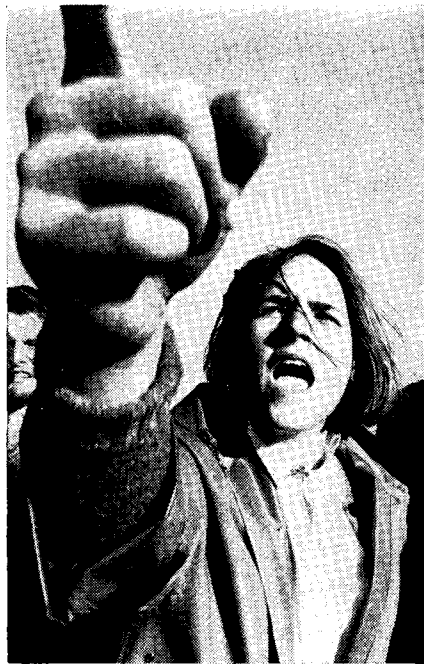




—Louise Jefferson (Monkmeyer).



—Fred Ward (Black Star).



—Louise Jefferson (Monkmeyer).

“These middle-class expatriates do not at all seem to share the good liberal’s desire to bring the poor man into the split-level wonderland of the Great Society.”

THE SPANKED AND THE UNSPANKED

By CARL OGLESBY, *resident activist scholar at Antioch College, and past president of Students for a Democratic Society.*

EVERYONE has by now heard that something is up with the new student generation, something perhaps forbidden, and—at least in the eyes of corporate and Marine Corps recruiters, who find their campus work growing harder—something menacing.

But mainstream speculations about the real meanings, causes, and portents of this mystery usually grow less persuasive the closer they come to naming the crime, not to mention the criminal. The “serious” academic study is often sociometric and bland, taking the student disturbance as a mere setting for scientific questions about its locus in an income-defined culture. The typical popular treatment searches also for the face behind the mask, convinced that these students mean something other than what they say. Student activism, crudely equated with ghetto rumbles and motorcycle gangs (in a subtle, Ginsbergian way, of course, that equation is good enough), can be looked at pathologically by the social experts and amateurs, but neither practically nor ethically.

A gross Freudianism, run culturally amok, implies that the really deep questions are, “Who is saying these

things *actually*, and why are these things *actually* being said?” Since the appearance must conceal a different, more sinister reality, the simplest student utterances (e.g., freedom is good, anti-Communism is a stupid ideology) will have to be probed analytically for the witch’s truth which they try to hide. So the war protestors turn out to be Reds, beatniks to be sociopaths, and dissenters with shaved faces to be nothing but softies who can’t stand the strain, can’t do the work, and who dissemble their decadence with a lot of counterfeit talk of love and alienation.

Thus, the culture guards itself against the possibly quite practical truths which the students are voicing. “Since these kids say we men of affairs are sick, something must be wrong with them. They probably weren’t spanked enough.” Hence, for example, Ronald Reagan, not at all a disgrace to this America, is the spanker hero who will teach those Berkeley brats what’s what.

In a way, this is fair enough. The spanked and the unspanked now begin a curious duel in which each wants the other to share his own brand of social fate. And perhaps for each, the drama will be increasingly bathed in resentment. “So my son now chooses, does he, to abhor me for my ulcer?” grumbles the standard, forty-five-year-old, split-level, executive father-figure. “He might just remember that this ulcer happens to finance his light shows.”

And with a pathos which James Dean pantomined and Bob Dylan versifies, the unspanked kid earnestly replies, “My only goal is your salvation, our survival”—which may sound pretty impudent up on the forty-fifth floor.

Otto Butz teaches at San Francisco State College, where he helped arrange last year a lecture series in which students talked about “their own greatest personal concerns—about themselves, about their society, and about higher education.” Butz has collected ten of the resulting student essays under the title of the original lecture series, *To Make a Difference* (Harper & Row, 174 pp., \$4.95). In this collection the unspanked unravel the great mystery of their discontent. The mask is dropped (there was, of course, no mask at all, ever). The criminals turn out to be a few of America’s children. Their crime: they believed in America.

It’s not easy to know what to make of a book whose greatest significance may lie in its sheer existence. I confess I’ve heard these lectures before, late at night in the ghetto flats of dropout organizers, in little church-sponsored, neo-hippy coffeeshops with names like *The Belly of the Whale*, in towns as culturally remote as New York and Greeley, Colorado. I’ve seen them printed before, too, in ugly underground tabloids bleeding with typos and fated for a life span of two or three issues. Here they are again, but now in hard-

cover format, well proofread and printed, under the mark of a distinguished publisher. What's up? Has the publishing industry discovered among the students an affluent narcissism that means market? Or is America about to start reading this subversive stuff?

In any case, America should. It might learn something worth knowing. In these essays one can meet on one and the same page, sometimes in the same sentence, a sophistication nearly masterful and a naïveté nearly quaint. But always the voices are genuine, the inner struggle and the honesty of these people real enough to be touched. And I suppose we cannot name a politician, a statesman, or a steel executive—and not many novelists—who have written with such lucid force about our country's confounding problems as they really exist. These problems, say the students, are not really out there somewhere in the demonic half-world of the Great Conspiracy to Shaft American Happiness; they are coiled up in the heart of that queer, troubling happiness itself.

EACH of the ten essays deserves separate consideration because each writer has his own way of moving, his own grace and strategy. (All write well, and Louis Cartwright and Timothy Earle, both twenty-five, are about as strong already as they will ever need to be.) But that response would take a volume the size of theirs; and in any case, what may be more interesting than the diversity of their voices is the virtual unity of their concerns.

Each one judges America in terms of the most commonplace American pieties. Over and again one hears echoes of the Declaration of Independence and Tom Paine. Even their occasionally precious use of Zen imagery strikes me as mainly a new way to praise something old and very Western. Nothing sinister yet, nothing wicked. But the problem with these judges—what makes them indeed quite wicked in the current setting—is that they have been naïve and audacious enough to take the American pieties seriously. This country, say these critics, has violated itself.

Specifics? Not just Vietnam, Santo Domingo, Lowndes County, East Kentucky, and Harlem. In the long haul much more menacing—because it taints in advance every “victory” which this culture may win—is the America of the great, sprawling, up-tight middle class. The point is crucial: These middle-class expatriates (if not rebels) do not at all seem to share the good liberal's desire to bring the poor man—black or white, Mississippian or Vietnamese—into the split-level wonderland of the Great Society. They are saying that Cicero is unworthy of those marchers who were

threatened in its streets, that a culture in which father's ulcer and mother's neurosis are badges of success, status, and fulfillment is a culture which is not worth a damn.

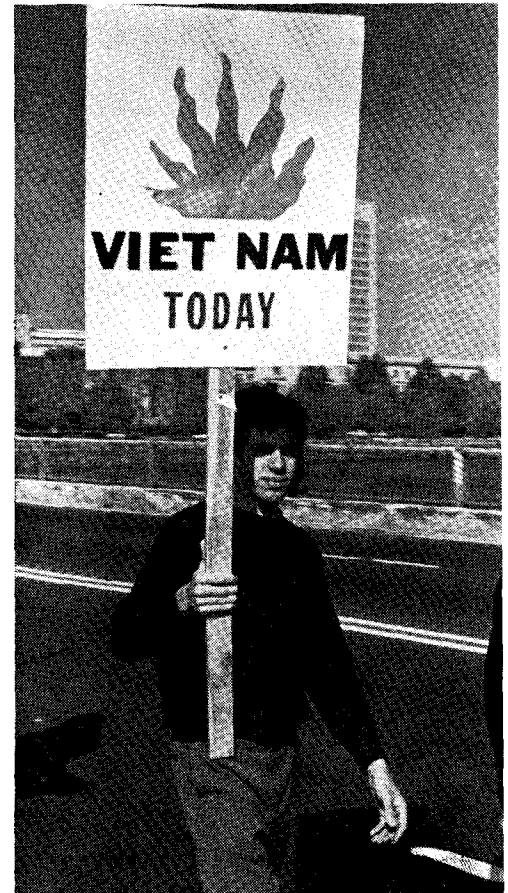
Their criticism does not seem to originate in textbooks, which will have instructed them, on the contrary, that their lives are sweet. It comes instead from firsthand experience, from their own middle-class lives. When Cartwright demands, “Whose America is this? I no longer feel a part of her,” he by no means speaks in the sober tone of a man who is about to prove something with data charts. He knows from the inside out that he has been spiritually abandoned by a culture which endlessly lisped into his ear the information that confidence was better than fright, human concern better than indifference, individual freedom better than Big Brotherhood, and which now leaves him quite little maneuvering room in the mainstream money world—except as he can straitjacket his politics in cringing anti-Communist fearfulness, his social imagination in rational apathy, and his freedom in obedience to the wizards of the inner sanctum—and a culture which, moreover, seems eager indeed to ridicule and quarantine anyone silly enough to think that the American Dream had something to do with the sanctity of human viscera.

Their comment is literate and thoughtful; but its experiential intimacy gives it that peculiar anti-intellectual air which has become almost a signature of the “new radical” style. I think this stance aims at the creating of a new critical mode for a new kind of social criticism, and that what the new criticism is trying to get at, trying to attack, is the spiritual Vega nerve of modern Western culture, the idea of progress.

A few of these writers still use the term “progress” to indicate America's sadly unfinished domestic work. But others use it to indicate the long-standing Western idea that the good man lives in the name of tomorrow's “better world.” Their attack on this idea is acutely premeditated. They seem to have observed that the terrific scientific-social optimism of the Enlightenment at once ran afoul of its highest hopes in the form of a certain revolution, and that the sickening career of a Europe careening thenceforth from upheaval to terror to Thermidor to restoration to new upheaval—from its Robespierres to its Stalins, its Napoleons to its Hitlers, its Metternichs to its Churchills—has deprived us once and for all of the Sun King's glory, Comte's sociology, Smith's economics, Rousseau's anthropophilia, and Condorcet's politics. All things clear, geometrical, and fine (Newton's reasonable cosmos not exempted) simply dried up and blew away one *Walpur-*

gisnacht in that great ongoing Western bloodbath whose most general victim, no doubt, was Enlightenment man's brave self-confidence.

For many reasons, America was the last to get the bad news. But in this decade, it has begun to register quite widely here that natural progress and its concomitant faith in science are at least as dead as Nietzsche's God. These ten young critics, who speak for tens of thousands, now confront a world routinely ambiguous and a future which the modern record forewarns them will not be what they want it to be.

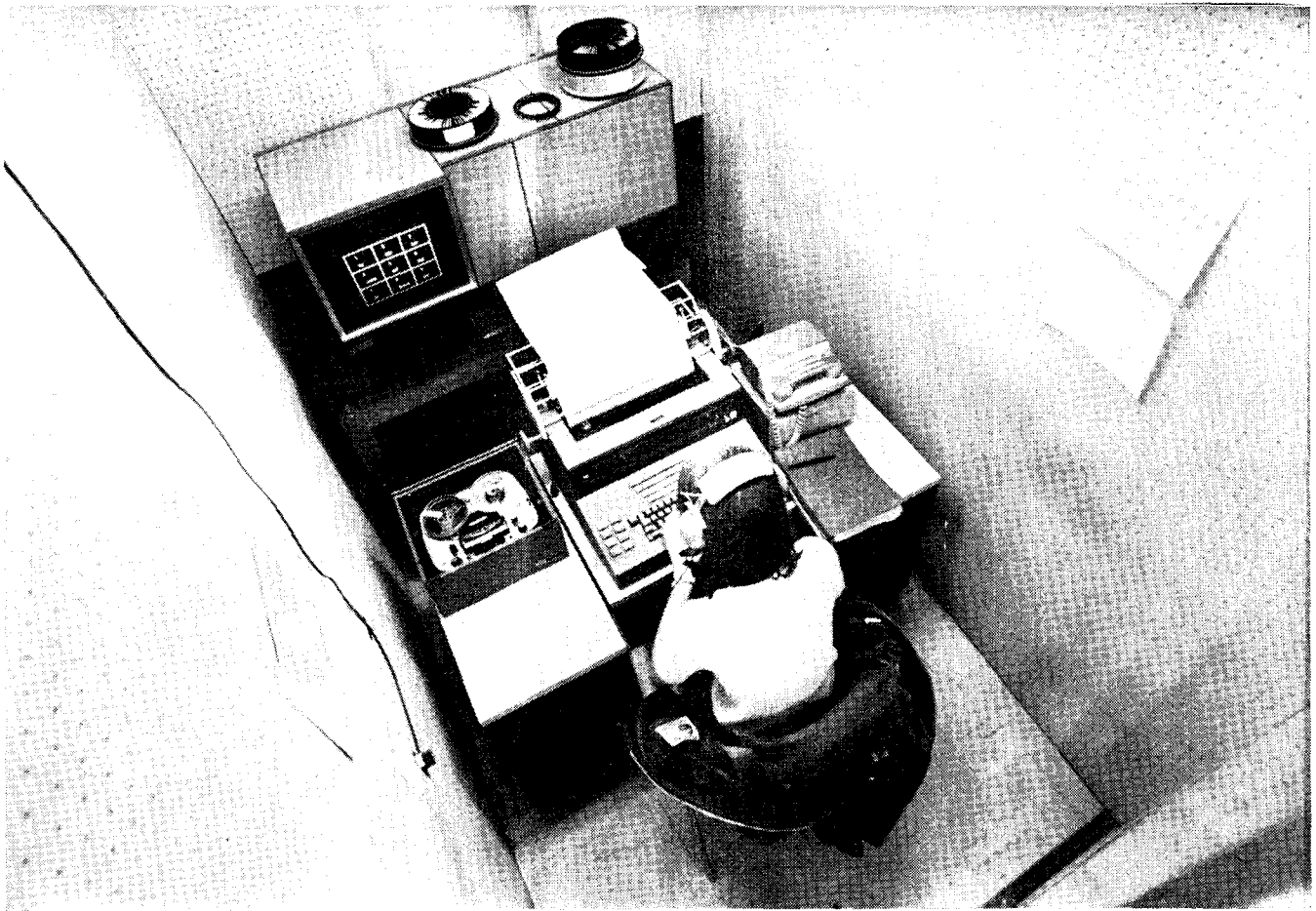


—Robert Campbell (Monkmeier).

Anti-Vietnam war demonstration in Boston—“This disenchantment with progress means most simply that the present is no longer to be gambled for the future.”

The implications are immense. No political humanist, for example, is now allowed to consider himself the partisan of destiny. What destiny he can find evidence of in the past 200 years can only scare the daylights out of him: the decline of spirit and the soaring prestige of coercive national violence—along with safety belts and TV-watching as avocations—is the legacy we have to work with. All those gorgeous ideological guarantees of coming greatness are out, and the future, having lost its virginity in advance, leaves us with nothing but the uncertain concrete situation that we're thrown into. That's where these people

(Continued on page 93)



—IBM.

“There has been increasing concern that students will become appendages to electronic monsters.”

THE EDUCATION INDUSTRY

KIDS, COMPUTERS, AND CORPORATIONS

By PETER SCHRAG

IN THE STANDARD photograph, an attractive child sits at a typewriter keyboard intently watching a screen that resembles—but is not—a television tube. Near the child stands the company Wise Man, who understands systemese, reinforcement, individualization, and the semi-spooky shorthand—CAI, CRT, ERE, 1500, WC-W, Spectra-70—that presumably accompanies electronic modernity in education. The message is that the computer is coming; the messenger is The Industry, and the gospel prophecy is Revolution in the Classroom. Nowadays, it seems, anyone who can't tell his SRA from his GLC just hasn't followed the program.

Ever since the first flurry of announcements about the new corporate entries in the education business—the mergers of electronics firms and publishing houses, and the creation of new corporate divisions for education—there has been increasing concern that academic decisions will eventually be made in company

board rooms, that children will become appendages to electronic monsters, and that the teacher will find himself technologically obsolete. Confronting this image of the pedagogical Big Brother is a sylvan vision of the “the truly child-centered school” based on the individualized instruction that computers seem to make possible. The child sitting at that keyboard *must* be living modern. To start him playing with electronic machines at the age of four is really to prepare him for the world in which he'll live. No more slates, blackboards, and golden rules: The work will now be displayed by a cathode ray tube (CRT), spoken by a computer-controlled tape, and registered and evaluated through infinitely patient electronic circuits that can play chess, do calculus, and say “Good morning, Mary.”

As a consequence of this prophetic double vision, the new education industry is rapidly becoming involved in the same curious love-hate relationship that Americans maintain with most of the other powerful instruments they create.

We're certain that something big is coming, but we don't really know what, or whether we'll like it. Like the railroad, the automobile, and the television set, the education industry is a machine in the garden.

The computer, of course, is only a symbol, and, for the time being, a somewhat misleading one. Although several firms, among them RCA, IBM, and Responsive Environments Corporation, are working intensively with instruction by computer, the interests, significance, and dangers of the industry are far more pervasive. Because of their new divisions and acquisitions, companies such as IBM, Westinghouse, General Learning (a creation of General Electric and Time, Inc.), Raytheon, RCA, Xerox, CBS, and Litton are collectively involved in almost every phase of education from the production of workbooks and science kits to the development of high-speed computers, administrative management systems, and even the planning of institutions. Many of these activities are now in the research and experimental stage;