

A MIDDLE-AGED PROFESSOR

Speaks Out On Campus Rebels

"I Am Tired of the Tyranny of Spoiled Brats"

The following by K. Ross Toole, professor of history at the University of Montana, first appeared in the Billings, Mont., "Gazette", and since has been reprinted in the "Congressional Record":

I am 49 years old. It took me many years and considerable anguish to get where I am — which isn't much of anyplace except exurbia. I was nurtured in depression; I lost four years to war; I am invested with sweat; I have had one coronary; I am a "liberal," square and I am a professor. I am sick of the "younger generation," hippies, Yuppies, militants and nonsense.

I am a professor of history at the University of Montana, and I am supposed to have "liaison" with the young. Worse still, I am father of seven children. They range in age from 7 to 23 — and I am fed up with nonsense. I am tired of being blamed, maimed and contrite; I am tired of tolerance and the reaching out (which is always my function) for understanding. I am sick of the total irrationality of the campus "rebel," whose bearded visage, dirty hair, body odor and "tactics" are childish but brutal, naive but dangerous, and the essence of arrogant tyranny — the tyranny of spoiled brats.

I am terribly disturbed that I may be incubating more of the same. Our household is permissive — our approach to discipline is an apology and a retreat from standards — usually accompanied by a gift in cash or kind.

It's time to call a halt. Time to live in an adult world where we belong, and time to put these people in their places. We owe the "younger generation" what all "older generations" have owed younger generations — love, protection to a point, and respect when they deserve it. We do not owe them our souls, our privacy, our whole lives — and above all, we do not owe them immunity from our mistakes, or their own.

Every generation makes mistakes, always has and always will. We have made our share. But my generation has made America the most affluent country on earth. It has tackled, head-on, a racial problem which no nation on earth in the history of mankind had dared to do. It has publicly declared war on poverty and it has gone to the moon; it has desegregated schools and abolished polio; it has presided over the beginning of what is probably the greatest social and economic revolution in man's history. It has begun these things, not finished them. It has declared itself, and committed itself, and taxed itself, and damn near run itself into the ground in the cause of social justice and reform.

Its mistakes are fewer than my father's generation — or his father's, or his. Its greatest mistake is not Vietnam; it is the abdication of its first responsibility, its pusillanimous capitulation to its youth, and its sick preoccupation with the problems, the mind, psyche, the *raison d'être* of the young.

Since when have children ruled this country? By virtue of what right, by what accomplishment should thousands of teen-agers, wet behind the ears and utterly without the benefit of having lived long enough to have either judgment or wisdom, become the sages of our time?

The psychologists, the educators and preachers say the young are rebelling against our archaic mores and morals, our materialistic approaches to life, our failures in diplomacy, our terrible ineptitude in racial matters, our narrowness as parents, our blindness to the root ills of society. Balderdash!

Society hangs together by the stitching of many threads. No 18-year-old is simply the product of his 18 years: He is the product of 3,000 years of the development of mankind — and, throughout those years, injustice has existed and been fought; rules have grown outmoded and been changed; doom has hung over men and been avoided; unjust wars have occurred; pain has been the cost of progress — and man has persevered.

As a professor and the father of seven, I have watched this new generation and concluded that most of them are fine. A minority are not — and the trouble is that minority threatens to tyrannize the majority and take over. I dislike that minority; I am aghast that the majority "takes" it and allows itself to be used. And I address myself to both the minority and the majority. I speak partly as a historian, partly as a father and partly as one fed-up, middle-aged and angry member of the so-called "Establishment" — which by the way, is nothing but a euphemism for "society."

Common courtesy and a regard for the opinions of others is not merely a decoration on the pie crust of society — it is the heart of the pie. Too many "youngsters" are egocentric bores. They will not listen; they will only shout down. They will not discuss but, like 4-year-olds, they throw rocks and shout.

Arrogance is obnoxious; it is also destructive. Society has classically ostracized arrogance without the backing of demonstrable accomplishment. Why, then, do we tolerate arrogant slob who occupy our homes, our administration buildings, our streets and parks — urinating on our beliefs and defiling our premises? It is not the police we need — our generation and theirs — it is an expression of our disgust and disdain. Yet we do more than permit it; we dignify it with introspective flagellation. Somehow

it is our fault. Balderdash again!

Sensitivity is not the property of the young, nor was it invented in 1950. The young of any generation have felt the same impulse to grow, to reach out, to touch stars, to live freely and to let the minds loose along unexplored corridors. Young men and young women have always stood on the same hill and felt the same vague sense of restraint that separated them from the ultimate experience — the sudden and complete expansion of the mind, the final fulfillment. It is one of the oldest, sweetest and most bitter experiences of mankind.

Today's young people did not invent it; they do not own it. And what they seek to attain, all mankind has sought to attain throughout the ages. Shall we, therefore, approve the presumed attainment of it through heroin, "speed," LSD and other drugs? And shall we, permissively, let them poison themselves simply because, as in most other respects, we feel vaguely guilty because we brought them into this world?

Again, it is not police raids and tougher laws that we need; it is merely strength. The strength to explain, in our potty, middle-aged way, that what they seek, we sought; that it is somewhere but not here — and sure as hell not in drugs; that, in the meanwhile, they will cease and desist the poison game. And this we must explain early and hard — and then police it ourselves.

Society, "the Establishment" is not a foreign thing we seek to impose on the young. We know it is far from perfect. We did not make it; we have only sought to change it. The fact that we have only been minimally successful is the story of all generations — as it will be the story of the generation coming up. Yet we have worked a number of wonders. We have changed it. We are deeply concerned about our failures; we have not solved the racial problem but we have faced it; we are terribly worried about the degradation of our environment, about injustices, inequities, the military-industrial complex and bureaucracy. But we have attacked these things.

We have, all our lives, taken arms against our sea of troubles — and fought effectively. But we also have fought with a rational knowledge of the strength of our adversary; and, above all, knowing that the war is one of attrition in which the "unconditional surrender" of the forces of evil is not about to occur. We win, if we win at all, slowly and painfully. That is the kind of war society has always fought — because man is what he is.

Knowing this, why do we listen subserviently to the violent tacticians of the new generation? Either they have total victory by Wednesday next or burn down our carefully built barricades in adolescent pique; either they win now or flee off to a commune and quit; either they solve all problems this week or join a wrecking crew of paranoids.

Youth has always been characterized by impatient idealism. If it were not, there would be no change. But impatient idealism does not extend to guns, fire bombs, riots, vicious arrogance, and instant gratification. That is not idealism; it is childish tyranny.

The worst of it is that we (professors and faculties in particular) in a paroxysm of self-abnegation and apology, go along, abdicate, apologize as if we had personally created the ills of the world — and thus lend ourselves to chaos. We are the led, not the leaders. And we are fools.

As a professor I meet the activists and revolutionaries every day. They are inexcusably ignorant. If you want to make a revolution, do you not study the ways to do it? Of course not! Che Guevara becomes their hero. He failed; he died in the jungles of Bolivia with an army of six. His every move was a miscalculation and a mistake. Mao Tse-tung and Ho Chi Minh led revolutions based on a peasantry and an overwhelmingly ancient rural economy. They are the patternmakers for the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and the student militants. I have yet to talk to an "activist" who has read Crane Brinton's "The Anatomy of Revolution," or who is familiar with the works of Jefferson, Washington, Paine, Adams or even Marx or Engels. And I have yet to talk to a student militant who has read about racism elsewhere and/or who understands, even primitively, the long and wondrous struggle of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the genius of Martin Luther King — whose name they invariably take in vain.

An old and scarred member of the wars of organized labor in the U.S. in the 1930s recently remarked to me: "These 'radicals' couldn't organize well enough to produce a sensible platform, let alone revolt their way out of a paper bag." But they can — because we let them — destroy our universities, make our parks untenable, make a shambles of our streets, and insult our flag.

I assert that we are in trouble with this younger generation not because we have failed our country, not because of affluence or stupidity, not because we are antediluvian, not because we are middle-class

materialists, but simply because we have failed to keep that generation in its place, and we have failed to put them back there when they got out of it. We have the power; we do not have the will. We have the right; we have not exercised it.

To the extent that we now rely on the police, Mace, the National Guard, tear gas, steel fences and a wringing of hands, we will fail.

What we need is a reappraisal of our own middle-class selves, our worth and our hard-won progress. We need to use disdain, not Mace; we need to reassess a weapon we came by the hard way, by travail and labor: firm authority as parents, teachers, businessmen, workers and politicians.

The vast majority of our children from 1 to 20 are fine kids. We need to back this majority with authority and with the firm conviction that we owe it to them and to ourselves. Enough of apology, enough of analysis, enough of our abdication of responsibility, enough of the denial of our own maturity and good sense.

The best place to start is at home. But the most practical and effective place, right now, is our campuses. This does not mean a flood of angry edicts, a sudden clampdown, a "new" policy. It simply means that faculties should stop playing chicken, that demonstrators should be met not with police but with expulsions. The power to expel (strangely unused) has been the legitimate recourse of universities since 1209.

More importantly, it means that at freshman orientation, whatever form it takes, the administration should set forth the ground rules — not belligerently but forthrightly.

A university is the microcosm of society itself. It cannot function without rules for conduct. It cannot, as society cannot, legislate morals. It is dealing with young men and women, 18 to 22. But it can, and must, promulgate rules. It cannot function without order — and, therefore, who disrupts order must leave. It cannot permit students to determine when, what and where they shall be taught. It cannot permit the occupation of its premises, in violation both of the law and its regulations, by "militants."

There is room, within the university complex for basic student participation, but there is no room for slob, disruption and violence.

The first obligation of the administration is to lay down the rules early, clearly and positively, and to attach to this statement the penalty for violation. It is profoundly simple — and the failure to state it, in advance, is the salient failure of university administrations in this age.

Expulsion is a dreaded verdict. The administration merely needs to make it clear, quite dispassionately, that expulsion is the inevitable consequence of violation of the rules. Among the rules, even though it seems gratuitous, should be these:

1. Violence — armed or otherwise — the forceful occupation of buildings, the intimidation by covert or overt act of any student or faculty member or administrative personnel, the occupation of any university property, field, park, building, lot or other place, shall be cause for expulsion.

2. The disruption of any class, directly or indirectly, by voice or presence or the destruction of any university property, shall be cause for expulsion.

This is neither new nor revolutionary. It is merely the reassertion of an old, accepted and necessary right of the administration of any such institution. And the faculty should be informed, firmly, of this reassertion, before trouble starts.

This does not constitute provocation. It is one of the oldest rights and necessities of the university community. The failure of university administrators to use it is one of the mysteries of our permissive age — and the blame must fall largely on faculties, because they have consistently pressured administrators not to act.

Suppose the students refuse to recognize expulsions — suppose they march, riot, strike. The police? No. The matter, by prearrangement, publicly stated, should then pass to the courts. If buildings are occupied, the court enjoins the participating students. It has the lawful power to declare them in contempt. If violence ensues, it is in violation of the court's order. Courts are not subject to fears, not part of the action. And what militant will shout obscenities in court with contempt hanging over his head?

Too simple? Not at all. Merely an old process which we seem to have forgotten. It is too direct for those who seek to employ Freudian analysis, too positive for "academic senates" who long for philosophical debate, and too prosaic for those who seek orgasmic self-condemnation.

This is a country full of decent, worried people like myself. It is also a country full of people fed up with nonsense. We need — those of us over 30; tax-ridden, harried, confused, weary and beat-up — to reassert our hard-won prerogatives.

It is our country, too. We have fought for it, bled for it, dreamed for it, and we love it. It is time to reclaim it.