

Yale University News Release

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New Haven, Conn., January 13: -- The revolutionary movement is virtually dead among the nation's college students, but the prevailing mood of apathy and cynicism on campus may well be "the calm before the storm."

That's the general conclusion of two noted University experts on the college generation, in an interview at Yale.

The Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame University, pointed out that "there's a kind of hunger with youngsters today for some meaning in their lives. There's a hopelessness and a listlessness that is a fall-off from Watergate."

And Yale psychologist, Professor Kenneth Keniston warned that a generation of youngsters is growing up in a period of corruption and cynicism. "If a large number of young people have given up on our society, then the only meaning left for them is the meaning of inner exploration such as through drugs," he said.

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The two men spoke on the "Yale Reports" radio program. They were interviewed at Yale in December and the recording was released for broadcast tonight (Sunday) on WTIC (Hartford).

Father Hesburgh went on to point out that the pessimistic mood of the college students in this country is also reflected among the adults. "There's a kind of darkness, a lot of pessimism and foreboding. The country really needs a lift. This mood is dangerous because it's the kind of mood that you could see in other countries before dictatorship moved in. People are desperately looking for leadership," he said.

"What this country really needs at this point is a new vision, a burst of leadership...It would be marvelous if somehow this country could have a rebirth of leadership at all levels," the Notre Dame president said.

In analyzing the student moods, Father Hesburgh said that "in many ways college students have given up, and I think there is nothing worse than a cynical young person. A lot of the enthusiasm and excitement has gone out of life for them. There is no Peace Corps anymore. Vista seems to have fallen apart, and the idea that they can do something to help society seems to have dissipated. There's no pull to get people into public service."

Why have college students given up on the social action movement of four or five years ago? Prof. Keniston is of the opinion that students today have become disillusioned with the campus rebellions of the late 1960s. "A lot of students today are very critical of that movement because they feel it didn't accomplish much and produced a political backfire. But even more because they feel the student movements became corrupt itself."

Prof. Keniston went on to add an encouraging note about many of the students that he knew in the 1960s who were radicals and revolutionaries. "The great majority of them have not dropped out altogether. They may be in law school or medical school or graduate school. They are doing that with the conscious intention of acquiring the skills that are necessary to change the society. A lot of their revolutionary ardor has gone, but there's a recognition that changing things is very hard, that it takes skills, without the total abandonment of the notion that the country can be made a better place."

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