

Wednesday, June 11, 1969

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1969 Graduates: Singing A Song Of 'Student Soul'

By HOWARD KOHN

Our mass culture is only a few seconds old in the long expanse of time.

We are less than 100 years removed from such tribal customs as forcing children to earn their keep in the fields and workhouses.

Today we've decreed that all children should march off to school and learn something. And we've produced a social class called "students."

There is no historical precedent for universal education. There are no ancient norms to guide this student class.

And naturally parents, teachers and administrators all have different jumbled ideas about what kids should be learning and how they should be acting.

But mass education has taught this student generation how to think and question. And that's what they're doing.

If the world seems confusing to you, it seems even more confusing to them. If you have trouble relating abstract concepts like justice and democracy to real-life situations, they have even more trouble.

Out of an often disconcerting and disillusioning plant school emerges each year's graduating class. Becalled school attitudes are changing fast enough to be both exhilarating and scary, each class is noticeably distinct from its preceding class.

The Enterprise & Observer has tried to pick out some of these changes in this profile on the 1969 Farmington graduates.

relevant to today's world," says Jeff Cohen of NFHS. "Certain teachers avoid the controversial issues and they are usually the most important ones."

Kevin Blake of NFHS is more specific: "Courses should discuss Vietnam, sex, poverty, etc. . . in short, involvement with life."

Almost 90 per cent of the seniors agree that classroom discussions are inadequate for understanding either societal problems or personal problems. More than 90 per cent agree that teachers should be more concerned with ideas and issues and less concerned with facts.

And more than 90 per cent favor some student control in evaluating teachers and setting up courses.

"What students want should always be considered strongly," points out Jill Shires of FHS, "because they feel the effect of these decisions."

"Education should be determined by what students want to learn," supports Judy Marvin of FHS. "It's their future and they're going to have to worry about it."

"We should have some way of analyzing the teachers," adds Jan Erkert of NFHS. "After all, if a teacher can't get through to kids, he's a lousy teacher."

A SMALL minority still believes no change is necessary. "If anything the school should be more authoritative," says Rich Tooley of FHS. "We are here to learn and they are here to teach us."

Most students are not willing to be that passive. Dave Wilson of NFHS, for instance, is tired of a second-class status. "Students should have a great say in rules and curriculum," he says. "Who lives under the rules? My dad can vote and before he has a say in the laws that affect him. But we have no say. We don't even have basic citizen's rights. We are nonentities."

The student movement in the colleges began 10 years ago against rules of "no loco parents" (in place of parents). Students protested that colleges did not have the right to impose rules on their non-academic lives. Today few of these rules are left at larger public universities.

NOW STUDENTS are raising the same issue at the high school level. More than 300 North Farmington students picketed this spring against the dress policies.

It is too easy to pass off this picketing as part of a troublemaking conspiracy. "When we asked the administration why shouldn't we be able to wear what we wanted, we didn't get an answer. They just said, 'no,'" explains Dawn Hamilton of NFHS.

"They have refused many times to listen to our grievances," adds Karen White of NFHS. Dress rules, incidentally, are still enforced.

The controversy on dress moved the students closer to militancy and further away from "using channels."

"I feel that the school board doesn't see how the school really is," explains Michael Zahn of NFHS. "They may look at a class and everything is rosy. But then they leave and things go back to normal. They should teach classes for a week to know all the problems."

"The administration is too worried about what the teachers and parents want," adds Steve Vagnoni of NFHS. "Their priorities are mixed up. First they should consider the students, then the others. Student dress, curriculum, assembly speakers, teacher evaluations, attendance policies and other rules affect the students most of all."

Jill Shires of FHS says pressure from parents is at fault. "Parents judge far too much by appearance alone," she explains. "Yet they are always tossing off clichés about 'Don't judge a book by its cover.'"

ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY North Farmington seniors say the administration isn't open enough. Almost half say they'd be willing to demonstrate to focus attention on reform.

Farmington High seniors also label their administration as unresponsive. But few favor demonstrating.

Jackie Poladian of NFHS.

"They aren't able to let down their false fronts," says Rich Tooley.

"Society is too concerned with competition," adds Donna Bush of FHS.

"Problems would be relieved a great deal if people concentrated more on spiritual things rather than material things," says Kathy Hahn of FHS.

NOR DO THESE seniors excuse their own faults. They are willing to criticize themselves.

"Young people are often too plastic or pseudo," says Ben Secher of NFHS.

"There aren't too many happy people in my generation," says Jill Shires.

"Young people try to reach God through indirect means such as love and peace," says David Smith of FHS.

"We're often too inconsiderate and too closedminded," says Nancy Koduska of NFHS, "but so are older people."

Reasonably enough, young people are like old people in many ways. Most seniors say they spend most of their time talking about themselves, their relationships with their friends and their future rather than about societal or political issues.

At FHS some students have organized the Student Power Association. Disavowing any sympathy for "radicals or communists," SPA wants instead to become the voice for average kids who have average disagreements with the administration.

SPA so far hasn't been very successful in reconciling the administration to the student viewpoint. Partially because organizations like SPA are ineffective, almost 75 per cent of the seniors think a high school SDS chapter can be expected here soon.

This is probably the best argument for setting up tripartite committees and judicialies now before confrontation moves back to the sidewalk.

And perhaps the best argument for introducing more contemporary discussions into the classroom are the seniors themselves.

WHEN ASKED what they judged to be wrong with society, most replied in terms of symptoms rather than causes. Many pointed to "lawlessness, drugs, poverty, Vietnam, etc." One boy even summed it up with an old middle-class cry: "the government and the nigger."

Encouragingly some students go beyond that to move reflective thinking.

"Society's biggest problem is people," says Dave Wilson. "People who don't fit the system screw it up. Radicals are bad for the system. Lazy people and individualists are bad for the system. Society needs everybody to work, enjoy their needs, not to complain and to obey the rules."

"Society's biggest problem is money," Jeff Cohen says. "Some have a lot, some have a little. Those that have little are doomed to stay that way."

"People have to get rid of built-in prejudices," says

issues.

But young people also face some things that older people have already confronted or accepted.

"Religion often comes up when I talk with my friends because they're searching for truth, wisdom and understanding," says Kathy Hahn.

"I feel that the reason drugs are used so frequently, because they are searching for inner peace."

"Wages about life and our part in it," says Debbie Kalich.

Still a few have their own ideas on how money should be spent.

FARMINGTON AREA seniors are also just as money-conscious as their parents. Nearly 15 per cent said they'd spend a free gift of \$1 million on themselves rather than for altruistic purposes.

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IN WHAT DIRECTION ARE 1969'S GRADUATES MOVING?

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35% 65%

23% 77%

74% 26%

38% 62%

61% 39%

72% 28%

SELF OTHERS

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of NFHS.

"We wonder about what makes life important and worth living," adds Dan Neuen-swander of NFHS.

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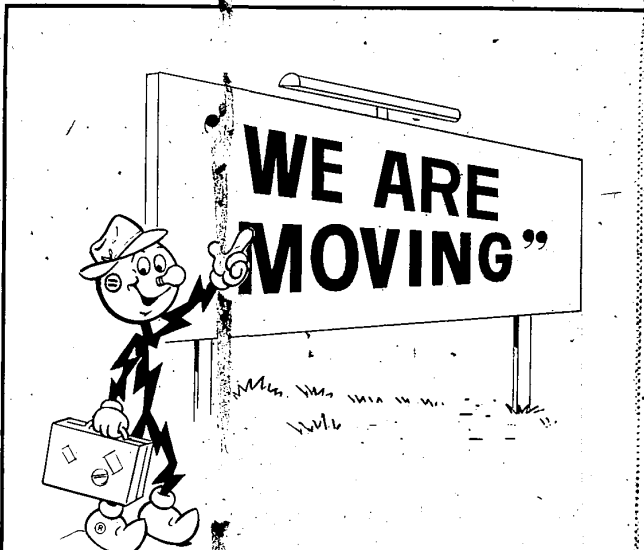
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After Thursday, June 12, our Farmington Customer Office will be located in the Downtown Shopping Center at 23360 Farmington Road, next to the Rexall Drug Store.

We'll be open for business as usual at our present address until 5 o'clock Thursday, and ready to serve you in our new location on Friday morning, June 13.

As always, our Farmington staff will accept bill payments, exchange fuses and standard light bulbs and appliance cards, accept small appliances for repair, and assist you with other company business.

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THE
GENERATION



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ALL I SAID WAS SDS...

