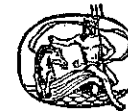


DEMOCRACY
and the
STUDENT LEFT

by
GEORGE F. KENNAN
and

Students and Teachers from:

BARNARD BRANDEIS BROOKLYN CALIFORNIA COLUMBIA
CORNELL DARTMOUTH HARVARD ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
NOTRE DAME OHIO STATE PRINCETON ROCHESTER RUTGERS
SYRACUSE TORONTO WESLEYAN WEST VIRGINIA
WILLIAMS YALE



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Williamstown, Mass., January 21, 1968

To the Editor:

George Kennan's article ("Rebels Without a Program," Jan. 21) does a disservice to those concerned students for whom civil disobedience means non-violent non-cooperation rather than violence. By identifying civil disobedience with the "angry militants," Mr. Kennan overlooks the possibility of breaking the law as a moral duty. No doubt he is thinking of student demonstrators blocking campus recruiting, but what of inductees who must either go to prison or fight a war which they believe to be morally wrong? The purpose of refusing to cooperate in an unjust policy is twofold: first, to avoid involvement in the commission of injustice and, second, to cause other citizens and the leaders of the nation themselves to realize their error. While for the latter purpose civil disobedience may prove ineffective as a tactic, the former will nevertheless require it as a duty to one's conscience.

As Mr. Kennan says, civil disobedience is never a citizen's right. But, in the words of Thoreau, "I think we should be men first, and subjects afterward." As long as men are capable of independent moral judgments, civil disobedience will have a place in a democratic society.

ROBERT HALLEM
Williams College

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editor:

Mr. Kennan's remarks in the Jan. 21 edition of the NY Times magazine was a most sophisticated attempt to discredit campus activists. The first part of his essay tries to convince the reader that the activist is grossly anti-intellectual. Mr. Kennan accuses activists of "screaming, throwing stones, breaking windows, overturning cars," yet these generalizations are more applicable to the Ft. Lauderdale junior jet set. Most student demonstrations are non-violent; however, across the nation, it has been the police who have demonstrated barbarism, not the activists. Furthermore many studies have shown that student activists have more distinguished academic records than their quiescent colleagues. The July 1967 edition of the Journal of Social Issues reports that activists not only have more distinguished academic records but also are more altruistic and more favorably disposed to the arts than their peers.

Mr. Kennan also writes that there is "a serious doubt whether civil disobedience has any place in a democratic society." An activist might not agree with this statement but he will certainly disagree with the assumption that the United States is a democratic society. There has never been democracy in the South. Indian-Americans whose populations have been genocidally decimated by white Americans live in degrading conditions as do Negro-Americans in the North. College student dissenters

at Brooklyn College, Wisconsin and elsewhere have been dealt beatings by local police forces.

That America is a democratic society has been repeatedly pounded into our brains in each and every year of elementary and high school education to an almost Pavlovian familiarity. The activist is no longer conditioned to false notions. The student activist wants a *real* democratic society. The question he faces is "Does civil disobedience have a place in a 'semi-democratic' society?" He answers with an unequivocal YES.

IRVIN SCHONFELD
Brooklyn College

Chicago, Ill., January 24, 1968

To the Editor:

Will someone tell George Kennan that the young people whose photographs he sees daily "being beaten or dragged about by the police" don't take their activities to be any more conducive to good scholarship than he. The point is that they protest despite the deprivation. Mr. Kennan urges a picture of the self-indulgence of the young. What of their self-sacrifice? Would he have had those student activists of Tsarist Russia devote their university years to "quiet and successful study" and leave the Tsar to carry on?

JARRETT LEPLIN, Instructor
Department of Philosophy
Illinois Institute of Technology

Notre Dame, Ind., February 9, 1968

Dear Mr. Kennan:

Father Hesburgh has passed on to me, a student at Notre Dame, your comments in the *New York Times* of Jan. 21. I feel called upon to reply for two reasons. First, because I am the "type" at whom your cogent and convincing article was aimed: namely, one of the great many students who has thus far resisted any complete "surrender" to the tendencies of the New Left, but who find them interesting and ever more attractive. Second, I reply because I find in your remarks a microcosm of the great paradox we students see in our parents' generation. How can you provide us with the unbelievable opportunity of a place like Notre Dame and four more or less carefree years to imbibe of the wisdom she offers, and then become critical and distrustful of the "product"? How can you simultaneously have the good faith in our generation to seek the dialogue and cooperation for which your article pleads, yet feel threatened by our appearance and deportment in pursuit of and witness to the truth?

One point on which I am in complete disagreement with your article is in its espousal of the Wilsonian ideal of a university. Granted this vision provides a dramatic and eloquent preface to your remarks, it is far from Notre Dame's ideal and mine. Can this medieval concept be still pertinent after centuries of development in the ideas of both the university and its function in society? Father Hesburgh has called a university "a microcosm,