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CONFORMITY IN HIGH SCHOOL boyd watters

CONFORMITY TO CLASS STATUS

IF someone asked you what the overall purpose of high school is, you would probably reply with something like "to educate." Most people think of education as the knowledge gained from the classes one takes in school, but this is actually only part of our education. The purpose of the modern American high school is not only to teach its curricula, for high schools are at least as concerned with socialization, but to teach what society considers proper, acceptable behavior. It is this socialization part of our education that this article is concerned with.

High schools socialize their students to conform to social norms. Three ideas which students are taught to conform to and to accept are that of the class status system, nationalism, and the blind acceptance of outside authority.

References to high school situations in this article are taken from my own recent high school experiences. I do this because I believe that the large midwestern high school I attended is representative of the average American high school. Obviously, policies and all characteristics of the students, teachers, and school administration vary dramatically in high schools around the country and between those in cities and rural areas, but I contend that all serve the same social function; to teach conformity to class status, nationalism, and blind acceptance of authority. Moreover, it seems from meeting high school students from around the country that the way high school students deal with the socialization they get to conform to is similar. The conclusion we will reach is that despite all the social rejection and harassment which comes with nonconformity, the only real difference between a conformist and a non-conformist is that the nonconformist questions the authority of those who want him or her to conform. Nonconformity is not a preference for different things, but rather the willingness to trust one's own reason. In this way, we should all strive to be nonconformists.

One important thing which high school teaches is conformity to the class status system: that is, the belief that people of some backgrounds are somehow different than others, and that some should enjoy higher status and reward. Students learn first that there are class differences between people, and second that some classes have more power, and moreover, should have more power than others. Students have already been introduced to the idea of class status long before entering high school, for very early in life they learn that they have less power than their parents and older siblings, and probably have more power than their younger siblings. Still, high schools further perpetuate the class status system by putting students of different classes (socio-economic and grade-level) in closer contact, and by further magnifying the class differences between teacher and student.

High school reinforces the students' belief in socio-economic class status by exposing students to others of different socio-economic backgrounds; that is, to people of all levels of wealth and work status -- rich, poor, in-between, children of blue-collar workers, business people, and professionals. This does not happen to nearly such a large extent in earlier school situations since grade schools are usually much more localized than high schools; that is, the "neighborhood school" is smaller and more numerous, and is likely to serve students from a smaller geographical area. Since people in a neighborhood are more likely to share similar levels of wealth and occupational status than people in other neighborhoods, the students in a grade school which serves only a few neighborhoods are more likely to have similar background than students in a larger high school which serves a much larger area. Since public schools are funded largely by

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Le anne--remember you always have a friend. Next time you're down, grab that warm fuzzy and smile. Things will get better!!! I love you. Kim



Attention: All Gurus (and other LRYers)

Do you ever get GRAND INSIGHTS, or even small, somewhat abstract, farfetched, confusing IDEAS? Well, we need, want, desire and crave ANY and ALL ideas you may have about LRY, youth programming, workshops, packets, by-laws, workcamps, spirituality, activities... and the list goes on and on and on and on and on.

We of the LRY Executive Committee are not here in Boston to do only what we please. Our jobs are to HELP you and your LOCAL GROUP! The problem, though, is that we can't do much for you, unless we know what it is that you want!

LRY BELONGS TO US! It is up to all of us to get involved. Please send all ideas, questions, programs, and People Soup contributions to:

LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108



Conformity in LRY

ICANT
BELIEVE IT!

3

By David
Williams



Liberal Religious Youth, at first glance, might seem to be one of the least conforming groups known to the world. Each individual in it is generally one who does what he or she believes in, and the rest of the world can forget it! In the same way, different groups consider different activities the true meaning of LRY, they don't conform to one set of ideals or programs.

But is this truly the case? When I first came into LRY, I felt pressured to be something I wasn't. I was, and still am, a relatively straight, ordinary, suburban-type person. But people kept telling me "Be yourself!", which to them meant something on the order of compromising my moral standards. In this way, they were asking me to "conform to non-conformity".

Think about how you have changed since you have become involved in LRY. Are you conforming to non-conformity, being truly individualistic or have you changed at all? Think of how your group is viewed in the eyes of the adults in your congregation. Are the adults expecting you to conform to their set of values and expectations? Think about your group. Is there much pressure put on new members to conform to the groups values and way of doing things? All of these questions would be an excellent opener for a local-group discussion on conformity in LRY.

I have spoken to many people in LRY about conformity in LRY, and what I have determined is this: There is a great need in youth to feel that they belong to something and feel socially accepted. Anytime you have an organization which is larger than 1 person, you must have a set of guidelines for the organization to work. In other words, members of a local group all "being who they are", doing as they please and going in opposite directions won't get much done. In this way, LRY needs conformity.

However, conformity in LRY is not as bad as, say, being in the Marines. In LRY there truly is the potential for someone to be who they really are, the only time this is not the case is when it interferes with the rest of the group.

In summing up, I'd like to say that LRY, to me, is a truly confusing organization. We conform, yet we do not conform. We are a corporation, we have bylaws, yet rigid guidelines are the least thing on people's minds when they think, "What is LRY?". And to answer that question, all I can say is LRY is a paradox.



youth day~ is here to stay

This year's Continental Youth Day, to be held on Sunday, April 27, will be a success, but only if you make it happen. There is now a packet available from LRY to help you plan your Youth Day. It is chock full of ideas to help with worship, theme and presentation, meals, and inter-generational activities. The packet is free to anyone desiring it, and you needn't be an LRY group to enjoy a Youth Day.

Last year's Youth Day was such a success that the UUA has endorsed the last Sunday of April in every year as the "official" Youth Day. Youth Day is an attempt by both LRY and the UUA to involve youth more fully in the life of your church.

After your Youth Day, we'd like to hear about what you did, so we can print it in the "Youth Groups" issue of People Soup. Please write to us and request your Youth Day packets at:

Youth Day/LRY
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

GO AWAY!

Are you interested in going away with a group of new friends to enjoy yourselves, and help others while you're at it? One way to do this is by getting involved in a workcamp.

Unitarian and Universalist youth used to attend workcamps in the 1940's and 1950's. New workcamps are now starting for us.

There is a packet for people who are interested in planning and implementing a workcamp anywhere in the world. This packet is available from the LRY office.

If you are interested in attending, planning, or otherwise helping to implement a workcamp, please contact:

Workcamps/LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

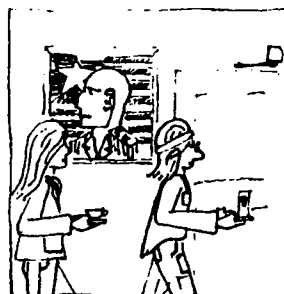
DEADLINES for "SOUP!"

Creativity March 1st

Send us your poetry, artwork, photographs, short stories, personals, quotations, drawings, sketches, doodles, novels, and anything else you can think of to put in an issue of CREATIVITY. This issue is FOR you BY you!

Youth Groups April 15th

This issue will center around YOUTH GROUPS, LRY and non-LRY, who they are, where they are, what they do, all across this great continent of ours. But we need your help! Please let us know what you're doing, and what would help you to do even more!



Get People Soup Late?

If People Soup takes more than one week from the day it was mailed to reach you, then maybe we can change it.

Just send us your name, address and the date that you received it, you can help us get People Soup to you quicker... Send it to:
People Soup
c/o LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA
02108

Thank You,
The Mailroom

4 Have You Ever Considered Suicide?

cheryl markoff

It is not uncommon for a person to think about and consider suicide. Unfortunately, it is also not uncommon for a person to attempt suicide.

Suicide is a very real thing. It happens every day. Youth between the ages of six and eleven have been committing suicide more and more. The suicide in this age range usually occurs after a family death, separation, or argument.

It is estimated that approximately 5000 people from the ages of 14 to 24 commit suicide every year and it is suspected that 5 people attempt suicide to every one that completes the suicide.

There is no accurate way to find the correct number of suicides and attempted suicides. This is because 1) Many attempts never come to the knowledge of "officials" 2) Many suicides are written off as accidents because of the embarrassment for families of suicide victims, and 3) Many true accidents (ie, car accidents etc.) are hypothesized to be suicides by way of deep rooted death wishes.

Suicide is the number two killer of young people today. Accidents are number one, if in fact the accidents are truly accidents and not suicide carried out in a less harsh way. (ie, committing suicide is seen as an angry, frustrating way to die compared to a car wreck.)

Statistics show that male victims will outnumber females by three to one in suicide deaths, but that more females will attempt it. These again, are only REPORTED figures. Who knows what really happens?

We've all heard that suicide is not a laughing matter. We've all heard that no suicide threat should be taken lightly...but, when suicide becomes a real thought within us and to our friends...it seems so different and distant, and can easily be frustrating, angering, and taken lightly.

Many times I have heard, "Life sucks. I wish I were dead...". How seriously should this be taken? I

find myself correcting the individuals I hear this from by saying that life really doesn't suck, it just has its hard times for each of us. I continue on to share my beliefs that each of these hard times will eventually turn good and even educational for us and others. I don't usually carry my concern much farther, yet I often wonder...should I? How?

I reflect on my own past and very easily remember my own suicidal attempts and tendencies. I used to be very suicidal in my earlier teens. If it had not been for a couple of special people who didn't take my pleas lightly, and who didn't listen to me as I demanded they leave me alone...I would be dead today. I would never have lived to find out that I am a good, worthwhile person. I would never have lived to discover the beauty of life. I would not have experienced the tremendous growth, love and fun that I have. I wouldn't have known any of it was possible. I have grown, I have changed, I have enjoyed, I have become happier, I have lost and cried, but I have been better able to handle it.

I AM GLAD I AM ALIVE!!!

There are numerous agencies across the nations. There are hot lines, drop-in centers and counselors working around the clock to help you, your family, and your friends with feelings of depression and despair. Call the operator and ask, s/he will know how to contact a local agency.

If you ever feel like committing suicide, or someone you know does, TAKE IT SERIOUSLY! Each one of us are good, worthwhile people...whether we recognize that now or not. Each of us are capable of extraordinary things. It will take a lot of encouragement and loving support to help ourselves and others through hard times.

Every person is a counselor in undefined terms. Every person has a responsibility for others.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP!
DON'T BE AFRAID TO DISCUSS THE TABOO OF SUICIDE WITH OTHERS.

Suicide is a real thing.

binding myself up

Liza Updike

Sometimes I realize I am conforming. It throbs inside me, capturing my individuality, losing it and bringing out the worst of my resentment.

When I conform, it is usually because I am scared to be different, I am uncomfortable or in a new environment. These are the times my self hatred starts to grow. It is this intense feeling to follow others, to be passive, and to be a close-to-unlikeable-person. It's a feeling of being trapped within myself.

I am walking in an alley and I have six inches on each side. The alley is straight, the walls are tall on each side.

There is not much room to move or grow. There is no one. Besides feeling isolated, I apply strong pressure to myself to change. "Be creative, be unique. No one will ever like you if you are a copy-cat." The pressure I put on myself to be a socialite, brings out self hatred. "Change you idiot!", "Adapt, be comfortable!" So far nothing has come of that approach.

Many times I get stuck in that long straight alley, the small, worthless, close to unlikeable person, role. I have broken it in new situations. Before I needed someone to say "Hey you seem special." and save me from my isolation. Support from others, my self-consciousness is lifted. Slowly I can show myself.

I have just begun breaking my own walls, but I still need to be reminded from others, while I am freeing myself, that I Liza Updike, am a terrific person.



THE PRICE OF CREATIVITY

Stephen Woodbridge

Conforming is making yourself blend, fitting yourself into the majority, being average. Often the reason for conforming is fear of alienation. Popularity, style and fear of rejection all enforce conformity.

Students are dependent on their classmates' acceptance. There is strong pressure to conform to standards of behavior, opinion, dress, financial and social status. Conforming has its benefits: friends, parties, feeling comfortable in school, and help with schoolwork. Many non-conformist students are alienated and ostracized. Some withdraw, become cynical or pessimistic about themselves and the world. Some quit school, others live with the feeling of failure, sticking it out for the diploma. Creativity and individuality have a price to pay in junior and senior high school.

People earn, borrow, steal, and dream of money which will help them gain status. Folks who have money often buy items to represent their ability to purchase milk coats, "Cadillacs", diamonds, big homes, etc. when something becomes "un-stylish" it is disregarded and wasted. Society dictates what we buy and when we dispose of it.

In a country where individuality is supposedly encouraged, there certainly is a need to conform. By conforming we lose part of the beauty of democracy. Apathy and conformity block out views and ideas which make for a strong and valuable nation.



THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES TO SUICIDE

what would you do ?

Think of situations you or a friend have been involved in with suicide. How did you or your friend feel at the time? Afterward? How about now? Do you think you or your friend should have acted differently? Has this affected your life at all? How?

Just what are some of the reasons that make people want to commit suicide? Make a list (either in your local group or on your own) of possibilities. Take this list and for each reason stated, think of a counter reason. For example:

REASON	COUNTER REASON
family hassles	--- can move out when 18
failed math	--- can work on math skills
no friends	--- go on vacation to meet others

Think of things that you can do to help another person with these problems (reasons). For example:

REASON	HELP TO OFFER
family hassles	--- listen to attentively help person clarify his/her feelings
failed math	--- tutor in this subject find another subject he/she is good in and encourage this
no friends	--- befriend, invite out, make something for her/him

You will find that LISTENING can be one of your best gifts, especially to someone in need. Many "suicidal people" feel misunderstood, unloved and unlistened to.

if....

1) You are taking an evening stroll and your eyes focus on what seems to be a person ready to jump off of a bridge. As you move closer, the person screams out "Stop or I'll jump!"...

2) You get an unusual call from a friend who confesses to have just swallowed a bottle of barbiturates. When you suggest that you can call the poison control or police, your friend becomes frantic and demands that you do no such thing...

3) A friend comes up to you in school and swears you to secrecy, stating that s/he'll be committing suicide within the next week. S/he'll be doing it by hanging or slashing her/his wrists. The knife and/or rope are in her/his locker...

Should you go to your friends' parents? Your parents? A school counselor? A teacher? The police? Call a hotline? Take action yourself? Tell some other friends?

Would you feel as if you were betraying your friends if you solicited help and support from someone else? What is more "important"; to preserve a life or a friendship?

CONFORMITY IN HIGH SCHOOL

CONT.

property taxes, students who live in more wealthy neighborhoods are more likely to attend grade schools with better facilities and a lower student-to-teacher ration, and thus are likely to have had a better quality primary education than students from less advantageous neighborhoods and schools. When the students reach high school, it becomes apparent to all that the more advantaged students are better adjusted to school and perform more effectively. This socio-economic difference in the quality of earlier education is often seen in high school as greater intelligence, quickness, and innate ability, and thus reinforces students' beliefs in innate differences between people of different socio-economic classes, rather than artificial, human-built wealth stratification systems. High school is probably the only situation in American society which requires people from such radically different backgrounds to mingle closely and work together, and the differences in people brought on by advantage come to be seen in high school as innate and deserved, rather than artificial and acquired.

Similarly, high schools teach class status by exposing students to others of different grade levels and giving privileges to those of higher status. In earlier grade levels, students are around others of different grade levels, but not until high school are they as likely to have classes together, mingle in the lunchroom, library or extra-curricular club or activity. Older students in high school often get the privilege of driving to school, leaving early, choosing their own classes, and other desirable privileges. Students learn that the higher class of older students will get and should get the more desirable resources.

A final way in which high school teaches class status is by magnifying the class difference between students and teachers. Again, early in school a student learns of the teacher's greater power, but high schools are more likely to have strict attendance policies and hall pass regulations which constantly remind the student that he or she must account for him - herself to those with greater power--the school administration. Further, teachers are likely to have special privileges such as smoking in school, having a teachers' lounge, being first in lunch lines, etc. Again, students learn that they must and should account for their actions to the higher class of administrators and teachers, and that members of this higher class deserve preferential treatment.

The critical word in each of these three examples of ways that high school teaches class status is "should". For students to conform to the concept of class status, they must first be convinced not only that there are real differences between classes, but also that some classes should have higher status than others.

CONFORMITY TO NATIONALISM

High schools also teach conformity to nationalism (or "patriotism," to use a more common, but emotively loaded word). Nationalism is that feeling of superiority which predisposes us to condemn other countries or cultures which operate on economic, political, or cultural systems different from our own, without an adequate knowledge of them. The main vehicle which high schools use to teach nationalism is spectator sports programs such as the football and basketball programs.

To see how a school sports program can teach nationalism, let us look at a typical high school football program. The players are only a relative few compared to all who participate -- there are far more who cheerlead, play in the band, and simply attend games and pep rallies. When all involved are considered, probably most students participate in the program, at least sometime during the season. Most students, then, learn to have "school spirit" -- that is, they learn that their school is somehow different than the others, and is somehow better. They learn to see their environment in terms of "us" and "them".

The acquisition of a sense of "us" and "them" is probably harmless in and of itself, since everyone will surely agree that there is not real difference between high schools large enough to actually justify the feeling of superiority to members of another school which is so emotionally displayed at a football game. The problem is that this sense of "us" and "them", or the ability to differentiate and rank on the basis of irrelevant characteristics, is not forgotten after high school. Rather, it becomes the basis for a similar feeling of superiority to people who live under different political or economic systems or who have different cultural values. The "us" of the high school becomes the "us" of the United States, and the "them" of other schools becomes the "them" of other countries. Just as students cheered their own football team on to victory, so they later will "cheer on" their country, without stopping to think about whether or not what they are supporting is actually consistent with their own ethical values.

That students are willing to "cheer on" their own nationalistic interests without understanding the issues involved



Be Born Again Find Out What's Happening With Your Denomination

It's time already to make plans for going to the Unitarian Universalist Association General Assembly to be held from June 13-18 this year in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Youth Caucus, a group of youth interested in the activities and policies of the UUA will meet during that time. Youth Caucus is open to all persons between the ages of 12 and 20, and we meet daily to discuss resolutions and actions affecting youth and the rest of our Denomination. It is a chance for youth to participate in the democratic functioning of the organization.

Last year, Youth Caucus supported the controversial Business Resolution in Support of Youth Programs, whose passage made it possible for LRY to continue existing in its current state. This year, Youth Caucus will again support resolutions which it believes are in the best interest of youth and the entire denomination.

Sounds interesting? If you would like to go, send us your name and address and we'll send you more information and put you on our mailing list so that you may receive information as it is given. Find out about becoming a delegate from your church or fellowship which will enable you to cast a vote on GA resolutions, and speak for or against a resolution on the floor of the Assembly.

We are expecting to be able to disburse up to \$2,000.00 in Youth Caucus scholarship money. This money will be awarded in a first come first served basis, and on the basis of need. Be sure to exhaust all other funding sources, your church, parents, district, yourself, etc. before you come to us. More information will be printed in the next issue of *People Soup*. For information and a scholarship application, write:

Youth Caucus
c/o LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA
02108

was demonstrated recently by the crisis in the American embassy in Teheran. Thousands of university (former high school) students staged "pro-American" rallies in several places across the country, and many were quoted as having such ideas as bombing Teheran, taking revenge on Iranian students in the U.S., and other such acts of violence which they would not normally condone were it not for the fact that this situation was seen in terms of "us" and "them". The "us" had been wronged by the "them", therefore, "they" had to be punished. An understanding of the events leading up to the taking of the hostages, or even of the basic issues involved (cultural and economic imperialism vs. the right to national self-dentity) was not considered important. World War III is always the ultimate threat inherent in military intervention, and yet many students were willing to go to war to protect the honor of the "us", as if wars were fought with footballs and shoulder pads, like the earlier football games were.

BLIND ACCEPTANCE OF AUTHORITY

High schools, then, teach conformity to nationalistic spirit as well as conformity to a belief in class status. A final important lesson which high schools teach is one of conformity to and blind acceptance of authority.

All schools have the responsibility of preparing students for future work situations. High schools especially must fulfill this role, since high school is the highest and last level of education which most students complete. Since industrialized American society has an enormous need for unskilled and semi-skilled laborers, and since these workers must be willing to accept unquestioningly the duties and conditions of employment dictated by their superiors in order to achieve maximum efficiency and profit for those in power, the high schools are charged with the responsibility of turning out large numbers of workers willing to unquestioningly do what they are told.

Industrialized American society has an enormous demand for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Seventeen percent of males and twelve percent of females in the labor force are unskilled or semi-skilled operatives with no supervisory duties. (These and the following 1977 statistics are from *Employment and Earnings*, January 1978, page 152). Another 8% of men and 1% of women in the labor force are unskilled laborers; 12% and 42% respectively are clerical or lower-level sales workers; 9% and 21% respectively are service workers (restaurant workers, janitors, private household workers, etc.) and 2% and 1% respectively are farm workers. Forty-eight percent of men and seventy-seven percent of women in the labor force, or almost half of the men and over three-fourths of the women, then, hold jobs which require little or no training, other than on-the-job. Almost none of these have supervisory duties. In order to fill these positions, high schools must teach the students to unquestioningly accept school policies and programs. This blind acceptance of authority will later be generalized to employers.

The sheer size of the typical American high school sets the stage for the suppression of individualism necessary to produce unquestioning workers. Large numbers of students in one school requires that curricula be highly standardized and unbendable. The more students are involved, the less power each one individually can have to select courses or programs. Thus, students come to accept that they must take the courses dictated by the school.

Furthermore, the more students a teacher has, the less individualized attention she or he can give to each one. A teacher with a large number of students cannot help each one individually, and like the school must standardize her or his teaching methods in order to accommodate so many. Students learn that they must not question the system, for fear of demanding the individualized attention which a large high school cannot afford to give, and also that their original ideas are "wrong" -- for in a large class it is logistically impossible to investigate the ideas of all of the students.

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WHAT Coalition!?



The L.R.Y. Coalition Against Nuclear Proliferation

Nice name huh! Hi my name is Mark Huntley, I am the co-chair for the coalition. I'm sure this doesn't mean much to most of you, so I'll start from the beginning and try and set things straight.

In December at the winter Board of Directors meeting for LRY, the coalition was reborn. What I mean to say is the coalition has been around now for more than a year but not much has happened. So I as Social Actions Coordinator am taking on the responsibility of revitalizing it. At that meeting, which lasted one week, we had two very constructive meetings. Our purpose at those meetings was to set up our structure and purposes so that the coalition can be a vital organization of the social actions focus in L.R.Y.

Before I go into what the outcome of those meetings were, let me say briefly how the coalition primarily got off the ground. It was in February 1978 when about 50 youths got together in New York City at the United Nations office for a two day seminar on disarmament. What came out of this was a heightened awareness of the threat that Nuclear arms race, weapons, and power have on lives. So the people got together and had a few meetings of their own and started the coalition.

So now you know it's roots. Now I'll tell you about it's trunk and branches and hopefully it will bear fruit.

We the L.R.Y. Coalition Against Nuclear Proliferation are in general sympathy with the objectives stated in the February 1978 "Youth Seminar Declaration on Disarmament" which states: First, that an immediate agreement to end the production and spread of nuclear weapons be instituted, with the ultimate objective of total nuclear disarmament. Secondly, this agreement should be structured in such a way that it will eventually result in total conventional disarmament as well. Thirdly, the basic social, economic, and political problems must also be dealt with. We therefore propose that the resources presently allocated to arms manufacture and purchase be used instead on programs dealing with job creation, and restructuring of the present inequitable economic situation. Lastly, we propose that an international forum for the arbitration of disputes be created with the power to enforce it's decisions.

Therefore the LRY Coalition Against Nuclear Proliferation's primary function is educational, with the hope that we could foster an awareness of the nuclear situation throughout the world by informing our congregations, youth groups, and communities in the hope of adding to the momentum of the movement towards nuclear disarmament.

In order to obtain our goals we have tentatively set up three primary functions of the coalition.



SOCIAL ACTIONS Coordinator...

Howdy all, my name is Mark Huntley. I've just been appointed as Social Actions Coordinator for Continental LRY. I've been in LRY for about two and a half years now and active in social issues for at least that long. In case some of you want to know what a Social Actions Coordinator does, here is a list of my responsibilities:

A Social Actions Coordinator, appointed by the Executive Committee, who shall be responsible for promoting awareness of social concerns, issues and actions among the LRY constituency through:

1. corresponding and filing actions of the UU Washington Office for Social Concerns, UU Service Committee, Office on Aging and Gay Concerns, and any other UU social concern agencies determined pertinent by the LRY Board of Directors or Coordinator.
2. regular correspondence with the Executive Committee.
3. supplying information for each issue of People Soup on projects, boycotts, rallies, and demonstrations of interest to LRYers.
4. filing of correspondence with social actions groups of interest to LRYers, and disseminating the contained information to Federation and Local Group social actions contacts.
5. serving as the co-chair to the LRY Coalition Against Nuclear Proliferation, and working to revitalize that organization.
6. acting on those issues which the Board of Directors determines for emphasis for the coming year.
7. being prepared to address social actions issues being discussed in business resolutions of the UU General Assembly, LRY Board Meetings, and Continental Conference, and making recommendations thereupon.
8. travelling to UU and LRY camps and conferences when feasible, to conduct workshops on social actions issues and to assist in the extension work of the Executive Committee.
9. reporting to the Annual and Winter Board of Directors' meetings.
10. providing written continuity for the next Social Actions Coordinator.
11. serving as a non-voting member of the Board of Directors as prescribed in Article V, Section 8, lines 42-45 of the By-Laws.

Inherent responsibilities include corresponding with Canadian social actions groups, work in planning UU Youth seminars and close contact with UU, and maintain our UU office and current Social Actions information file. The Social Actions Coordinator will not be serving as staff of the LRY office, therefore s/he will not be held responsible for the business of the Office. S/he will be directly responsible to the Executive Committee and must therefore act in cooperation with that committee. The appointed person must be affirmed in the position by a majority vote of the Board of Directors at the Meeting following appointment, when possible this will be the Annual Meeting. This person shall serve a one year term, unless otherwise determined by the Board of Directors.

Well, there you have it. Now, doesn't that seem like fun to you? I think so. I'm looking forward to doing this, but I need your help. What I mean is that in order to do the traveling and corresponding necessary and everything else, I need your help. I need your financial support to help supplement a very minimal Social Actions budget. Please think about this and send your tax-deductable donation to the Continental office of LRY, c/o Social Actions Coordinator.

We can make this organization very active and socially aware, as in the past and as it should now be!

oh WOW! New Packets!!

There are 2 new packets available from LRY!

They are on WORKCAMPs and FEDERATION STRUCTURES.

The packet on workcamps is to assist all interested persons with the planning and implementation of workcamps.

The other packet, entitled "A Do-It Yourself Guide to Federation Leadership". It is geared toward Federation Executive Committees with suggested Structures and job descriptions.

For more information, write to:

Liberal Religious Youth
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
or call
(617) 742-2105 ext. 370

1) Clearing House Coordinator: Who shall be responsible for the collecting, filing and disseminating of materials regarding nuclear proliferation.

2) Publications Editor: This person is responsible for contributing articles and general information about the coalition's activities to People Soup on a regular basis. Also, this person will be responsible for writing letters to key political figures regarding the coalition's stance on pertinent issues.

3) Mobilization Force: Which would be a group of people who spread information about demonstrations, conferences, and seminars concerning issues relevant to the coalition's purpose through personal contact.

So there you have it. This is what we are all about. Basically as I see it the coalition's main emphasis will be educating people on the issues, after which the mobilization force will move into action.

We are currently working on finding people who are interested in devoting some of their time to work for this worthwhile cause. If you would be interested please send in a one page sheet describing what you are interested in, your qualifications and why you would like to do this to: Social Actions Coordinator, c/o LRY, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108.

The coalition has tentatively scheduled a conference from March 28-30 in Harrisburg, PA (on the anniversary of 3 Mile Island) to go in depth, into topics pertaining to the nuclear situation. I do hope that all of you can make it (the more there are the cheaper it is). I'd like to finish this off with a quote from H.G. Wells... "Human history is a constant race between knowledge and catastrophe and more often than not catastrophe wins out". This time, let's gain the knowledge and win.

Something to think about...

"Non-Conformity..."

Individualism or Rebellion?"





We Extend

An

Invitation ...

Within the last few years, the need for outreach and fieldwork has become a very apparent need for the youth of our denomination. To meet this need, LRYers have visited many groups, both LRY and non-LRY, District and Federation meetings, conferences, churches and general gatherings of people. There has been an increased amount of communication, written materials, and assistance dealing with youth programs.

At the Annual LRY Board of Directors meeting, there was a proposal to appoint REGIONAL FIELDWORKERS, as representatives of Continental LRY. These Regional Fieldworkers are expected to work with all youth within their regions in developing more stable programs and groups. The fieldworkers are also going to be working with District and Federation representatives.

Since the time of the meeting, there have been five (5) Fieldworkers appointed, with other decisions pending at this time. The newly appointed Fieldworkers are:

REGION #2
California, Nevada and Arizona
Rachel Stearns
2338 Telegraph Ave. #315
Berkeley, CA 94704

REGION #3
Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado,
New Mexico, and western Texas
Tom Perchlik
1721 - 13 Ave.
Greeley, CO 80631

REGION #4
North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska,
Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Wisconsin,
Iowa, and Minnesota
Nan Warshaw
815 Monroe St.
Evanston, IL 60202

REGION #7
northern Virginia, eastern Pennsylvania,
southern New York, New Jersey, Delaware,
and Maryland
Julie-Ann Silberman
Solebury School
New Hope, PA 18938

REGION #9
Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas,
and Louisiana
Nina Martin
711 Linda Vista #214A
Arlington, TX 76013

These Regional Fieldworkers are happily anticipating calls and letters from YOU! They want to help you get better organized and to offer any kind of support, materials, questions, answers or resources that you may want or need.

There are still Fieldworkers needed for the following areas. If you are interested, write to:
Regional Fieldworkers/LRY
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108
or call
(617) 742-2105
ext. 370

REGION #5 - northern New York, Michigan,
West Virginia, Ohio, western Pennsylvania,
Kentucky, Indiana, Ontario and Quebec

REGION #6 - Tennessee (except Memphis),
southern Virginia, North Carolina,
Florida, and Mississippi

REGION #10 - New England states,
Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick

What Could Possibly Be More Exciting...

This year, LRY held it's Winter Board Meeting in beautiful Kansas City, Missouri at the All Souls Unitarian Church. Over 30 people attended from all across our continent, including Federation liaisons, the Executive Committee, the Judiciary Committee and a handful of observers.

Much was accomplished at the meeting. One of the most important events was the election of two new Executive Committee members, to take office on March 1, 1980. They are Nina Martin, from Arlington, TX, to replace Cheryl Markoff as Director of Extension, Leadership and Program Development, and Julianne Farman from Winchester, MA, to fill the currently vacant position as Director of Publications. Laurel Prager is no longer on the Executive Committee, as she resigned at the Meeting.

One of the most crucial (and time consuming) items taken up at this meeting was discussion about fundraising, the LRY budget and youth autonomy. Board members reiterated the stand taken at last Summer's board meeting, that in order for LRY to be a truly autonomous youth-run organization, it must stand more on it's own two feet financially. How to do it? Stress fundraising on all levels, and investigate new fundraising ideas.

Other business at the meeting included hearing reports from and giving suggestions to the Executive Committee, as well as the various committees and programs of LRY. Also, there were reports on the status of programs initiated and continued from Summer Boards. For example, the Regional Fieldwork project which is working out quite successfully was reported on, and two new Fieldworkers were appointed.

The Judiciary Committee submitted over 20 By-Law changes to be considered and submitted to the Board of Directors at the next Summer meeting. A few of the proposals passed at the meeting concerned age limits for church membership, holding meetings in ERA-ratified states, Youth Day, and directives to Federation Liaisons as well as the Executive Committee. There also was a proposal passed stating that "The Retardos" shall be the official LRY punk band.

It wasn't all business for the week though. Although many people were sick during the week people still got out and enjoyed the city. Others enjoyed themselves by playing music, going to movies, or holding electronic football tournaments. And imagine the surprise when New Year's day came...and everyone's flight was cancelled due to fog! Group activities which almost everyone participated in involved the last sundae of the '70's (one trip of many to the local ice cream parlors), a recording session of LRY songs and chants conducted by one of our wonderful advisors, Vonnice Hicks from North Carolina, and, of course, playing in the Kansas City airport after being grounded.

All in all, it was a very enjoyable and productive week, and we'd like to thank our advisors, Vonnice Hicks and Larry Denny, our moderator, Nada Velimirovic, Steve Kellogg, our wonderful secretary, Lane Betz, the cook, all of the Kansas City people, especially Gretchen Jones and Jack Bunker, who not only drove us back and forth to the airport but put us up at their homes when we were grounded, and finally to the folks at the ALL SOULS UNITARIAN CHURCH who were kind enough to let us hold our meeting there.

FED'S UP'S

BARNEY: We are becoming more structured. Our conferences are well attended and local groups are increasing in membership. There are two conferences planned. **CMF (Central Midwest Federation):** There have been some major changes in our Fed. There is a new constitution which will be sent to all CMFers in a packet of other info. Most CMFers are members of UU churches, unlike the past. The Fed. Board will meet 3 times this year. The last conference, held in Peoria, was quite successful.

CRVF (Connecticut River Valley Fed.): We will have a Tri-Fed conference with MBF and Nabasco in the Spring. The Conference in Hartford from Nov. 30-Dec. 2 went well, and there is another one planned for Feb. in Handen. The Fed. is having a raffle as a fundraiser. The constitution has been reviewed, and there are many activities planned for the Spring, including a No-Nukes demonstration.

DEAF (Formerly Rocky Mountain Area): There is quite a bit of unity and optimism in our Fed. We are planning a Fed. Development Conference. We still have one conference every other month. The last one, in Colorado, was on "Human Sexuality".

GODARFUL (Greater Ohio District-Allegheny Regional Federation of United Liberals): Howdy! Life's lookin' up for us. We sent out our first newsletter of the year (The Word of God). There is a Leadership Development Conference planned for March, plus many other Spring happenings. Hope to see you there! PEACE

MBF (Massachusetts Bay Federation): There was a conference held on January 18-20 in Winchester, MA. The famed movie, THE INVASION OF THE BOX PEOPLE, will soon be shown within the boundaries of MBF! And, lastly a new president will be elected this month, and a new treasurer in March. **MVF/NSF (Missouri Valley/North Star Fed.):** There is a conference planned for February 8-10 in Omaha. We will be splitting the Fed. into 3 regions due to our large size. **SAHILL:** There was a District Youth Conference in November in the Seattle area which was a great success. People attended from ALL across the District. **SAM (Southern Appalachian Mountain):** We have a new constitution. There was a good conference in Charlottesville, Va., and there is another one planned to be held in Winston-Salem, NC. April will bring in yet another conference. We are pulling together better than ever before! YEAH. **SUNCO:** We are re-writing our constitution. There will be a conference in St. Petersburg, FL. in February. Local groups are working on increasing membership, along with having good intergenerational activities.

They're Thinking of

Reinstating The Draft.





Cultural Relativity

by Tlim Greek

In studying different cultures, it is easy to see that customs vary widely among people around the world. What might seem like normal, acceptable behavior to one culture might seem rude and disgusting to another.

This idea is sometimes known as the theory of cultural relativity. It states that behavior is relative to the culture which surrounds it, and that often the culture is responsible for these behaviors. One's very emotions and desires, and how they are expressed depends on, or is relative to the culture in which one lives.

Perhaps a striking example of cultural relativity is given in Ian Robertson's textbook, *Sociology*, in which he reports the different sexual habits from culture to culture. Sexual activity is chosen to illustrate the difference in cultures because it is something shared by all humans; it is a common denominator of humanity. Robertson notes that the frequency of intercourse is extremely variable between cultures. The Koraki of New Guinea, who have the lowest average of sexual intercourse, have intercourse once a week, and desire no more. The Chagga of Eastern Africa are reported to have up to ten episodes per night, and desire no less. Robertson continues:

"The Siriono find pleasure in poking their fingers into each other's eyes; the Choroti women spit into their partners' faces; Ponapean men tug out tufts of their mates' hair; and Apinaye women in the Brazilian jungle bite off pieces of their lovers' eyebrows, noisily spitting them aside to enhance the erotic effect."

Probably the last paragraph was enough to make most readers cringe with disgust at the idea of poking, spitting, tugging, and biting. Yet this behavior is considered perfectly normal by people in cultures where it is common; as a matter of fact, to not accept these behaviors would be abnormal! We must remember that had we been given birth by an Apinaye woman, we most likely would have enjoyed chewing eyebrows off of our loved ones -- and perhaps be disgusted by what our western counterparts considered erotic.

Obviously, then, the culture one lives in has profound effects upon a person. This conclusion can be applied to history in an attempt to understand the past. For example, why did the Chinese, having invented gunpowder, the printing press, and other technological advancements, not become the conquerors of the world, instead of Europe? The answer, or part of it, could lie in the nature of the Chinese culture, which taught order, harmony, and peaceful coexistence; and the nature of the European culture, which stressed personal gain. Probably the Europeans' interest in personal gain, and their willingness to pursue it at the expense of others, was part of what drove them to conquer.

America, like all other cultures, has its own cultural values. Three of them, individualism, free will, and conflict between good and evil, are presented here for thought.

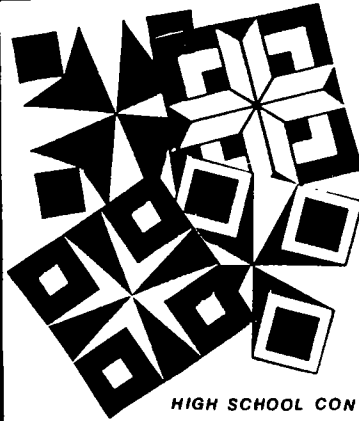
Individualism -- The American culture and economic system is fiercely permeated with the concept of individualism. Individualism sees people as separate, unique identities, self-motivated and self-powering. In America it is also assumed that this is good, and the correct way to live. Interestingly enough, however, there has been a strong anti-individualism force active in American culture, and an ongoing battle is occurring between these two forces.

Free will -- The American culture assumes that an individual has a will free of outside forces enough to be held responsible for that individual's actions. This is obviously true in the free market system that America uses, since economic gain and other benefits go to those who are believed to be deserving.

Good and evil -- The roles of good and evil are also very important in American culture, affecting one's every thought.

When a pious person is attacked, he or she might declare that non-violence would be the only morally good way to respond, even though the attack was evil. However, in American culture one who responds violently would be considered justified to do so, since fighting back is not considered evil, but only less good.

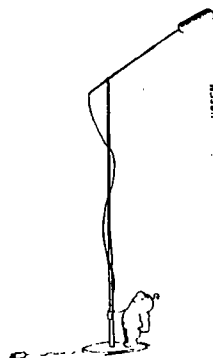
It might be noted that the non-violent concept of good is often in direct opposition to the concept of free will, yet both of these concepts come to affect our thinking and behavior. Perhaps this philosophical conflict is responsible for some of the inner conflicts that seem to abound within the American society.



A more direct way which high schools teach unquestioning acceptance of authority is through rules and restrictions on freedom of movement of students. High schools often set restrictions on students' attendance, freedom to leave the grounds, driving to school, "acceptable" dress, and other restrictions which most adults are not subjected to, at least not to such extremes. Some of these rules at least have foundations in practical reasons other than those of logistics as discussed above, but many of them serve no practical purpose other than to teach the young people acceptance of the school's authority -- that is, to "show 'em who's boss". The students come to accept that an outside authority has the right to tell them how to dress, wear their hair, when to come and go, if and when they may drive and where they may park, and where they must be at any given time. Most of these restrictions will be removed once the students leave high school -- but the willingness to unquestioningly accept authority is left intact, and will be applied to future employers.

PEER GROUP PRESSURE TO CONFORM

It is clear, then, that a basic purpose of high school is to socialize young people to conform to and accept three ideas which American society values: the ideas of class status, nationalism, and blind acceptance of authority. However, high school students do not play a passive role in their own socialization, like rats in "Skinner" boxes learning to press levers to receive food or avoid electric shock. On the contrary, high school students play quite an active role in teaching each other conformity. We can see how high school students socialize each other to conform by looking at the ways which their social interactions reflect those three ideas which the high schools teach.



Before looking at how the social cliques in high school interact, however, we must first look at each group individually. Again, the examples used here are taken from the high school I attended, hereafter referred to as "Northside". Obviously, different high schools around the continent have different students who form different cliques with different names, or no name at all. Even so, I have learned from MYERS and other high school students from around the continent that high school students seem to divide themselves up in similar ways when they form cliques, and that the cliques in the high school I attended were not atypical. Therefore, even though the names of high school cliques will surely be different, and the distinctions between cliques may not be as clear-cut as they were in my experience, I believe that most high school students will be able to see great similarities between the school they attend and the examples given here in the way students divide themselves and interact.

The largest and most dominant social clique at Northside was the "jocks". This included most of the athletes, and all of the most popular students in the school. Most of the jocks were from middle-class, white-collar backgrounds, and were the ones most concerned with being accepted (conforming), and being popular.

A smaller, but still sizable group was the "grits". The grits were mainly from working-class families, and were less wealthy than the jocks. They were generally more interested in vocational training, and most were not college-bound.

Finally, there was a much smaller group: the "freaks". The freaks were the ones who fit neither of the other two categories; they were the ones heavily involved in drama or photography or (heaven forbid) academics. The freaks were generally more individualistic and less willing to conform to the group (thus, the name "freak"). They came from different socioeconomic classes; unlike the jocks and grits, a particular class status was not a prerequisite for being a freak.



STUDENTS INTERNALIZE THE SCHOOL'S PRESSURE TO CONFORM

The social interactions between members of the jocks, grits, and freaks clearly reflected the three values imposed on students by the school. The students had learned to conform to class status, nationalism, and to blindly accept authority, and had begun to apply these ideas to each other.

Evidence of the class status system can be found in the interactions between the jocks and grits, since the jocks enjoyed a higher social status than the grits. Among the real or imagined traits which gave jocks higher status were greater intelligence and material wealth.

The jocks considered themselves more intelligent than the grits because they were generally better adjusted to the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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the little boy

Once a little boy went to school.
He was quite a little boy.
And it was quite a big school.
But when the little boy
Found that he could go to his room
By walking right in from the door outside,
He was happy.
And the school did not seem
Quite so big any more.

One morning,
When the little boy had been in school awhile,
The teacher said:
"Today, we are going to make a picture."
"Good!" thought the little boy.
He liked to make pictures.
He could make all kinds:
Lions and tigers,
Chickens and cows,
Trains and boats--
And he took out his box of crayons
And began to draw.

But the teacher said: "Wait!
It is not time to begin!"
And she waited until everyone looked ready.

"Now," said the teacher,
"We are going to make flowers."
"Good!" thought the little boy.
He liked to make flowers,
And he began to make beautiful ones
With his pink and orange and blue crayons.

But the teacher said, "Wait!
And I will show you how."
And it was red, with a green stem.
"There," said the teacher.
"Now you may begin."

The little boy looked at the teacher's flower.
Then he looked at his own flower.
He liked his flower better than the teacher's.
But he did not say this.
He just turned his paper over
And made a flower like the teacher's.
It was red, with a green stem.
On another day,
When the little boy had opened
The door from the outside all by himself
The teacher said:
"Today we are going to make something with clay."
"Good!" thought the little boy.
He liked clay.

He could make all kinds of things with clay:
Snakes and snowmen,
Elephants and mice,
Cats and trucks--
And he began to pull and pinch
His ball of clay.

But the teacher said:
"Wait! It is not time to begin!"
And she waited until everyone looked ready.

"Now," said the teacher
"We are going to make a dish."
"Good!" thought the little boy.
He liked to make dishes,
And he began to make some
That were all shapes and sizes.

But the teacher said, "Wait!
And I will show you how."
And she showed everyone how to make
One deep dish.
"There," said the teacher.
"Now you may begin."

The little boy looked at the teacher's dish.
Then he looked at his own.
He liked his dishes better than the teacher's.
But he did not say this.
He just rolled his clay into a big ball again,
And made a dish like the teacher's.
It was a deep dish.
And pretty soon
The little boy learned to wait.
And to watch,
And to make things just like the teacher.

And pretty soon
He didn't make things of his own any more.
Then it happened
That the little boy and his family
Moved to another house
In another city,
And the little boy
Had to go to another school.



This school was even bigger
Than the other one.
And there was no door from the outside
Into his room.
He had to go up some big steps,
And walk down a long hall
To get to his room.

And the very first day
He was there,
The teacher said:
"Today we are going to make a picture."
"Good!" thought the little boy,
And he waited for the teacher
To tell him what to do.
But the teacher didn't say anything.
She just walked around the room.

When she came to the little boy
She said, "Don't you want to make a picture?"
"Yes," said the little boy.
"What are we going to make?"
"I don't know until you make it," said the teacher.
"How shall I make it?" asked the little boy.
"Why, anyway you like," said the teacher.
"And any color?" asked the little boy.
"Any color," said the teacher.
"If everyone made the same picture,
And used the same colors,
How would I know who made what,
And which was which?"
"I don't know," said the little boy.
And he began to make a red flower.
With a green stem.

Helen E. Buckley.....

Games people play

I am in a place called frustrated.
It is like a maze in a child's magazine.
What I want to feel
is the dot in the center
that you have to get to
without crossing any black lines
(That's cheating)
But hey!
Someone has been sneaky
and drawn a neat black line
across the only path to the dot
without breaking any rules!

Erica McDonald



larger poem

I started out a sunlit green when
I began my life on my first square.
Then I met another person and I had to
change my color,
Just a little to make it work.
Anyway it was so easy to change that I
thought a brownish color would be
really cool because it was so
warm, and kind of somber.
But then I thought I'd like to get back
to green because I was getting
all messed up.
But all I could get was muddy green,
not my color at all.
I got real scared at that.
But then I said - it doesn't matter
I'll be purple, green isn't that cool
anyway.
But I couldn't dig purple so I tried
yellow
People told me things I didn't want to
hear.
They thought I was gold.
I have been so many colors, I've for-
gotten what it is to be my green.
Sometimes I feel almost green but then
I feel weak and hurttable so I
change to a stronger color.
So I won't get hurt.
Now I'm afraid no one will ever know I
was once sunlit green.

BY: Jamie Nathanson

I am walking down that old familiar street. The clear, crisp snow
blankets the sides of the street. The street itself is pitch black
color. It is hard and cold under my feet. Then I pass by that old
street light. My memories wander back to that one night.

I remember that night last December, when Bob and I were walking
down this street. It had been a cold and chilly night and the wind was
blowing. The snow drifted silently to the peaceful sleeping earth.

We packed the soft, billowy snow into hard balls and threw them
into the darkness. We talked about everything that the world had to
contain. Then we stopped at the street light and stared into each
others eyes. We kissed each other and walked back home.

Now, a year later, I am walking down that same street remembering.
I remember that night as if it had been yesterday, but alas, it is not.
The snow is new and crisp, and the light from the street light is burning
brighter. I feel as though I lost my world and yet something new and
exciting is about to happen. Slowly, I turn around, and an image
form in my mind, a new start to my old and weary life, Angelo.



academic part of high school. They generally got better grades and were more likely to be college-bound. What was not considered, however, was that most of the "lower class" of grits had attended the larger, more impersonal, less well-equipped elementary and middle schools, while most of the jocks had attended smaller schools in more wealthy areas. Thus, the jocks had generally been exposed to better early educational opportunities, and this was reflected in their greater ability to do the academic work. Yet the jocks did not seem to realize this -- they thought of their greater "intelligence" as being "natural", and a legitimate reason for considering the grits to be inferior.

A second difference between the jocks and grits which separated the two groups by status was a difference in levels of material wealth. The jocks wore more expensive clothing, had more and newer cars, and generally came from more wealthy families than the largely working-class grits. Material possessions were seen as symbols of status, and the jocks had more of both. Yet the jocks had not worked harder to earn their possessions; the only way they had acquired them was by "divine right" -- because they were lucky enough to be born into more wealthy families. No one questioned that the jocks deserved higher status because of their wealth, even though the way they acquired this wealth was as much a matter of chance as who their parents were. Nonetheless, material wealth was considered a legitimate indicator of status.

Greater material wealth and greater imagined intelligence, then contributed to the status difference between grits and jocks. That the jocks enjoyed higher status is further illustrated by the higher prestige of that group: often the jocks had to end or avoid friendships with grits, for fear of also being labeled "grits". Also, one of the worst insults which the jocks used against each other was the accusation: "you grit!"

The students, then, had clearly accepted the idea of class status taught by the school, and this was reflected in the status differences between jocks and grits. That the students had also internalized the school's pressure to conform to nationalistic spirit was illustrated earlier in the students' rivalries with other schools: the students had "school spirit"; they believed that their school was the best.

The third lesson high schools teach, blind acceptance of authority, can also be found in the students' interactions. The outside authority which students come to blindly accept is peer opinion. They learn that they must conform to the group's tastes in clothing and interests in order to be accepted.

This kind of pressure to conform surely needs little explanation -- high school students, I believe, are painfully aware of the pressure to conform to peer opinion. At Northside, for example, peer group pressure demanded conformity to strict dress restrictions. Male students had to wear tight, worn-but-not-too-worn looking blue jeans and printed flannel or cotton shirts in modest colors. Group pressure allowed the female students to wear dresses and bright colors, occasionally, although wearing either of these on a regular basis was likely to make one suspect of being "weird". Of course there were many violations of this peer group dress code, but a look around any gathering of students invariably showed that most students did indeed conform to the strict restrictions of socially acceptable dress.

Another type of conformity which was socially compulsory at Northside was adherence to many ideas which I shall group together as "sex roles". The pressure to engage in behavior considered appropriate to one's sex begins at birth, but still, peer pressure in high school plays an important role. While a discussion of how both sexes are socialized to conform to sex roles would be appropriate here, the fact that I have had infinitely more experience with pressure to conform to the male sex role demands that I limit it to sex role values taught to male high school students by their peers.

Male students at Northside felt pressure to conform to their sex role by publicly showing their "masculine" character. Power is an important part of what our society considers important to males, and the male students at Northside felt pressure to prove their "masculine character" to their peers by showing power over themselves, over other men, and over women.

Power over oneself, or the ability to do what one wants, is illustrated by the male students' desire to drive and to own a car. Driving to school was enormously popular at Northside; much more so than can be accounted for by mere need for transportation. The students were at a time when they were breaking away from dependence on their families and establishing themselves as individuals, and the newly found privilege of driving came to symbolize independence and power to do and go where one wants. Thus, the ability to drive to school was seen as a sign of power. The fact that the male drivers competed to see who had the fastest, newest, most attractive, etc. car shows that they also proved their "masculine identity" by showing power over other men. Finally, the male student showed their "masculinity" by asserting power over women. Sexual conquest (or at least bragging about or showing interest in it) was considered extremely important by most male students at Northside.

The Northside students' conformity to their peers' ideas of sex roles and proper dress shows that they had learned to accept the outside authority of peer opinion. Of course, there were some who refused to respond to the pressure to conform -- the freaks, as they were called, chose to reject the authority of peer opinion, and instead developed their own tastes and ideas. However, they paid the price of social rejection and alienation from most of their peers for their individualism.

COPING WITH PRESSURE TO CONFORM

Let's look back over the different ways high school students are socialized to conform, and then look for ways of coping. First, the high schools teach conformity to the idea of class status by exaggerating and creating differences between students, and giving some higher status than others. That the students learn to differentiate and rank is reflected in the way they divide themselves into cliques. Second, the high schools teach conformity to nationalistic spirit by instilling a sense of "us" and "them" -- and the belief that some students are somehow different (and better) than those in other schools paves the way for an unfounded feeling of superiority to people who live in other countries. Finally, the schools teach blind acceptance of authority by stifling individualism and by imposing needlessly authoritarian rules. This is reflected by the students' blind acceptance

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of the authority of peer opinion; that is, their eagerness to conform to the rest of the group.

High school students, then, are faced with an enormous amount of pressure to conform. It comes from school policies and teachers, as well as from other students. Faced with such intense pressure to accept cultural norms like class status, nationalism, and blind acceptance of authority, how can a student develop her or his own values and ideas? How can one avoid being a pawn of the school environment and become a real individual?

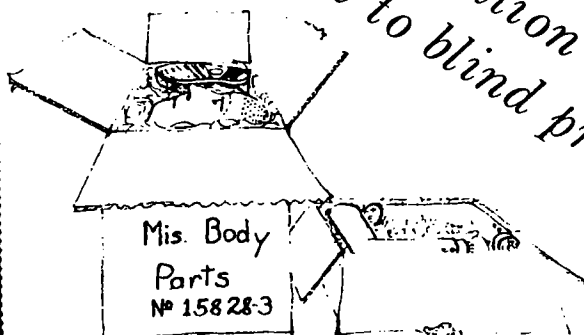
It is important to remember that the purpose of teaching conformity to high school students is not so much to get them to believe in the idea or value that they are conforming to as much as it is to get them to accept the authority which is demanding conformity -- whether it is the authority of the school or of peer opinion. Therefore, refusing to conform is really a rejection of authority, rather than a rejection of the rules the authority imposes. But how does authority choose the rules it will impose? Do the rules grow out of actual need for a particular rule? If so, we would have to believe that the schools really care who parks where, chooses their own classes, leaves the grounds, or how often they attend. Similarly, are we to believe that the rules that the authority of peer opinion imposes (such as what students must wear or how they must behave in relation to their sex role) really matter? Surely not -- we must conclude that these rules are arbitrarily chosen, and imposed for the purpose of imposing authority.

To be a nonconformist, then, is not necessarily a matter of having different values and opinions, nor are there any real differences between conformist and nonconformists, as the conformists would like to believe. The only real difference lies in the willingness to question the real power of the "authorities" one is faced with. Nonconformity is the willingness to stop and think, and to use one's reason to find the best course of action for oneself, rather than blindly following the masses. In short, nonconformity is the willingness to trust one's own reason.

Yet conformity is not as easy as it sounds -- the Northside freaks were nonconformists, but they suffered social rejection and alienation as the price of nonconformity. Sometimes they even let the

cont. on p.12

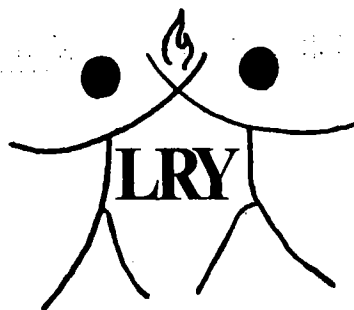
"Not blind opposition to progress, but opposition to blind progress."



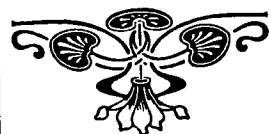
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masses convince them that they were somehow different or strange, or "weird". In reality, there were no differences between the freaks and the others, any more than there are between any other individuals -- and yet the fact that the freaks questioned the authority of those who told them they must conform gave the freaks lower status and made them social outcasts.

It seems that high school students have a choice in how they deal with pressure to conform: they can either blindly accept the things they are pressured to conform to, and be accepted; or they can think about whether or not the idea they are being pressured to conform to is actually best for themselves, and run the risk of being labeled "freak".

At Northside there was a small subgroup of the freaks, commonly known as the "faggots". They were the extremists; the ones who rejected the authority of peer opinion, and to some extent that of the school, and were the most blatant about flaunting this rejection. Despite the implications of the group's name, being a member of the faggots had nothing to do with one's sexuality, although unfounded assumptions about it were usually made by others. The faggots insisted that their own tastes in clothing and interests were as good as anyone else's, and refused to change them in order to conform. They were the feminists, both men and women, who refused to conform to their sex role; they were the ones who stood up for unpopular political causes; and most of all, they were the ones who, when suspected of being a "faggot", made no attempt to prove otherwise! The price the faggots paid for their blatant nonconformity was constant suspicion and rejection. Physical and psychological harassment from students (and in a few cases, from school administrators and counselors) was a real and constant threat.

I am not suggesting that all high school students, like the Northside faggots, blatantly reject the authority of those who demand conformity -- the price of blatant nonconformity, after all, is blatant harassment. What I am suggesting is that whenever you feel pressured to conform, think about it first. Decide for yourself what is best for you, and do it. Always question the authority of those who want you to conform, and decide for yourself if that person is qualified to tell you what to do. The most important thing is that there is no real difference between a conformist and a non-conformist, despite all the social rejection that comes with nonconformity -- the only difference is the nonconformist's willingness to trust his or her own reason. I, for one, would like to believe that our world would be a much better place to be if more people consciously thought about what was best for themselves and for others, and if fewer people were willing to blindly follow along.

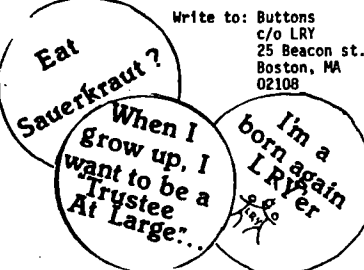


THE END

Button Contest!

At the Winter Board of Directors meeting held in Kansas City, Mo, the Board directed us to instigate a contest to find a new design for buttons. So here it is. There are no big fancy prizes, but if your design is picked You Can Have Your Name In Big Print In People Soup!!! If you have a design you would like to see on an LRY button or if you like any of the designs below please let us know and then LRY can have NEW BUTTONS!

Write to: Buttons
c/o LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA
02108



I Know Some Great
Islands In The South
Pacific



REGIONAL LDC'S

The Regional Leadership Development Conferences are still happening. These conferences are for all high school aged UU youth. It is envisioned that all youth should gain good leadership skills for personal use, and to share with others.

We are looking for interested people in the Rocky Mountain and Eastern Canada-St. Lawrence District areas. If you are from one of these areas and would like to help or participate, please contact the LRY office.

If you are from another area, and would like to help or participate in future conferences, please contact the LRY office.

Write to:
Leadership Development Conferences
c/o LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02108

EVER BEEN IN OMAHAHA?

Well here's your chance!! The Missouri Valley/North Star Federation is having it's first conference of the 80's in Omaha, Nebraska. The theme of the conference is Creativity. It is happening the 8-9-10 of February at the Second Unitarian Church of Omaha. For more information write: Andy Bloomer
4627 W. 62nd terr.
Fairway, KS 66204

UUUN

Interested in world affairs and the UN? Why not become involved in the UUUN office? They have several programs for youth and adults alike, including seminars, visits to the UN, and social actions projects. A youth seminar with the theme of disarmament will be held in the fall of this year. For more information on the UU-UN office, write:

James Olson, Director
UU-UN Office
Room 7D, 777 UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017

- or -
UUUN/LRY (youth seminar only)
25 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

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Please mark cheque Erica Fund. The book will be mailed to you first class.

Corrections

We'd like to apologize for several mistakes in the last issue of *People Soup*, "International Year of the Child".

Credit for the cover picture goes to Greg Zoerheide and credit Lane Betz, cook for the LRY Board meeting and for the original draft of the article on Continental Conference. Also meritorious of applause is Tom Perchlik whose doodles were scattered throughout the issue. Also, the Reverend Wayne Arnason who is referred to on page 7 as the Consultant on Youth Programs. We'd also like to apologize for the appearance and delay of the *Soup* as a paper strike and printing problems, in addition to it's obese nature, caused that.

interns

Live and work with the Executive Committee for a month. While working for your favorite organization, you will be staying in Boston for free food, lodging and transportation around the city of Boston. You'll write and edit articles for *People Soup*, assist with packets, mailing and a whole lot more!

While staying in the capital of MA, you'll learn all the ins and outs of LRY. You'll be in the heart of the Unitarian Universalist action. Catch up on some gossip, find out what Unitarianism and Universalism really are.

Send us your name and address to the address below and we will be glad to send you the application.

Interns
c/o LRY
25 Beacon St.
Boston, MA
02108

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If you would like to receive the Advisors Newsletter or find out more about it, fill out the form below.

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