting lectures with denunciations of their ideological basis, boycotting the examinations, sticking up posters and slogans, taking over the public address system — in short taking any action that openly challenges the authorities."

— Daniel Cohn-Bendit,
Obsolete Communism
The Left-Wing Alternative