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Congressional Record S. 3823 - The Gap Between Generations

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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE

S 3823

THE GAP BETWEEN THE GENERATIONS

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, in the April 29, 1969, issue of Look magazine is an article entitled "To an Angry Old Man," written by Leo Rosten, which has interested me. The article has been reprinted in the April 1, 1969, issue of The New York Times. I urge my colleagues to read Mr. Rosten's article. In my judgment, he has a lot to say that is worth saying about the difficulties which confront us and about our obligation to the young and old—which is to keep this society, this Nation and this world livable not only for ourselves but for those many generations which will come after us.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Record the article entitled "To an Angry Old Man," written by Leo Rosten.

TO AN ANGRY OLD MAN

(Note—I could massage your heartstrings curl your hair, depending on your politics, by quoting from the torrrential reaction (laudatory, furious, flattering, venenous) to my evangelical letter To an Angry Young Man (Look, November 12, 1968). Before it was printed, a friend urged me to sort my countrymen, play in the hands of the Right! And of the sermon you are about to read, others may say, "It will play into the hands of the Left!"

(Both positions seem to me indefensible. Surely, the older generation has nothing to do with who agrees or disagrees with it. To censor the expression of your thinking because you are displeased with it is simply to let others do your thinking for you. I detest thought control. Here, sans apology, are some overheated letter writers from the Right.)

Dear Ma, X: Thank you for writing—and that's about all I'll get from you. You say, "Let's throw all these young rebels out of college!" Over my dead body. Free speech does not stop at the gates of a campus. On the contrary, it should find a special sanctuary there, for it is indispensable to the search for truth. A student has a perfect right to protest, picket, petition, dissent. When students riot, set fires, throw rocks, stop classes, and use bulldozers to disrupt the peace—they are setting not as students better as homosexuals. Let the law attend to them, the swifter the better.

But you want students "thrown out" simply for protesting, which is what the Communists and Fascists do—from Russia to Spain to Hungary. Expel, Intimidate or imprison those who question or complain. Don't emulate them.

You say, "Draft these college punks into the Army and trick them into shock sense into their heads!" You horrify me. I don't want anyone to "knock sense" into anyone's head. To put the point sharply, I quote a great jurist: "Your freedom to move your flat ends at the point where my nose begins." I have a long nose.

As for the draft: I consider the present draft impractical, unnecessary and morally indefensible. I think there is more than this page to explain why. The young have every right to speak, petition and argue against it (this has nothing to do with Vietnam) peacefully.

Why let these creeps wear wrinkled clothes and beards? Line them up, hold them down, bathe them, shave them, wash their mouths with soap! I laathe your bullyboy views were not Choosing Flight in a Wind of Distortions. Kooky clothes break no laws (though courts have ruled on choolboard regulations, and on hair, etc.). Young slobs pollute the nearby air—but the courts have not yet ruled on that.

The definitions of course, a clinical sign of psychological disturbance. I feel sorry for the kids who cannot know the psychological price they will pay for repressing to the anal level. But your excessive response to the dirty is as distasteful to me as their sad glorification of discomfort disgusts me.

You praise me for "speaking out for those students who are not newsworthy because they do not want any draft" and you think it a "wonderful Establishment!" Well, the only Establishment I defend is this. I find violence abhorrent, fanaticism disgusting, and demagoguery unspeakable. The present generation of students cannot be called "idealist," but they shatter that consensus of civility that is the very heart of a civilization. I am afraid that the younger generation cannot help us solve problems that must and can be solved—by intelligence, not force.

I urge you all to read Mr. Rosten's article. I urge you to pass this resolution. I urge you to make the Institute of Freedom a part of the American Institute of State and Local Government.

We need only go back, in all honesty, to our own younger days to sense the similarity between past and present. There were straights and tugs then as there are now. The principal difference is that we who are older, now, were younger then and were doing most of the straining and tugging.

The older generation has its faults which, in my judgment, tend to center on a shirking of responsibilities toward the young who, in their own way, for better or for worse, are striving to grapple with a world which they did not make. The faults of the younger generation, in turn, seem to me to center on a tendency to reject whatever has gone before as, at best, irrelevant. On the part of the minimum fault there, is an apparent determination not merely to reject the past but to rampage over past, present, and future and reduce them all to a meaningless present.

What is needed is a realistic appraisal of the situation. The present generation of youngsters was born into a world which was already secondary to a past and a present. The elders helped to make. These kids are not faced with a world which they did not make. They have to make and correct their mistakes, and to face the responsibilities which go with it. They have to make and correct their mistakes, and to face the responsibilities which go with it. And of the similarity between past and present.

I would also have the temerity to suggest to young people that they resist the temptation to blame everything on the preceding generation. Those of us who are older should, in turn, act our age and stop the flautent berating of youngsters when we ourselves are not without blame. The young people have to make their own lives. They have to find a way to face the responsibilities which go with life, to have to make and correct their own mistakes, and to make the accountable for mistakes of the past and, in that way, to come forward, as we tried in our turn to do, in a responsible and reasonable way of life of their own.
has simply ruthened South and Central American universities.)

You ask, "Why doesn't anyone brand these things 'Communist'?" The Communists aren't?"

That organizers plan and foment trouble, going from campus to campus, is becoming an everyday occurrence. That there are evidence of Communism as of naiveté. The young enjoy baiting their elders with shocking symbols. The young. The CIO, and Mao and Minh.

I am not seriously concerned not only with the right to punch holes in old Herbert's gaseous balloons, with the authorities to call you and me—no—no. It is. His competence and integrity as a teacher are for his colleagues—not you or me—to decide. And if San Diego has no professors who are able to punch holes in old Herbert's gaseous balloons, it should promptly hire some.

Incidentally, Mr. Russell should not be allowed to teach at San Diego!" Dr. Mr. Russell should not be allowed to teach at San Diego!" Dr. Mr. Russell should not be allowed to teach at San Diego!" Dr. Mr. Russell should not be allowed to teach at San Diego!" Dr. Mr. Russell should not be allowed to teach at San Diego!" Mr. President, I am now convinced that Mao and Minh.

Unfortunately, those students who have made the most noise, who have been most disruptive, and who are least representative, least sincere in their desire to win constructive changes—those students have won most of the headlines, most of the focus of television cameras.

Less known to those constituencies who are not closely associated with college life today are the more significant efforts of a majority of today's students to obtain a meaningful and constructive dialogue by which they may work with administrators and faculty to make the college and university of today and tomorrow a better, more responsive institution. Perhaps it is not to limit this to college and university students, but for college and university students, today's high school students are very much a part of this student activity.

Traditionally, faculty members have tolerated administrators as, at best, necessary evils. Today, teachers are more concerned with participating in the administration of colleges and universities. They are seeking the renewal of the campus as deeply embedded in the life of the community.

Students wish to participate in faculty evaluation, in changing curricula, and—in particular, in introducing more courses reflecting current social and political concerns.

Colleges and universities are being challenged as well by a free enterprise society which more than ever recognizes a dependency on U.S. higher education not just for a continuing supply of recruits, but for a growing program of research and service. Any county, state or regional development organiza-