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Their Hearts Were Young—and Gay

As this issue goes to press most of us have seen the most recent production of the Glee Club, "Our Hearts Were Young and Gay". We wonder if those who saw it in the pathetic contrast of its life and times to those of our own. We further wonder if a quiet nostalgia was not stirred up upon reflecting on this production and having had a glimpse of days we have never known but have heard so much about.

Somewhere lately we read a lament by some writer for the days when a country was "really a country" and not a powder box of political war. Everywhere daily we see, read or hear of the things which make our time so different from the old days of which our parents speak and of which we are told were at least not filled to the brim with hatred, degeneracy and oppression. Those were the horse and buggy days—the days when the world was relatively somnolent and not apparently bent on self destruction, the days when mass psychology and atoms were the playthings of eccentrics, in brief, when the world and its peoples, like certain hearts, were young and gay.

This era has passed but it is not so stale as to be forgotten. We are the children of those who were the children of those times and as such we should have inherited a world not too different from theirs. Yet what a difference fifty years have made. If theirs was the dawn of sincerity ours is the twilight of the gods. Around us in our age, in our times, we see not the sweetness and light they knew but the bitterness and despair of futility, materialism and atheism.

Perhaps we are but paying the price of our parents' wrongs, of past greeds and expectations, but in that period of peace that seems so long ago there is that sense of values, that prevalence of sound ideals, that existence of Christian faith that to us, who look back from the dusk of 1952, appears like altar lights of retreat from chaos and surcrease from pain.

Apart from the external differences that mark this great deterioration there is a more serious charge, an internal one, one of the heart. As a whole the heart of today's youth is sad, not gay. Indeed can it not be said by way of paradox that the young are old before their time. The age is one of speed, of sex, of cynicism, of fatalism. These are not the ingredients of innocence and laughter. And there is much to be said in favor of the contention that too much learning too early is a bad thing. Whatever is the cause of our plight this is certain, that we have lost something fundamental, some high influence, that our parents knew.

History may well look back at us as the inhabitants of the perverted age, for we are the ones who have lost sight of things sacred, real and of value and surrounded ourselves with the shadow of glamour and tinsel and the cobwebs of complexes and misconceptions. Our journalism plays us the evil, our movies reflect the psychological jungles, our literature portrays the sordid and the undesired. And it is with pleasure that we can forget the tremendous emphasis on pessimism that surrounds us and escape for a moment into a time we only know by hearsay—a time that should be ours but is not.

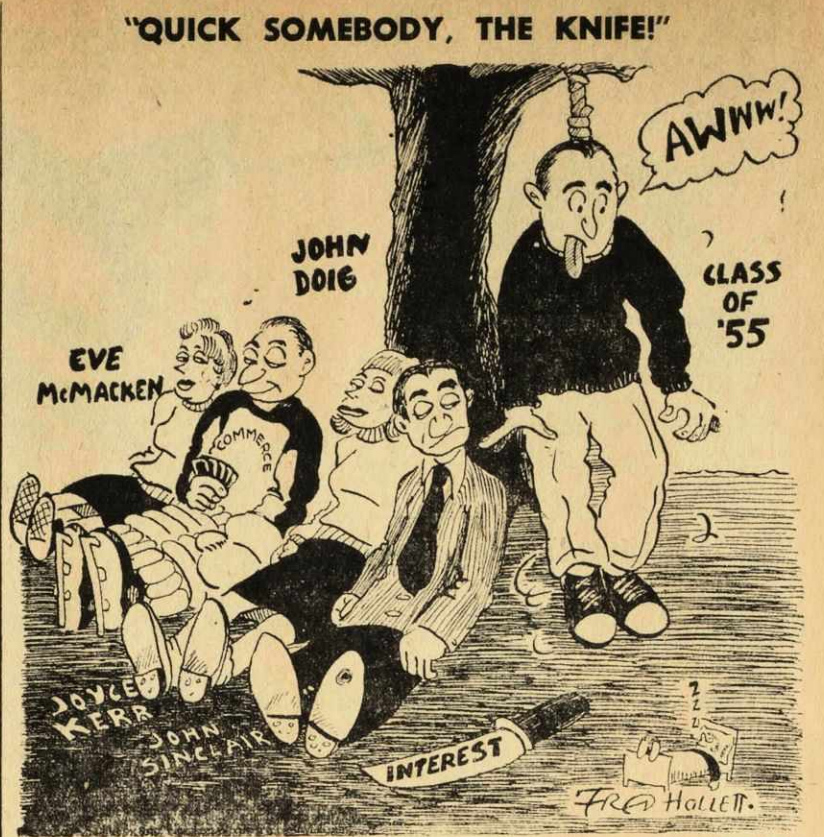
SOMETHING SACRED

The night after the police raided Frank's home and confiscated the stacks of pamphlets and literatures that were stored there, I met him on the street. He was bitter and sneered at the arbitrary power of the police, but I had long since learned to make allowances for Frank's exuberance for he was an avowed Communist. Rather, I would converse with him in order to learn what a Commie is like and why. And behind all the flowery praises of Soviet progress and achievement this is what was so obvious about him.

Frank was a typical product of this age. He was not under-privileged but uneducated. He could not evaluate or make allowances, in short he could not think straight. Frank was restless, bored and had no avocation to relieve the monotony of his life. He had no beliefs and held nothing sacred. His world was fully materialistic and he was quick to absorb the system that could give these things and in theory, elevate all to that impossible level of luxury.

But more important than this was his blindness. He could not see beyond the illustrious propaganda that they fed him. Such achievements as the Dnieper Dam, he assumed, was but a part of countless other development and that the wealth it represented was indicative of the wealth that had been created for all. Nor was he concerned with the cruelty, the slave labour, the savage poverty of millions, that had created such isolated edifices. Poor Frank was blind to the inevitable destiny of a national system that rested on evil.

Lastly, this passion was his religion and it taught him no kindness, purpose in life, goal beyond life. It gave him no rules of decency or laws of behavior. Nor did it give him a code of morals or ethics. Men must believe in the good or evil and Frank's belief was the latter. He looked on Christianity as we look at Greek Mythology with an eye of curiosity only. Well, perhaps there was no Christ, perhaps there is no God. But if there is not, His whole conception has been the most noble and commendable feat of man's imagination. Indeed, it is the only stabilizing factor in a most stabilized world. Of course none of us can afford, if we are educated at all, to accept Frank's corrupted beliefs. We have to cling to something sacred and we can't be Christians and Communists at once.



Beauty

*They are the quiet things which move me most
And bid me love my Life with fondness still
Quicksilver summer rain.
Gay dancing host
Of clouds caught on the peak of sky-kissed hill.
Bright blossoms drifting in a sea of sun,
Tall trees that stand in silent wisdom steeped.
Faint fragrance from a rose.
The eyes of one
Into whose heart Earth's tears and joys have leaped.
A deep endearing love. The promise of
Long unived years ahead, innumerable Springs.
All these withstand and tower far above
Time's ageless, noiseless, skilled unravelings.*

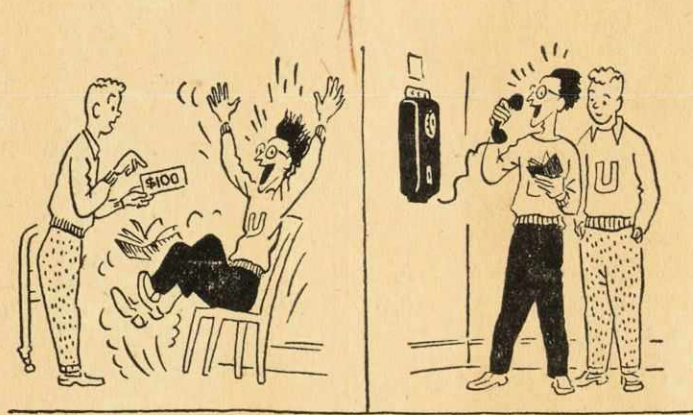
—Reprinted from the Gazette, 1949.

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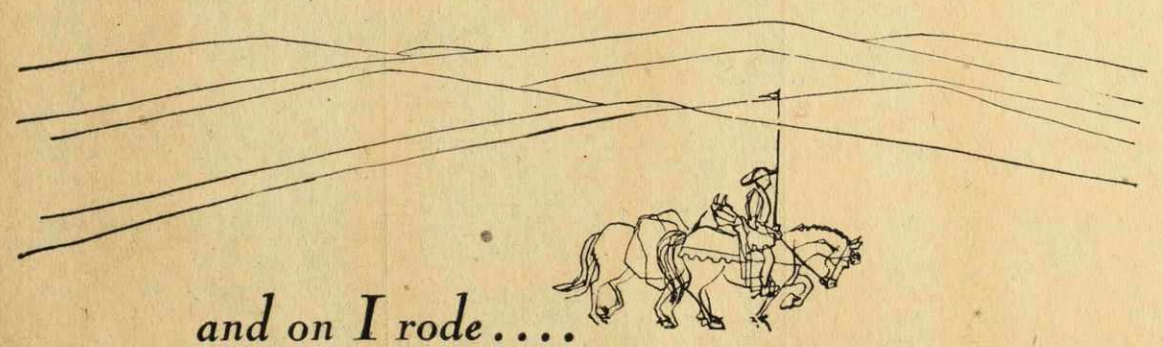


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