

Twelve Angry Young Men

The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society, by Kenneth Keniston (Harcourt, Brace & World. 500 pp. \$8.50), examines the interaction between individual and community that nurtures contemporary disillusionment. Robert J. Levin, who took his M.A. in sociology at Columbia University, is articles editor for Redbook magazine.

By ROBERT J. LEVIN

KENNETH KENISTON, professor of psychiatry at the Yale Medical School, undertakes his difficult task with admirable caution. The task: to explore the reasons why many fortunate, talented, and privileged young Americans are alienated from their society and reject its basic values. The caution: a refusal by the author to try to determine cause and effect, and an effort to seek, instead, the interaction between the individual and the community that sustains the "new" alienation—not "imposed on men by an unjust economic system," but "chosen by men as their basic stance toward society."

Rather than present material neatly

tailored to clothe a thesis, which might then be either accepted or rejected but in any case dispensed with, Professor Keniston has let his findings and his opinions pour out freely as he considers the subject of alienation from diverse standpoints: psychological, sociological, cultural, and historical.

As a result—and this is perhaps a measure of the man and the book—*The Uncommitted* contains within its 495 pages enough controversial ideas to serve as springboards for cross-disciplinary debates, graduate school seminars, and, no doubt, cocktail party discussions. Most college undergraduates, however, will ignore the book; their contempt for their society would logically cover any work square enough to try to explain them.

The Uncommitted consists of two parts and two different approaches. In the first, "Alienated Youth," Professor Keniston traces common themes in the conscious and unconscious emotional development of a dozen severely alienated Harvard students who cooperated in a three-year study. Then, in "Alienating Society," the author outlines those social, cultural, and historical trends which, in his opinion, nurture contemporary disillusionment. The attempt to fuse a de-

tailed study of specific individuals with a generalized survey of an entire culture over a wide span of time, unfortunately, results in a work that never really comes into focus.

The confusion is reflected in the book's subtitle: "Alienated Youth in American Society." Keniston's study is not of alienated youth but of a small and very special group of young men, and he carefully states, "the specialness of this group means that we cannot generalize in any simple way from these youths to others. . . ." But he then goes on to say that "while the study of extremes should not lead to generalizations about the behavior of others who are not extreme, it can be used to understand the problems and stresses of more typical lives. . . ." And while this approach constitutes a valid basis for objective inquiry, it is questionable whether it operates as it should in the case of *The Uncommitted*.

NOWHERE, for example, does the book consider the alienated female. This would seem to be more than simple oversight; at the heart of Keniston's analysis is a childhood in which a special mother-son alliance exists, and where the father has been displaced. "Central to alienation," the author claims "is the conception of adult maleness" that results from the son's hollow victory over the father.

If this is the underpinning of the new alienation, where does it leave the girl who also rejects her society's basic values?

While *The Uncommitted* is a scholarly work, what gives it an additional dimension and transforms it into the curious, fascinating, and provocative book it turns out to be is that the author, unlike his subjects, commits himself to a point of view. "The new alienation," he writes, "is intimately bound up with the technological society in which we live." And technology is the target at which he tilts his lance.

Few would argue with Professor Keniston's attack on the dehumanizing impact of technology; most would cheer him on. But, on the basis of his book, it is hard to know what solutions he would propose. When, for example, he decries the fact that "cognitive skills have replaced virtuous character as standards of human value," one wonders just what virtues the author has in mind.

In his final paragraphs the author expresses his longing for "a new vision of life," for the re-establishment of idealism, for "a society in which whole men and women can play with zest and spontaneity, can work with skill and dedication, can love with passion and care—a society that enjoys diversity and supports human fulfillment." To which most reasonable men would only say: Amen—but how do we get there?

Your Literary I. Q.

Conducted by John T. Winterich and David M. Glixon

WHODUNIT?

At one time or another the words in the left-hand columns have been the terms for occupations, some of which are obsolete. Ruth Adler of Wanamassa, N. J., challenges you to match the words with the callings listed in the numbered columns. Vocational guidance on page 87.

almoner ()	1. arrowmaker	manciple ()	12. hawker of books
chandler ()	2. barrelmaker	perukier ()	13. horseshoer
chapman ()	3. candlemaker	pettifogger ()	14. household attendant
colporteur ()	4. cloth finisher	scrutineer ()	15. junior barrister
cooper ()	5. constable	stuffgownsmen ()	16. shoemaker
cordwainer ()	6. coroner	tidewaiter ()	17. shyster lawyer
crowner ()	7. customs inspector	tipstaff ()	18. steward
farrier ()	8. dispenser of charity	webster ()	19. streetsweeper
fletcher ()	9. dockmaster	wharfinger ()	20. trader
fuller ()	10. examiner of votes	whitewig ()	21. weaver
hatcheler ()	11. flax comber	yeoman ()	22. wigmaker

City Slums and Segregated Suburbs

Dilemmas of Urban America, by Robert C. Weaver (Harvard University Press. 138 pp. \$3.50), focuses on the need to build decent housing for the millions of victims of color prejudice trapped in the subworld of the slums. C. W. Griffin, Jr., wrote "Frontier Freedoms and Urban Chaos."

By C. W. GRIFFIN, JR.

IN THE 190 years since our country's founding the total population has multiplied fiftyfold, the urban population nearly 700. From a rural nation in which barely 5 per cent of the people were city dwellers, we have grown into a highly urbanized society, with 130 million Americans living in 200 metropolitan areas. Within the next fifteen years, as the total population soars toward 250 million, nearly 80 per cent will be residing in cities. Despite our rising standard of living, our chaotic urban growth threatens to depress the quality of American life.

In *Dilemmas of Urban America* Robert C. Weaver, administrator of the House and Home Financing Agency, proves himself a perceptive and candid public servant, a worthy prospective Secretary of the newly created Department of Housing and Urban Development. In defiance of established bureaucratic code, Mr. Weaver admits that his agency's urban renewal program profited through controversy. As a consequence, relocation programs for slum-dwellers evicted from cleared urban renewal sites are demonstrably improving. This ability to learn from experience—intelligence, in short—is a refreshing contrast to the positive-thinking businessmen of the Eisenhower Administration. Like Stewart Udall pressing his conservation crusade, Mr. Weaver understands the problems of urban America and, more important, he cares.

Though he surveys the whole urban scene, Mr. Weaver focuses on the need to build decent housing for millions of Negroes, Puerto Ricans, and other victims of prejudice trapped in our teeming big-city ghettos. Simply providing enough low- and even middle-income housing is a big problem. Entangled with race prejudice, the problem becomes staggering. The decision regarding the kind of housing to build on cleared slum sites often reduces itself to a choice between housing a large number of low-income Negroes

in a segregated project or a smaller number of middle-income Negroes in an integrated project. Obviously, few practical resolutions of this dilemma can satisfy everyone.

If there is to be any hope of eradicating the subworld of the slums, the benefits of free enterprise must be extended to Negroes and Puerto Ricans. Race prejudice severely restricts the housing market open to colored peoples, delivering them to those vultures of capitalism, the slumlords. To Puerto Ricans and Negroes the respectable white reservations surrounding the big cities represent a vast collective conspiracy depriving them of the right to buy or rent whatever home they can afford. Championing this conspiracy to subvert the open market are the realtors, who wage a nationwide war against fair housing laws. Two years ago in California these pillars of prejudice led a successful drive to repeal that state's fair housing law and to ban future enactment of such legislation.

NONETHELESS, as Mr. Weaver reminds us, fair-housing laws enacted by eighteen state legislatures and thirty-four municipalities, supplemented by President Kennedy's 1962 anti-bias executive order, are slowly opening up the all-white neighborhoods. And a thousand fair-housing councils are cracking

down on realtors and on home and apartment owners who attempt to circumvent these laws.

One quarrel I have with Mr. Weaver concerns his failure to be realistic about the circumscribed goals of suburban fair-housing councils, with their middle-class orientation. Though he incessantly warns against overoptimism about any federal program, Mr. Weaver charges that "... by neglecting lower-income minority families [fair-housing councils] limit their potential." Actually, such an extension of goals could ruin the fair-housing councils. They take an essential first step in educating the white majority for the inevitable integrated society of the future. It is difficult enough to induce whites to accept as neighbors Negroes of equal economic and cultural status. To attempt at this time to persuade middle-class whites to accept lower-class Negroes as neighbors and classmates for their children would be hopelessly utopian. It strikes at the heart of the American dream of climbing the social ladder and pushing one's children a rung or two higher.

Ultimately, as Mr. Weaver points out, merely to avert the chaos that threatens if metropolitan growth is not directed into saner patterns will require that low-income minorities be admitted to suburbia. To achieve this goal one prominent planner urges a tightening of federal requirements for certain aid programs to local governments. In any event, political and economic pressure seems the best means of opening the suburbs to low-income Negroes. For fair housing councils to tackle this larger, vastly more complex task would dissipate their energies and blunt their attack on more basic, immediate problems.



"It's all right for you to scoff at zoning laws! They didn't build a Parthenon practically in your front yard!"