

THE PROMETHEAN

Symposium for Liberal Religious Youth

Vol. III, Number 3

May 1966



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A SYMPOSIUM FOR LIBERAL RELIGIOUS YOUTH:

YOUTH AUTONOMY;
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Volume III, Number 3

Editor, Henry Koch

The ideas and opinions expressed by contributors to THE PROMETHEAN do not necessarily represent the position of every LRY'er nor of Continental LRY. This is a symposium which welcomes diversity of opinion and invites letters to the Editor from youth and adults.

Note: The final issue of THE PROMETHEAN is devoted to "A Radical Look at Liberal Religion".

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INTRODUCTION AND CREDITS

I have my doubts about some of the material in this issue and about the theme. On reading it all over again I begin to realize that a learning and growing experience as profound (or, if that word repels you, confounding) as that which many people have in LRY cannot be described easily. LRY'ers seem to have considerable difficulty discussing it either from an objective or subjective viewpoint. I think it will be several years before I or, for that matter, any other LRY'ers I know, can truly evaluate LRY or adolescence. This is why some of the best and most objective material printed here was written by adults who have worked with LRY'ers.

There isn't really any single point made by these articles, stories, and poems, save, perhaps, that both self-direction and outer direction, inner goals and outer goals, are the bases of the LRY "experience." One simply cannot make an irrevocable rule or formulate a credo for LRY. As has been pointed out in several of the articles printed here, one of the most valuable qualities of the LRY program is its flexibility. You could say I meant lack of planning, not flexibility, but despite their apparent lack of direction LRY programs do very often succeed, and even when they don't, the experience of failure is a learning experience.

Susan Ransom of Harvard, Massachusetts, wrote the poem which begins this issue. It first appeared as an editorial in the newsletter of the Nashoba Federation of which she is editor. The poem originally followed the comment, "At Mid-Winter Conference this past Xmas someone advanced the opinion that atheists would have nothing to motivate them to get up in the morning, so I wrote a poem about it."

'Youth Autonomy'--A Phoney Issue was written by Bob Marshall, Minister of the Birmingham, Michigan, Unitarian Church and former Ministerial Advisor to the Michindoh Federation.

Martha Bailey wrote the short short story, and The Grass Turned Brown, which first appeared in the Central Midwest Federation's Liberal.

A former LRY'er, Ivy Rutzky, from Huntington Woods, Michigan, did the pen and ink drawing which faces And The Grass Turned Brown.

Jay Smith and his wife, Irene, are advisors to Central Midwest Federation. Jay manufactures Merlin banjos in Chicago.

Richard Schickel's Why Young People Are Seeking New Values originally appeared in the May, 1966, Redbook magazine and excerpts are reprinted here with permission.

Blue Fantasy was written by Glen Lindwall, editor of the Missouri Valley Federation's West Wind.

Woody Wright, whose poems appear in the Promethean with astonishing regularity, is President of the Missouri Valley Federation.

The article by Peter Baldwin, Executive Director of LRY, is taken from a new pamphlet entitled, Well, You Bug Me Sometimes Too.

Inside was written by Steve Lubet, Editor of the Central Midwest Federation's Liberal.

Bill Sinkford is a sophomore at Harvard and President of LRY. In August I Will Be Leaving LRY is Bill's recollection of his experiences in LRY.

The last poem in this issue appeared anonymously in the October, 1965, Starr King Federation LRWire.

The photographs in the cover design were taken by a machine in Penn Station. The other photographs in this issue were taken at Antioch College. Although the photographer was never in LRY, the subject was.

the fact of me-

a freeness immeasurable in time, a life.
I can wiggle my toes and dance.

the fact of We-

holding hands and laughing, talking, touching,
WE can be.

the fact of them-

never touching or really seeing, they wander,
but I care.

the world-

has a need for human people
ME.

'YOUTH AUTONOMY'--A PHONEY ISSUE

"Youth autonomy" as an LRY slogan is a snare and an illusion. As a slogan it is empty of meaning, as a prescription for a programmatic approach to a viable youth movement it is useless, and can be harmful. The real question is not autonomy, but alienation.

The concept of alienation is a meaningful opening onto the problem of individuals and groups in this half of the Twentieth Century. The notion of youth autonomy feeds into what we see--the tragedy of alienation, the dichotomy between the ideal and the real, the chasm between the philosopher and the existentialist, the split between reason and emotion, the separateness which pushes people apart, the warfare between teens and adults, the religion which lacks relevance for daily living, the job which organizes life into contrasting poles, the shatterings of families.

Who am I? Who are we? Significant answers to these questions are impossible so long as alienation characterizes individuals and groups. Pertinent answers to these queries can be found only in discovering our individual and collective membership in the web of life, our belongingness in the loom of history, our relationship in a fabric of fellowship. Let us affirm that we are heirs and participants in a struggle of a thousand-thousand generations. (Implied here is a strong sympathy for the viewpoint of Camus, and a considerable lack of sympathy for that of Sartre.) To understand and to affirm that we are self-conscious members of the eon-old thrust of life is to answer not only the "who" questions, but to give us some clues for the "why" and "how" queries as well.

A logical corollary then--we need each other. In this confused, impersonal age when the answers to the basic questions have an inevitable ambiguity (despite the brave words just written), we need each other very much. Youth does not have all the answers. Adulthood does not have all the answers. Both youth and adults can learn from each other. All of us must learn from all of us.

A spirit of mutual exchange, of joint comradeship in the search, of kinship with each other in the ongoing processes of life--this is what is meant when we proclaim that we need each other. We must share experiences, ideas, hopes, dreams--and thoughts about tactics and strategies, too. Of course adult dictatorship is just as foreign to this free spirit as youth autonomy.

. Especially for Unitarian-Universalists, the feeling of partnership and companionship between the generations and across the generational lines can be keen and warming. And "it should be, it should be, it should be like that." For we are a tiny minority in a world where the responses to the thrust and push of life oftentimes are dull, indifferent, and passive. . . and too frequently active opposition, enmity, and hostility. Men and women and teen-agers in the liberal religious movement need each other, not only because all humankind have common bonds, but because we have lit some special campfires against the night. Around these small fires all of us must gather to swap our tales, bind our wounds, and plan our sorties for the morrow.

As an active participant in many projects and programs with high-schoolers, some of these in LRY at the local church, federation, and summer camp levels, I am aware the broad theories sound better sometimes than the specific practices. In an age where alienation is a prevalent threat, we all bear some of the infection of suspicion, doubt, and distrust. All of us are hesitant to open ourselves to each other. This is complicated, moreover, by some unavoidable but nagging differences in vocabulary and experience. Learning from each other is not easy. In an age characterized by alienation real honesty with our fellows is most difficult. All learning, in fact, and all honesty is arduous. I am notorious for some of my own failures in learning quickly from some of my younger colleagues and co-workers who are of high school age. Just so, this cuts both ways.

But I am convinced that the theoretical approach ventured here is wise and meaningful. Equally am I convinced that when some other philosophical base is employed (either youth autonomy or adult dictatorship) the results in specific practice are catastrophic. While the more democratic approach of comradeship and partnership is difficult to employ in actual daily practice, too, I've seen it work.

Much of the reason LRY activities and youth-adult relations bog down is because of a theoretical underpinning which is inadequate or misleading. As indicated, both "youth autonomy" and "adult dictatorship" stand indicted as a philosophical or intellectual rationale for our existence and our living. As indicated, a philosophy of democratic partnership and comradeship is difficult, too, is hard to build upon in all the details of programming, planning, working, and playing. But if we would try it, would begin to develop its practical ramifications, the results in specific practice might shape up in a far-more hopeful and satisfactory fashion. Make that statement stronger--an honest association between youth and adults, each playing those specific

roles most suited to them in that association, could give us an LRY movement which would astonish us, which would have depth and excitement beyond our wildest dreams.

It is not my intent in this brief article to try to spell this out. Candidly, before LRY can realize its possibilities, can do the sort of job it might do, we must all cope with present philosophical shortcomings. An obvious example is the theory of "youth autonomy." Lurking in the background is the less-obvious shortcoming of "adult dictatorship." If we can surmount the theoretical barriers to frank interchange, if we can minimize the rationalizations for alienation, LRY could then start to swing at all levels of its organizational life and structure. Adults might learn to swing, too. Recognizing our membership one unto another is the first and basic step.

AND THE GRASS TURNED BROWN

"Mommy, I'm home."

"Fine, dear. How was your day?"

"O.K. I guess."

"Fine."

"I learned something today, Mommy, I really did."

"And what was that, dear?"

"Mommy, did you know that one mole of CO_2 requires one mole of CaCO_3 ?"

"No, I didn't know that, dear. But that's fine. Did you learn anything else?"

"No, Mommy, that's all."

"That's fine, dear, fine. Dear, I've told you before that I don't like to see you chewing gum."

"But, Mommy, I like to chew gum. It relaxes me."

"SPIT THAT GUM OUT RIGHT NOW . . . or I'll tell your father."

"All right Mommy. Mommy, where is God?"

"Why you know that. You go to church. You're a smart girl. YOU KNOW THAT!"

"Can I go outside, Mommy?" The grass is so green."

"No, dear, you know the rules. No play 'til your work is done. Now give Mommy a kiss, dear."

"No, Mommy, I think I hate you."



I have my doubts about some of the . . .

WHAT PRICE AUTONOMY? . . . or, THREE CHEERS FOR THE UUA!

A Midwestern Advisor's Beady-eyed Look at LRY . . .

I'm sure that we have all experienced the phenomenon of knowing exactly what someone is going to say - just before they say it. My predictive accuracy is now approaching perfect with respect to questions concerning dependency relationships between the youth and adult communities in LRY.

The LRY'ers will point out that the church provides a meeting place, occasional adults, and money at the various levels of LRY organization. Implied, but never mentioned, are those funds supplied by parents for attendance at LRY activities - surely a valid adult community dependency.

On balance, the LRY'er may contend that the adults need: ". . . our creativity and vitality - we are a foil to their vegetation!"

Querying the UUA adults will generally bring one of three responses: (1) a small group is openly hostile; (2) the largest group simply just doesn't know what one is talking about - usually because of a lack of information, not because they are unconcerned; and (3) an encouragingly large number of adults have valid, pertinent ideas about adolescence, LRY, youth autonomy, and their interrelation.

An examination of LRY as a youth-run organization, and the motivations and expectations of the young people and adults who face LRY as a reality, may give us new insights into the dynamics of the situation.

Rather than attempt to evaluate LRY against the "official" LRY purpose, we shall examine some of the things LRY is and some of the things LRY is not. This may give us a better understanding of the "youth-run" concept as it actually operates in LRY - surely liberal religious youth could be united under some other philosophy of structure. Let us contrast the youth-run feature of LRY with comparable facets of youth participation in high school, Sunday school and scouting.

High school is essentially achievement oriented. A professional staff follows a professionally oriented curriculum in trying to impart x knowledge into y bodies. True, growth and development of the individual are very real concerns, but the emphasis is drastically limited by the student/faculty ratio. High school learning is also competitive. Choice of college, professors, and even course of study depends on high school grades and class standing - a reality which one sometimes learns rather late in the game.

Now a goodly amount of the structured LRY program is intellectual. The quality of the content is generally unpredictable. But the situation is not competitive. . .

the youth-run group is seeking knowledge on its own. The youth-run group has created its own formal learning situation - even though it did not have to! When the program is good, it is very, very good - our LRY'ers have learned that self-sought knowledge can be exciting and rewarding. And when the program is bad it is still good - not wasted time, but a valuable learning experience, a rehearsal for college and adult world.

We have Sunday school with its volunteer staff, and LRY with its volunteer advisors. As a denominationally affiliated youth group, it would seem reasonable that the similarities between LRY and Unitarian-Universalist Sunday school programs would outweigh the differences. Not so, however. The Sunday school program remains at an adult-child level, while LRY effects adult-adult relationships. The Sunday school, in its 1 1/2 or 2 hours each week, must structure its entire program. The weekly LRY meeting probably represents 25% to 50% of the total weekly LRY time for each member. One might say that the youth-run character of LRY creates a situation which its participants "live through" rather than attend.

We must also acknowledge that many Unitarian-Universalists (and future Unitarian-Universalists) found our denomination through LRY, and did not attend our Sunday schools.

The contrast between a scout camp and an LRY summer conference is most interesting. If the LRY theme was about nature and woods-lore, the camp schedules might be quite similar, superficially. The similarity, however, would be superficial. The adult directed scout camp program is kitchen-tested--it is tried and true--it is quite predictable--it is a good program--and it is "given" to the young people.

The LRY summer conference is planned and staffed (during the winter) by the LRY'ers with the "advice" of adults with whom they meet. Each year is exciting--fluid--different. Each year is a new experiment as the LRY'ers test their old ideas, and search for new ones. Each conference becomes a laboratory as the LRY'ers (both youth committee and campers) learn their responsibilities to each other in their micro-society. True, this year's mistakes may be repeated in two years; but this year's youth committee may graduate next year.

Now that we have examined some of the phenomena peculiar to our youth-run youth group, we can identify some of the reasonable expectations of the teen-agers and adults.

The Teen-ager can reasonable expect stimulation and freedom in LRY. Stimulation to try to understand himself and his society. Freedom to seek truth and question . . . freedom to express ideas without fear of ridicule . . . freedom to make honest mistakes without losing the love and respect of friends.

A reasonable adult expectancy for LRY is that it provide an atmosphere of stimulation and freedom for the teen-ager (as described above). A reasonable adult goal is the growth and development of the LRY'ers as individuals - not the accomplishments of the group.

Another reasonable goal is to see the LRY'ers graduate and leave LRY. The college experience is not like the high school and LRY experience. It is a new and different phase of life. High school participation in LRY can be considered a rehearsal for college. One expects the teen-ager to "move on" when he graduates from high school, and face his new challenge with the benefit of his past experience.

But, if everything is for the best in this best of all possible youth groups, why do LRY'ers and adults create hostile situations? Communications, of course. Especially with regard to "limits" and "image".

Everybody has "limits". Everybody includes teen-agers, advisors, parents, church secretaries, laymen, ministers, etc. Limits are restrictions placed on oneself (including self-imposed), and restrictions placed on others. These restrictions can be for psychological, ethical or whatever reasons. They can even be quite illogical, but they are, nevertheless, quite real.

As an example, I can accept the idea of reasonable horseplay after camp curfew; however, swimming without a lifeguard is unacceptable. I could not tolerate an LRY'er in camp who went swimming during off hours without the lifeguard. It would not be a question of "testing" my reaction - I do not have an open mind on this subject.

If teen-agers and adults who work together in LRY (and, indeed, everywhere else)

would try to honestly communicate their limits to each other, they would certainly improve their mutual understanding.

I do not use the word "image" in the sense of phyness. I mean that the LRY groups and the Unitarian Universalist societies should strive to communicate true and complete images of themselves to each other. Too often one group is aware of the other only when being irritated. Knowing all about each other will put unfortunate incidents into their proper perspective. The youth and the adults lose the labels of "good" and "bad". Rather, they become people (even friends!) who happened to do this or that.

Having considered some of the "whats" and "whys" of LRY, I should like to theorize a bit about "how". Just how did youth-run LRY evolve? Well, friends, I just can't believe that somebody turned over a rock and there it was. Youth-run LRY is very, very much like the adult-run Unitarian Universalist Association. The ideas and actions of the LRY'ers, and those of the adult members of our societies are quite parallel. The concepts of the free and questing mind, the use of reason, creativity and imagination in religion and life, respect for the dignity and integrity of the individual, a sense of social responsibility, and the development of a personal faith are all concepts which have been introduced to the future LRY'er in the Sunday schools of the Unitarian Universalist Association. It is reasonable for LRY to be just as it is!

Recently I heard the participation in our societies described as a continuum from the infant to the oldest member. Being a teen-ager and an LRY'er is an experience as one moves along the continuum to take an adult role in our family. And the infants become the teen-agers and LRY'ers. There is much love and understanding in this idea.

EXCERPTS FROM WHY YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SEEKING NEW VALUES

To state it bluntly, Erikson believes that our society--any society--gets the kind of children it deserves, even secretly wants. If our children disappoint us, he suggests, it is because the world we create for them --and which, of course, influences their values and aspirations--disappoints us even more. Preadult young men and women are often confused. In any era they want to know what they should believe in, what they should try to become. What frightens some adults is the fact that many adolescents work at these questions with furious intensity. And adolescent frustration when the answers refuse to come easily is often terrible to behold.

In his remarkable book *Childhood and Society*, Erikson suggests one possible answer to their questions. He reminds readers that when Freud was asked what he thought a normal person should be able to do well, he replied simply, "To love and to work."

But the search for identity is not the only thing that preoccupies adolescents. There is also, in the late teens, the beginning of the search for love--or, as Erikson puts it, the struggle to master the problems of intimacy. This is a necessary prelude to love--but it seems to him that our social system in general and our educational system in particular are designed to limit the opportunities for the kinds of close friendships and inspirational teaching that help a youngster develop a capacity for love. When education is geared mainly to preparation for economic success and when success is defined mainly as learning to get along in order to get ahead, human intimacy is bound to be regarded as a dangerous distraction from the one true path.

Friedenberg declares that the problem is not that so many youths rebel against such pressures, but that so few do.

The typical teen-ager, he says, "is enraged not at the tyranny of adults but at their blandness, their weakness, their emptiness. . . . Rebellion would be a lot cozier than this feeling that one has been gutted, that one is trapped, because there are no possibilities in humanity itself."

Thus both children and adults are victimized by society. But the burden falls more heavily on young people simply because adults have power over them. The natural parental abhorrence over the fact that they can't fully control adolescents is intensified, Friedenberg thinks, by what amounts to a deep envy of youth and their "life not yet squandered." But since much of this antagonism to the young is not conscious, it festers dangerously in the dark--only to break out in the schools, to which parents have delegated the job of keeping young people in line.

In his latest book, *Coming of Age in America*, Friedenberg is devastatingly specific in his charges against our schools. Their spirit may be recaptured by any reader who remembers his school days' myriad rules of conduct and deportment, the ostensible function of which was to make you "a nice person" but which had as its real purpose the "infantilization" of adolescence and the ensnarement of youngsters "in the trailing remnants of childhood emotions which always remain to trap them."

To add to the problem, Friedenberg says, we have turned over to the schools functions that used to take place elsewhere, placing the schools in a position to alter the way a child grows, his values, his sense of his own worth, even his patterns of anxiety. And these, Friedenberg insists, are matters too important to be left to those whose major concern is formal education.

BLUE FANTASY

"No, son," the fat, bald scientist grunted as he patted me on top of my eight-year-old head, "the sky isn't really blue. It is only an optical illusion." I kicked him on the shin. He looked like he was going to tell me next that Santa Claus was an optical illusion too.

That evening my father tried to calm my fears about the sky. "Would it not be just as pretty if it were green or pink or violet?"

"But I like it blue; the blue is good enough."

Man in the modern society must be extremely cautious in the presence of such radicals or they will surely indoctrinate us with these obviously incorrect falsehoods and we shall return to the dark ages.

- - -

"No, son," the obese sociologist said as he patted the forty-year-old infant atop the head, "the negro is not really inferior. He has darker skin but is just like you inside." The infant kicked the sociologist on the shin as though he were about to be told that Santa Claus is a negro.

A woman asked him, "Would you not be exactly the same whether you had brown or yellow or even blue skin?"

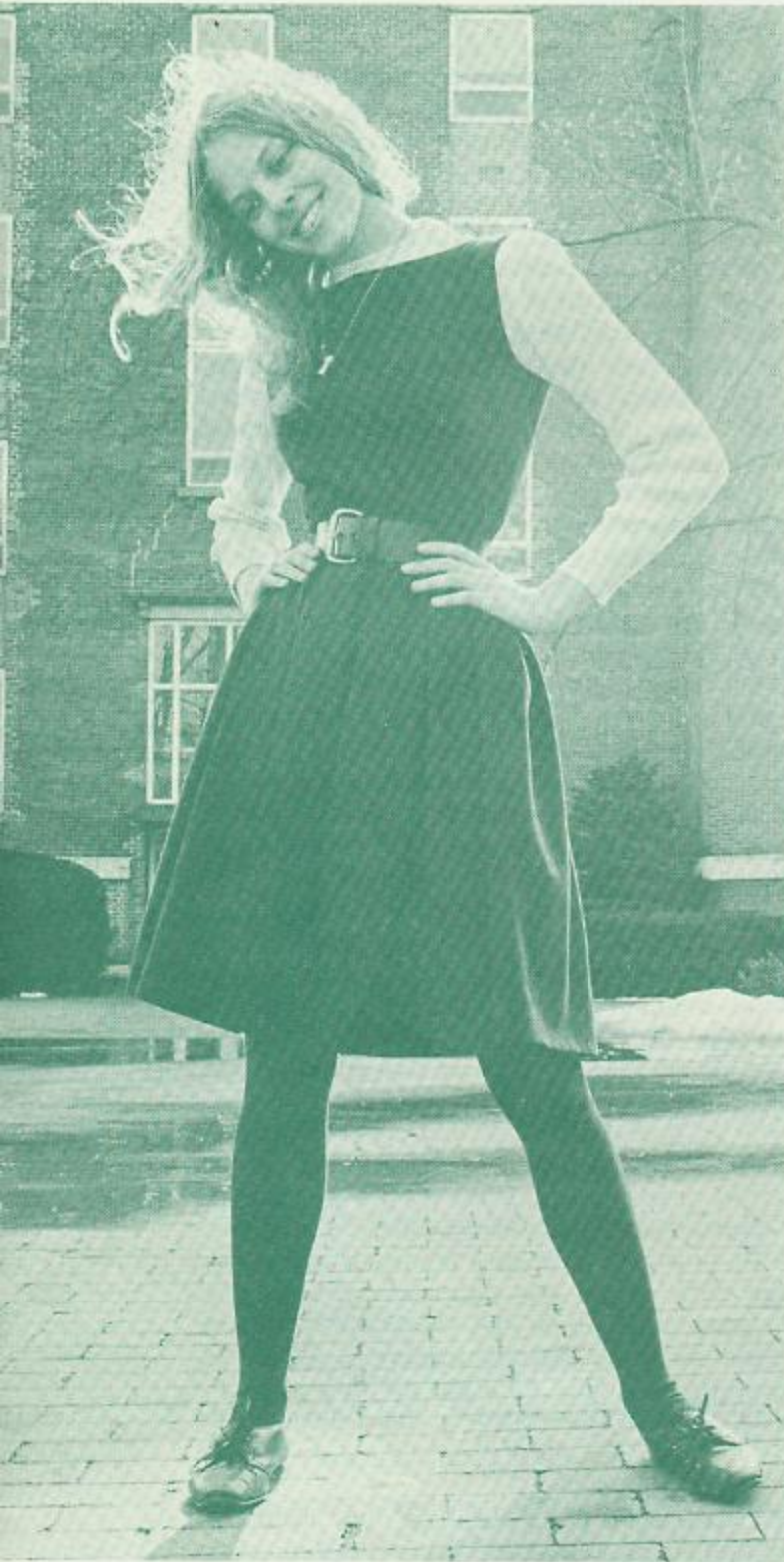
"But I am white, the whites are good enough for me."

Man in the modern society must be extremely cautious about radicals like the sociologist or they will surely indoctrinate us with their blasphemy. If man doesn't heed these warnings, someday we may be told that brown-eyed people are just as smart as blue-eyed people. Every day we approach the dark ages.

The high school, then, does not help the student test various roles and identities; it does not help him to "connect" his unique gift with some suitable adult role. Instead, it attempts to force everyone into the current statistical model of normality. Any tentative step toward trying another role is frowned on or laughed at or ignored. Most likely the odd youth will simply be left behind, standing on the corner with the other dropouts, watching the swelling parade to college.

And college, according to Paul Goodman, is new organized like a model of the great rat race that students are going to enter upon graduation. Instead of a leisurely, civilized pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, the college student finds he must pursue good grades that will ensure the good job in the good, materially rich life to come. College is no longer the refreshing contrast it once was to high school; too often it is nothing but a sophisticated extension of that dreary, regulation-bound place. No wonder the colleges are hurrying to re-create some of the old atmosphere of higher learning; no wonder the student body is restless with revolt.

This is not merely an abstract question of social justice; it is a matter of vital self-interest to everyone. As Erik Erikson says, "It is the young who, by their responses and actions, tell the old whether life as represented by the old and presented to the young has meaning." Young people at the moment are withholding any such assurance. That some among us are willing to ponder these deeply disturbing questions is a good omen. But if we are to take critics like Friedenberg and Goodman seriously, we must look beyond piecemeal reform, beyond nuts-and-bolts adjustments. We must do nothing less than take up the ultimate question of what constitutes a good life in a good society for all of us. THE END



NIGHT WIND

It's a cool feelin',
Racin' down the highway at night
In a V-W, with your
Head stickin' out the top,
And the wind tearing at your face,
Pushin' your cheeks back to your ears
An' flattenin' your nose
Like a sculptor workin' modelin' clay,
With tears streamin' out a your eyes
Over your ears

 Ticklin' your neck,
Makin' all the lights
Seem like striated diamonds
Scattered everywhere
Along the road.

It's a cool feelin',
Up there by yourself,
Watchin' the world
With the wind caressin' your head . . .
'Cept you're by yourself
With your elbows on the cold roof,
An' a cool wind that could be warm
'Cause you need somebody
In a wind like that,
Somebody you can put your arm around,
Somebody you can turn to
An' see the tears streamin' out a her eyes
With her hair blowin' wildly
So you can laugh at her
An' she can laugh at you,
So you can be gods together,
Lookin' out over the world
On top of a V-W at night.

It's a cool feelin',
But it's so lonely
You could eat your heart out
Thinkin' about it.
An' your tears aren't caused
By the wind rushin' past anymore . . .

 But maybe they are,
Racin' down the highway at night.

THE LOCAL GROUP: MORE THAN FOOLING AROUND

No other living creature is as thoroughly dependent upon the care of its parents when first born as the human infant and no other living creature appears to contain such a rich variety of potentials for ultimate freedom from the rule of instinct. We say that every human being is unique, that his or her life may in our kind of society move in any number of directions. We place premium value on the person who, after having been offered basic care, explores inborn potential and works toward becoming what he or she is capable of becoming. Our philosophy of man tends to be a philosophy of becoming, thanks to the new third force of psychology which emphasizes power of the conscious mind and the force of attracting values rather than the power of instinctual needs and the compulsive force of ego-centric values. During childhood the human being identifies himself as a child in a child-parent relationship and operates within a familial orientation in which he is for the most part dependent upon parental figures. At first the human child depends upon parental figures for all his needs, he must move during his childhood years from the point where his physical needs have been provided for, where he has been made to feel welcome in this world, accepted and valued, to the point where he protects himself, accepts himself and others, provides for himself and others and finally, attains a sense of personal connection and collaboration with life. He needs, in other words, to move from predominant dependence upon parent figures to relative autonomy; he needs to exchange his child-parent identity for a parent-child identity.

This does not happen automatically nor in a social vacuum. Nor does this happen within what might be called familial community experience alone. There are two kinds of community which a person must experience fully and effectively in order for this transformation to take place: familial community and peer community. In order for a person to become an effective parent and responsible, productive member of the adult community, he must first experience sufficient gratification as a child in relationship with careing parental figures with whom he experiences and from whom he can appropriate basic trust in life, belongingness, self respect, direction, ideological orientation and personal connection with life. Simple appropriation, however, is not enough. The person who merely operates as a parent when parenthood is thrust upon him after the fashion of his own parents is not an authentic parent; he is still a child dependent upon his parents, pantomiming a role appropriated directly from them. For a person to become an authentic adult and a parent in his own right, he has to remove himself some distance from, although not altogether away from, his child-parent familial orientation. He needs to test himself out in another kind of community, an age and interest peer community. As a child, one's peers are not one's parents and with one's peers one finds relief from the frustrations of the child-parent familial setting and companions with whom one can test out what one has appropriated from parents, explore one's own approaches and rehearse things to come. It is with one's peers that one explores one's different selves. And it is with one's peers that one rehearses for one's ultimate role as a parent in a parent-child relationship in places of the old role as child in the child-parent relationship within the familial community.

LRY offers a peer group experience for children in their adolescence. A group of LRYers shared with one another what they had found and what they valued most in their LRY experience. One said that she felt that it was with her LRY experience that she had begun to feel a part of the church itself. Another responded that for

her the most important experience was finding that she belonged with the other LRYers; this was for her a feeling of belonging not experienced in quite the same manner anywhere else. A third put in that more than belonging, he felt he was accepted, with all his idiosyncracies. Still another added that what he liked most was that he felt needed; he knew he was missed when he was absent. The last contributed that what meant most to her was to be part of a group of people searching together to work out the puzzling questions of life. There is clearly a need on the part of some LRY'ers to derive from their group experience where, they feel, they are stifled and their imaginations inhibited. They enjoy "organized confusion" at their meetings which delights them for all of its chaos. In this very clearly adult-oriented culture, many of our young people need peer group experience as relief from adult structuring and a chance to explore the nature and possibilities of their own generation.

What about this "organized confusion"? They create a community and an organization for themselves and then, more unwittingly than wittingly I am sure, confuse it, and derive great satisfaction from the confusion. Take one group for an example. It has a regular attendance of thirty-five. Now that's quite a sociological accomplishment, thirty-five people arranging their lives in such a way and determining to spend two hours a week in a particular place. And this is more than a gathering; they have created for themselves a group. There is organization. There are beginning and ending times; there are elected and appointed leaders, and there is even the appearance of recognizable program and planning. And yet, when asked whether they accomplished very much in the measurable sense, they confessed "not very much."

I asked their president, "Do you conduct business sessions?"

"Yes."

"Do you complete your agenda?"

Consternation all over his face. "No."

"Do you have serious programs occasionally?"

"Yes."

"Do you feel you get very far in your discussions?"

Painfully. "No."

"Why don't you quit your post?"

Astonished. "Quit? Good heavens no!"

When asked what kind of relief they find when LRY meets, a group replied in chorus:

"From school, from home."

"Are school and home that dreadful?"

"No, they're not dreadful really. It's just that my whole life save for LRY is a great big organized production. Shall I go through my schedule from morning to night? Never mind? You can imagine? Very well then. I like school, and my parents are

O.K. but when it comes down to hard facts, when the world says, 'jump,' I have to jump, and how can you really fight it? As people have been saying for a long time, 'How can you fight city hall?'

These young people find relief when LRY meets from 'authoritarian' demands upon them from the adult world which they feel they cannot fight. And so they create for themselves their own community with its authority structure and channels of communication which they then use, I venture to say, more unwittingly than wittingly, as a substitute for the adult dominated communities - school and home.

"Much as I love my parents, I'm scared to think that I'm going to turn out just like them. I'm terrified by the effectiveness with which one generation can imprint its patterns and sets upon those of the next generation! And when adults hear us complaining about their generation they say, 'just you wait; you'll turn out the same. When you grow older and have to face the realities of life, you'll see things the way we do.' This simply terrifies me; it can't be that way. We're going to have to be different." The younger generation can be different, but only if they can enjoy while they are young relative distance from the dominance of adult patterns and perceptions. And this is why young people need opportunities to create for themselves in their local group and at their federation conferences a community within which they can review, test and explore. LRY offers young people a rather impressive range of opportunities week after week in local meetings, in between meetings with one another, from time to time at special conferences and summer camps: to explore ideas, struggle with personal, social and religious questions, develop a sense of who one is and what one is about and grow increasingly able to develop rich relationships.

INSIDE

Disenchantment comes most often when it can be least readily accepted. It may come in the form of a sure fire idea that doesn't quite pan out. It may come in the form of a politician who betrays his promises. It may come in the form of an unfaithful lover. Or it may come in the form of the misrepresentation of an entire group of people:

I search out, to have as my comrades,
Those who agree and sympathize and concur.
Man, as animal, needs be social
And man, as social, needs be content.
Through life and world the greatest pleasure
Comes always when one is, or believes himself, correct.
So I search out, to have as my comrades,
Those who will agree and prove me right.

I entered a large double door
And my thoughts ran to anticipation.
Inside people laughing--and I had never
Laughed with but had only been laughed at.
Inside people discussing--and I had never
Discussed but it had turned to shouting.
Inside people pleading--and never had I heard
A plea but it was aimed in my direction
Entreating me to believe the mass.
And inside people listening--and I listened,
And never had I heard a sermon but it
Defiled my person and denied my thoughts.
Concepts which had abandoned me and
Which had alienated and eben denounced me
Were inside this building--the like
Of which had been contrary to my life.

I entered the church freely and happily
For I felt that within its non-frescoed walls
And beneath its non-spined ceiling
I might end my search for comrades.

As I entered I heard words, love and peace,
And I saw on the walls not only Christ and
Moses, but also Buddha and Camus and
I thought: Understanding.
High on the front wall was the shadow of
A once-present double-triangled Star of David
Which had been removed but not obliterated
When, earlier, the edifice had been
Purchased from its semitic owners.
I thought: Tolerance.

My eyes freely drank this possibility of acceptance,
But as they took their fill they became less exclusive.
I noticed the "joking" term Je-hovah and
I heard nigger "liberally" intoned and
Most of all I saw a conceit and self-righteousness
And a sense of not only different but better.
Concepts which had abandoned me and
Which had alienated and even denounced me
Were inside this building--the like
Of which had been contrary to my life.

These people hadn't my god and hadn't my ideals.
Dejected, at first, I left; alone with god and morals.
But what other comrades need I?
I had completed my search.

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Which had alienated and even denounced me
Were inside this building--the like
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IN AUGUST I WILL BE LEAVING LRY

In August I will be leaving LRY. It has been five years since I entered LRY. In September of my sophomore year in high school, my mother took me to the Unitarian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. We had never attended church regularly, but at that time we were looking at different churches and trying to find a church we liked and a congregation in which we would feel comfortable.

The minister, Bob O'Brien, was speaking on disarmament that morning and both Mother and I enjoyed the service. Afterwards we joined the congregation for coffee in the lobby. I was standing there, feeling rather uncomfortable (as young people are accustomed to do when they feel that they are in an adult discussion) when two young ladies approached me, introduced themselves and asked me how old I was. Being a precocious child, I was revelling in the promise which this situation held when they asked me to come to a youth group meeting that night. They told me the group was LRY.

I went that night, was given the job of putting on the worship services for the Ohio Valley Federation conference which the group was hosting in three weeks. I'm sure that the job assignment was the result of a profound manpower shortage--I had never seen an LRY conference, let alone a worship service!

The service that I did was on death and a very intellectual service it was, too. I had just decided that I was an intellectual in school and that was obvious in the service. After the service--dictionary definition of death and discussion of the implications thereof--one of the girls was merciful enough to say, "At least we could hear you."

The conference itself was great. Perhaps the high point came on Saturday afternoon when the Fed. President, a guy from Louisville, and fifteen or twenty other LRYers were sitting around singing "In the halls of LRY." There were several new LRYers in the group and no one knew our names. But the President made a point of singing a verse to each of us. I'll never know how he knew my name but I've never been so glad to be called a "pill" in my life.

Well, after that conference I was hooked. I didn't miss a fed conference or meeting and rarely a local group meeting from that point until my final conference in the spring of my senior year.

I could go on about my experiences--learning about liberal kids, learning to like and love people with long hair and "radical" ideas, learning to be emotional, learning to be responsible, growing toward maturity--but those first two experiences contain a great deal of what LRY has been for me and still is.

First of all, it was a place where I could be accepted, where I could make mistakes and still feel a part of the group. Through five years, rationalism, atheism, humanism, efficiency, procrastination, a beard, this has always been true.

Out of this acceptance, or perhaps out of something else, came self-confidence. When I went to that first local group meeting I was shivering in my shoes--and very nearly didn't go at all. Now, after many experiences of leadership, I am confident that I can handle most situations. This has meant that I have been successful in my life outside LRY, as well as inside.

I suppose that the business of leadership, confidence, or whatever, would be considered the thing which LRY has done for me. But in personal terms, there is

something of quite a different nature that I have gotten from LRY.

By being able to relate to people my age, being able to relate as an independent person, I learned to feel for other people. In a sense, LRY taught me how to be emotional and told me that it was all right to be emotional. For someone who lives in an intellectual community (Harvard University) now, there could hardly be anything more important.

Now I am studying Social Relations, a combination of psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology. In studying personality theory last term I came to understand some of what LRY had been to me in terms of psychology.

The business of identity crises seems to have into prominence as one of the central problems for psychology during the last decade. People have identity crises in LRY, but it seems to me that LRY helps people in the period after they have stopped defining themselves as part of a family and before they have come to have some identity as an individual.

LRY comes at the time when teenagers are working for independence from their parents. There is very little positive identity involved in this. The LRYers simply want to establish themselves as separate people--what kind of people is another question.

What LRY does is to allow the individual to take time and try out different personalities, just as different hair and beard styles are tried out. And since the individual is accepted in LRY almost unqualifiedly (as long as he is liberal--the case of the conservative LRYer may be different), the LRYer is not penalized for testing himself until he has found the personality and identity which he likes.

This is not to say that all LRYers have found their identity by the time they leave LRY, but LRY provides a time when this can be started. LRY allows the LRYer to take his independence and gradually become an autonomous person with his own identity.

Did you know a young girl was there?
Time draining the reality of far distant things.
She wonders and dreams
while fantasies fill the void.
Perhaps tomorrow will bring a few words.
The mist is settling around her;

a fear no words will come
a fear that they will bring a
reality
of emptiness if they
arrive.
Not really fear, just speculation.

Enough of that.
On to the other stuff of life.



EDITORIAL

On first reading the material for this issue we were somewhat disturbed by the emphasis on assimilation and adjustment. The idea of spending twenty or more years "rehearsing" for college or a significant role in adult society simply did not appeal to us. It smacked of the repressive atmosphere of American public schools described by Edgar Friedenberg in *The Vanishing Adolescent*. Rehearsal for college and the assumption of adult responsibilities sounded like laps in the rat race Paul Goodman describes in *Growing Up Absurd*.

But after further thought, we decided that our initial reaction was, perhaps, an emotional reaction--the result of an over developed and too easily offended respect for individuality. In defense of our own sense of individuality we have grown overly sensitive to social responsibilities which we often mis-interpret as attempts to stereotype and force conformity. Certainly we are not championing passivity or surrender to the mindless conformity which seems to characterize middle class America. We are not defending the American Dream, the consumer mentality, suburbia or the commuter train life style; we simply feel that there is a place for forcefully individualistic minds in American society. Withdrawal or refusal to participate in American society as it exists does nothing to reform it. Rebellion, revolution and reform all require an implicit commitment to a society that could be and thus to the society that is. We believe these are all viable substitutes for the alienation spoken of in the first issue of the *Promethean* of this year and in Bob Marshall's article and Steve Lubet's poem in this issue.

In answer to Ruth and Bruce Elwell's Manifesto to the Editor in the March, 1966, *Promethean* calling for an end to commitment to any aspect of society as it exists, we would quote from Bruce's editorial in the January, 1965, *Promethean*. "The times demand that we take the lead, still guarding the freedom to run our personal and collective lives and cherishing our deep sense of community, but becoming propagandists, militants and activists for our little portion of the Truth--yes, even revolutionaries." We believe that any revolutionary stance or ideology is the result of a commitment to society as it exists. An activist, a militant or a revolutionary has found something of value in the men, ideas, and institutions of the world, this society. He is willing to commit himself, to struggle to save those things he values from that which repels him in the present society. He wishes to realize the ideals of the present society which have been conceived, but not instituted, by those he revolts against. One of the functions of LRY, then, is to help us to participate fully in social dialogue and process while, ". . . still guarding the freedom to run our personal and collective lives and cherishing our deep sense of community. . ."

