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November 17, 1968

In all this outburst of student unrest I have tried to keep a level head, for I know how easy it is to misunderstand young people and how sensitive they usually are about not being taken seriously. Several things have occurred to me as I have watched and thought.

First, I just wonder whether half to three-fourths of the unrest is not kept alive by unfavorable publicity, or publicity, at least. Bad boys, at Fidelity, sometimes invited punishment to get attention; a fellow who could take a whipping and never make a sound was almost a local saint. Brought up as my generation was, with constant emphasis on physical prowess and even senseless immunity to suffering, it was no wonder that an occasional boy, and a few girls, loved the spotlight even when they were the victims. I could wish that the newspapers, the TV, and the radio would play down some of the antics of publicity hounds.

Second, I have watched figures to determine how these outbursts reflect the whole units of which they are a part. Thus far I am still unconvinced that they represent any large portion of most schools they occur in; a very few exceptions are in one-sided schools of some sort. Maybe I have been schooled too long in the stolid philosophy of the great mass of our area people. Loud outbursts of any sort are certainly not characteristic of any large percentage of our population; even in the great camp-meeting days, when jerks and screams and trances were the things that attracted most attention, truthful historians felt that most people took their religion a little less spectacularly. When I have heard faculty members and students lamenting how much student apathy there is, I often, inwardly, rejoice at what is, outwardly, not a thing worthy of rejoicing; a lot of the so-called apathy is just stolid ignoring of what many of our serious students regard as childish enthusiasms.

Third, I have always, as you know, felt that many student aberrations can be traced to faulty faculty leadership. A faculty member does not have to be open about his support of noise and riot; he probably does more good for the wrong cause by taking no obvious stand of any kind: he may be so wrapped up in his work that he hardly knows that there is anything else around; he may be secretly a rebel whom conditions have made a coward and a conformist. Or he may have wandered a few feet off the reservation in scholarship and, like any other adolescent, feels that he is a brave new leader, a new Moses to lead benighted or lost souls to some New Canaan. A new convert to some form of educational, religious, political, or social doctrine can easily draw around himself oddities of all sorts, many of whom he would in no way approve of if it were not for their kindred revolting tactics.

Fourth, if the draft law were carried out without fear or favor, many or most of these discordant elements would be in the armed forces and would be told what to do in no uncertain terms. Every time I read about some outburst of these revolters, who, nine times out of ten, do not know what they are revolting against, I wish I could be standing by when some drill sergeant gave them their come-uppance. Police brutality, so often a mere empty name, is a revolt against authority of any sort. Some policemen, being human beings, make bad errors, intentionally and unintentionally; but I would hate to live in a town or other political unit that did not have a police force, just as I would hate to live in a nation that refused to have some sort of standing army. As long as some of humanity will take advantage of any one who is physically or otherwise weak and needing protection, just so long will we need police officials of some sort.

Fifth, I just cannot imagine any large group of people who deliberately join an institution like a college and start revolting almost the day they arrive. When people have known an institution long enough to have some stake in it, they should be in a better position to

question its plans.

Sixth, and maybe the strongest point I could make, is that I fear vicious influences behind the whole movement. Whether it comes from Russia or China or Cuba or elsewhere, there is too much sameness about the way the outbreaks start and are conducted. The ones who pretend to be the most independent usually mouth the most handed-down platitudes. I can almost anticipate each sentence in a typical speech of one of the radicals; I have heard it before. It is canned and ready for the right kind of a seeker after notice, rarely a person whom his own regular acquaintances would trust. A lot of writers now mention that the revolvers are often the intellectual ones of their colleges; I do not doubt that, for many people equate intellect with senseless revolt. Any thinking person wants change, in that he feels that things in changing must be changed for something equally good or even better. Most of the revolvers who express themselves openly declare that they want to destroy the Establishment first. Sometimes I wish it would be possible for all revolvers to be required to take a thorough course in the French Revolution and then the Russian Revolution, to see how the same sort of path was followed: first destroy, then live in riot and change, then be taken over by a strong man or a group of strong men, new and harsher tyrants than those originally revolted against. The outbreak of the French Revolution with its tearing down things, the Reign of Terror, and then Napoleon--the pattern is simple. No thinking person ever believes in keeping everything as it was, an utter impossibility in the first place; but the only kind of permanent change results from growth, not from revolt. England, as I have so often said, has managed to remain an independent nation through ages of upheaval elsewhere; she may not have the only solution, but she has a good one, changing slowly from age to age but with the minimum of destructive revolt.