

PORTRAIT of the Younger Generation

Why haven't we heard from today's youth?

IN TIME, this week, appears "The Younger Generation"... a major report on the nation's silent, cryptic youth. The following are excerpts:

Youth today is waiting for the hand of fate to fall on its shoulders, meanwhile working fairly hard and saying almost nothing. The most startling fact about the younger generation is its silence... It does not issue manifestos, make speeches or carry posters. It has been called the "Silent Generation."

But what does the silence mean? What, if anything, does it hide? Or are youth's elders merely hard of hearing?

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But youth is taking its upsetting uncertainties with extraordinary calm. When the U. S. began to realize how deeply it had committed itself in Korea, youngsters of draft age had a bad case of jitters; but all reports agree that they have since settled down to studying or working for as long as they can. The majority seem to think that war with Russia is inevitable sooner or later, but they feel that they will survive it.

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Hardly anyone wants to go into the Army; there is little enthusiasm for the military life, no enthusiasm for war. Youngsters do not talk like heroes; they admit freely that they will try to stay out of the draft as long as they can. But there is none of the systematized and sentimentalized antiwar feeling of the '20s. Pacifism has been almost nonexistent since World War II; so are Oxford Oaths.

But youth's ambitions have shrunk. Few youngsters today want to mine diamonds in South Africa, ranch in Paraguay, climb Mount Everest, find a cure for cancer, sail around the world, or build an industrial empire. Some would like to own a small independent business, but most want a good job with a big firm, and with it, a kind of suburban idyll.

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The younger generation can still raise hell. The significant thing is *not* that it does, but how it goes about doing it. Most of today's youngsters never seem to lose their heads; even when they let themselves go, an alarm clock seems to be ticking away at the back of their minds; it goes off sooner or later, and sends them back to school, to work, or to war.

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The younger generation seems to drink less. "There is nothing glorious or inglorious *any more about getting stoned*," says one college professor. Whether youth is more or less promiscuous than it used to be is a matter of disagreement.

Fact is that it is less showy about sex... As a whole, it is more sober and conservative, but in individual cases, e.g., the recent dope scandals, it makes Flaming Youth look like amateurs.

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Educators across the U. S. complain that young people seem to have no militant beliefs. They do not speak out for anything. Professors who used to enjoy baiting students by outrageously praising child labor or damn-

ing Shelley now find that they cannot get a rise out of the docile note-takers in their classes.

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But God (whoever or whatever they understand by that word) has once more become a factor in the younger generation's thoughts. The old argument of religion v. science is subsiding; a system which does not make room for both makes little sense to today's younger generation. It is no longer shockingly unfashionable to discuss God.

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Young people do not feel cheated. And they do not blame anyone. Before this generation, "they" were always to blame. It was a standard prewar feeling that "they" had let them down. But this generation puts the blame on life as a whole, not on parents, politicians, cartels, etc.

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Says a TIME correspondent in Boston: "You cannot say of them, 'Youth Will Be Served,' because the phrase suggests a voracious striking out from security, wealth and stability. The best you can say for this younger generation is, 'Youth Will Serve.'"

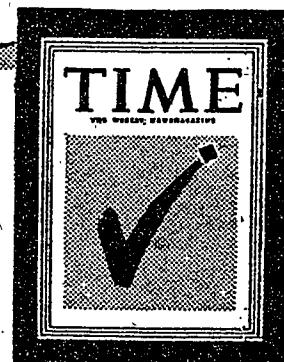
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