

## OUR ATTITUDES TO ADOLESCENT REVOLT

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Traditionally the adult and aging segment of the population have always been shocked by the amount of rebellion and hostility present in the young.

They forget their own period of revolt, and see the past in a roseate glow in which they did not have any serious faults. Their own rebellion, as seen in later years, was a rather funny bit of acting out, which is to be laughed at sympathetically, rather than deplored.

Furthermore, adults have on the one hand a vested interest in preserving things as they are, eg. property values, succession of command, and on the other hand they unconsciously reinforce the rebellion of adolescence because of their own suppressed desires to revolt against over-conformity. This ambivalence feeds into the adolescent problem and very frequently the teen-agers are acting out their parents' conflicts as well as their own. It is necessary to state that adolescents are not a homogenous group, that many, even in these times, grow up smoothly with only minor adjustments in their social interaction with adults and are gradually able to evolve independence from their parents and from authority figures without the necessity of revolution.

We now live in a turbulent age which has been characterized by a tremendous increase in the amount of our knowledge concerning science and its applications, while our knowledge about social integration and ability to get along with each other has lagged greatly behind.

All societies are threatened by change and impermanence and the threat of recent scientific developments including the hydrogen bomb - automation, have led to a disturbed equilibrium in present day Western society. Many Eastern and African societies also are in revolt, throwing off the yokes of feudalism,

colonialism, former exploitation by great powers, and so forth. Even in Canada, and particularly in la belle province, the young are revolting against real and fancied domination by English Canadians; they are revolting against their own feudal heritage, against the French Canadian family and social structure, against the authority of the Roman Catholic church. All this creates an atmosphere favorable to revolt and sets the picture that allows the adolescent to play out his part in a bigger way, and on a bigger canvas than ever before.

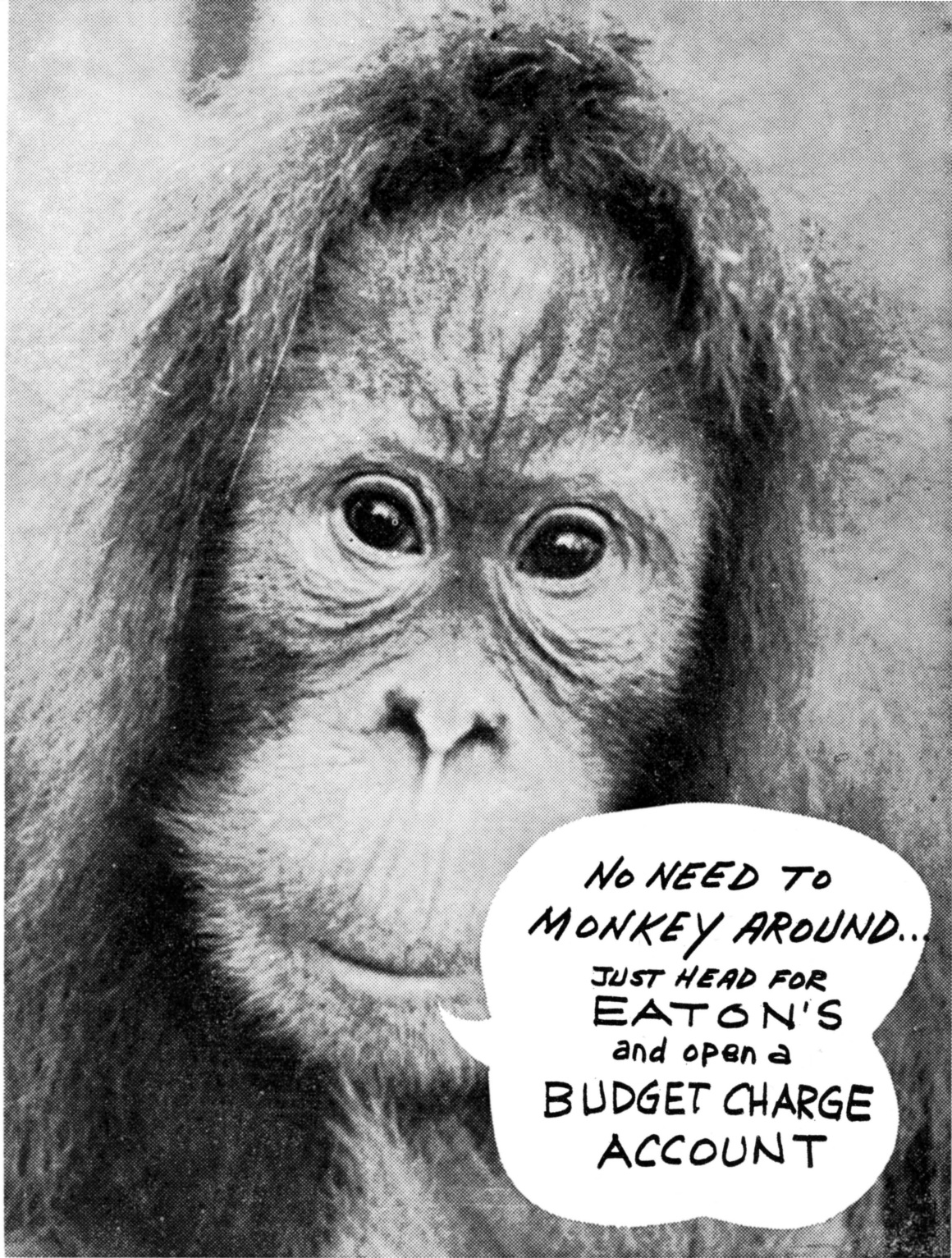
The breakdown of strong religious and social mores, the impact of two world wars, the depression, and the recent cold war have left adults, both middle aged and old confused about their values and unable to set reasonable limits. This confusion has fed back into the adolescent turbulence and has increased their need for firm behavioral boundaries.

The acting out behavior of high school children, while not new, has recently infected larger and larger numbers of children, so that one sees more and more people of high school age behaving in a defiant fashion, not only to their parents, but to society as a whole. When they indulge in mild hoodlumism and vandalism this probably does not cause society a great deal of harm, but when their revolt is carried out publicly, involving working out their power and other aggressive needs with powerful automobiles, this is indeed a threat to all of us.

Since it is a problem of society, it seems to me that the adult world as a whole should back up the parents in trying to set some reasonable limits for children.

I would feel that a hierarchy of interests should predominate, and that families should lay down very clearly which interest has the most priority in a family - for example, if a student is involved in high school or college, it seems to me that his studies should come

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first and that the parents should be very firm about allowing dates, TV, and other distractions to interfere with the prime purpose of this young person's life.

The parents, and adults generally, should be quite rigid about refusing to submit to blackmail from the children, concerning how other people behave, how other teen agers are allowed to do this and that.

I think that the adult world should cease tempting young teen-agers to grown-up behavior. I feel that our society has encouraged early pairing off of young people, forcing pre-mating behavior long before it is biologically or socially desirable. It has encouraged drinking, social competition and so forth, and has forced adult standards on an adolescent society.

A great many children still need protection and chaperonage although this is denied by the teenager himself. When it is provided in a discreet way, it relieves their anxiety, lets them function in society in a much more relaxed manner.

I think that adults as a general rule should refuse to condone teenage and under age marriages, even under the threat of sexual acting out, pregnancy, etc. In the few cases where I have had an opportunity to reinforce the parental determination in such problems, not only has the situation resolved itself, but it has resolved itself satisfactorily.

I feel that society as a whole should reinforce agencies, like the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A., the Police athletic league, church groups which encourage social activity in groups and de-emphasize encouraging the children into quasi-adult behavior. Few such opportunities for people outside the middle class exist, and the outlets for this particular group should be encouraged. General measures like improving housing, improving neighborhoods generally, trying to get a leavening of leaders in areas of low socio-economic level,

encouraging vocational school programs—fostering athletic groups etc., can all be helpful.

I feel that society as a whole should assist the law enforcement, detection and probation agencies of the Court. It is a well known fact that while severity of punishment has never deterred crime, the certainty of being caught, even with mild punishment, is a very powerful deterrent. We should reinforce the Police and probation people in breaking up unhealthy gangs, in trying to reinforce healthy organizations in the Community such as mentioned above; we should refuse to condone "fixing" charges against important people, or against people who are related to Municipal authorities and in general the type of underhanded nepotism that hamstring police work. Society has permitted, encouraged and fed into, the adolescent rebellion, and has increased this normal phenomenon to proportions that are now extremely destructive to the teen agers, involved and to society as a whole. Society has itself to blame, and it is in society as a whole that the remedies must be found. People in positions of trust and leadership, such as clergymen, lawyers, court officials, doctors, prominent business men must be involved in this particular problem just as well as the police and probation people. They must co-operate as a whole not to protect their own and the children of their friends, but to see that the total problem is aerated, that no one escapes censure or ridicule, and that justice is meted out on as even a basis as possible. If society made efforts in this direction I feel that the adolescent revolt which has grown to serious proportions particularly in large urban and suburban centers would very quickly recede to the normal levels which are necessary for the natural growth of society and provide a healthy opportunity to change the patterns and mores from one generation to the next.

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