

WHY, ask the earnest inquirers after pat answers, do we have these dreadful holiday riots—the spring-vacation troubles at Fort Lauderdale, Fla., the riots in New England and California last Labor Day, the Newport Jazz Festival riots of recent years?

Why do masses of college students, high-school students, and other young people masquerading as students converge on holiday resorts? Why, once too many of them have crowded together, do they drink, fight, destroy property and, in short, riot?

Is it a sign of social decadence? Are we witnessing a breakdown in law and order? Are these stampedes, as one psychiatrist has suggested, evidence of youth's search for status?

No simple answer suffices. Probably as long as university towns have existed, the conflict between Town and Gown, between the sober citizenry who have to work and the privileged youth who have "nothing to do but study," has intermittently broken into the open.

At best, the responsible authorities of the university and the community try to divert student shenanigans into more acceptable channels or they ruefully tolerate them; at worst, they combat them, turning simple gaiety into rioting.

In English-speaking countries, where all students are treated as minors without rights, these high jinks usually are meaningless pranks. On the European continent, in Latin America, and in Asia, the conflict between students and authority more often takes political forms. Students demonstrate for the Right or the Left, protest against visiting politicians or the continued presence of foreigners, demand the release of political prisoners. A mass gathering may overflow into a riot, and such a riot can be a spark that ignites a larger fire.

TODAY'S U.S. student riots are pranks run wild, fanned by mass-media publicity and the mobility of our population into activities that involve not a few hundred but many thousands of students. In the past, each college could think up its own troublemaking activities each spring, and the fracas with the local police or the fire department ended with a few fines, a night in jail, at most a few expulsions.

But today any such activity is given national attention and spreads like wildfire. If the troublemakers use something difficult to get—like the snowballs which Yale rioters threw at the police—their activities may not be copied. But if the troublemakers provide an easy model and if publicity provides a detailed description, the new activity may spread with incredible speed, as the panty-raid riots did.

If the troublemaking can be tied in with a place (Fort Lauderdale) or a date (the spring

WHAT MAKES COLLEGE KIDS CUT UP?

Holidays and collegians often add up to riots, but a renowned anthropologist says it's old stuff —what is new is our habit of popularizing the ridiculous



By MARGARET MEAD



Bored vacationing students rioted in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in 1961. This year the community took constructive countermeasures with dances, games, and parties.

holidays; Labor Day), the ensuing activities are all the easier to promote. The styles are old. The scale, the nationwide participation, the numbers of participants—all these can be attributed directly to the magnifying effects of our modern-day ability to communicate ideas (good and bad) fast and far and also our ability to hop in a car and "see what's going on."

As on all occasions of this kind, the trouble is aggravated by some who pretend to disapprove as well as by others—the merchants and the police—whose duty it is to prevent trouble by making adequate preparations for a crowd. Some merchants close their shops and try to offer constructive channels for youthful energies; others, however, order extra truckloads of beer. Sometimes the police disappear, giving the excitable young a sense of false security.

At other times, the police arrive in such large numbers and so well-armed that they appear to be encouraging a dangerous game of cops and robbers. Sometimes one side or the other misconstrues the situation, and the result is bloodied heads and filled jails.

But a riot can also be avoided. On a Midwest campus the dean of women filled a wheelbarrow with girls' panties, wheeled it into the center of the campus, and called out: "Come and get them!" At that moment, the fun evaporated. There were no takers; there was no riot.

ONE OTHER element enters into riots. This is the desire to effect action immediately instead of working toward some goal. We see this when idealists mass at state capitals or in Washington to protest about something instead of settling down soberly to win adherents. Philosopher Bertrand Russell forcing British authorities to send him to jail and the masses of mothers with baby carriages insistently parading the streets in a "peace strike" are not unrelated to the masses of students invading seaside resorts and the masses of younger teen-agers following their example.

But overshadowing all factors, penetrating everywhere is our tendency to popularize the ridiculous, blowing up the size of what happens, eagerly reporting what one part of the world is doing and what the rest may be doing next.

As long as publicity, the forces of law and order, the commercial interests who profit by the sale of gas and beer and hot dogs, continue to endorse student high jinks there will be more riots—and more serious ones.

But one sober, imaginative effort to prevent them, to reduce the whole thing to ridicule and put it in context, would be enough. Like the dean of women with her wheelbarrow, one adequate, extravagant, mocking answer would help deflate the picture, and this particular form of rioting would become history. Whatever the stripes on the top of the socks, the kids who tried it would no longer be reported as "swinging."

COVER:

"The Resurrection," by 15th-century Flemish artist Memling, is one of the treasures of the Louvre Museum in Paris. Easter also has profound meaning for author Catherine Marshall. Read her inspiring story, p. 4.

Family Weekly

April 22, 1962

LEONARD S. DAVIDOW President and Publisher
WALTER C. DREYFUS Vice President

PATRICK E. O'ROURKE Advertising Director

MORTON FRANK Director of Publisher Relations

Send all advertising communications to Family Weekly,
153 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill.

Address all communications about editorial features to
Family Weekly, 60 E. 56th St., New York 22, N. Y.

Board of Editors

ERNEST V. HEYN Editor-in-Chief

BEN KARTMAN Executive Editor

ROBERT FITZGIBBON Managing Editor

MARGARET BELL Feature Editor

PHILIP DYKSTRA Art Director

MELANIE DE PROFT Food Editor

Rosalyn Abrevaya, Arden Eidell, John Hochmann, Hal London, Jack Ryan, Peer J. Oppenheimer, Hollywood.

© 1962, FAMILY WEEKLY MAGAZINE, INC., 153 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Ill. All rights reserved.