

ROCK FESTIVAL BLUES

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British observer, Malcolm Muggeridge, with more than forty years of media experience as writer, critic, editor of *Punch*, producer and commentator of radio and television, thinks we are witnessing "the twilight of a spent civilization." In an address at Edinburgh, he reprimanded the student generation for its escapist and self-indulgent demand for pot and pills. "It is one of those situations," said he, "a social historian with a sense of humor will find very much to his taste. All is prepared for a marvelous release of youthful creativity; we await the great works of art, the high-spirited venturing into new fields of perception and understanding and what do we get? The resort of any old slobbering debauchee anywhere in the world at any time "dope and bed!"

Liberal apologists and political hacks with their wagons hitched to the youth rebellion keep insisting that our rock festival gatherings have social meaning, and that the new generation has something to tell us. Well, we've waited patiently, listened reluctantly but carefully and, like Mr. Muggeridge, have concluded that the only solutions youth offers are sex, drugs and self indulgence. The "message," which becomes more and more apparent every time another Woodstock or Byron takes place, is that this particular, highly publicized segment of today's youth is incapable of managing anything except its own destruction.

In some aspects, today's young differ not at all from previous young, as the same waves of compulsive conformity sweep cyclically through every college and teen age population. Lemming like, all slavishly follow their own dictates of dress, manner and music with hypnotic addiction to the imitative conventionality of their contemporaries. The present, granny-glassed young men—unkempt, longhaired, bearded, clad in tight and dirtied jeans worn at hip level, roaming the byways lugging tape decks, guitars and sitars—are merely modern versions of John Held's slick-haired, collegiate, jelly beans with baggy pants, orange square toed shoes and patterned sweaters who piled into rumble seats of the Twenties dragging saxophones and ukuleles. The current, barefoot, lank-haired lasses—pallid, peering through light blue saucers and wearing rag tatters, beads and headbands—conform just as hysterically as did their saddle-shoed, bobby-soxed mothers fingering neck pearls worn over reversed cardigan sweaters in the Thirties.

Yet in other aspects there are some decided differences to this generation. In numbers of course, and they are much more visible and audible by virtue of our electronic and television age of mass communication. But beyond that, they seem determined to revert to an animal primitivism that disregards all the fundamental concepts of sanitation and health that have helped produce them.

It is one thing to defy conventions of dress and behavior; it is another to rebel for rebellion's sake against the truths of health and preventive medicine. Living and sleeping outdoors exposed to the elements may be a lark but are not recommended if you would avoid sunstroke, frost bite, skin troubles and disease transmitting insects and vermin. Urinating against a tree or defecating in a hole and wiping with leaves and grass may satisfy some atavistic urge but does little to prevent pollution and the spread of intestinal disease. Bathing in and drinking from natural ponds and streams are not helpful in avoiding typhoid germs and liver flukes. Bare feet have never discouraged tetanus and hookworms. Eardrums react eventually to high decibel music with deafness. Fornication al fresco and sexual promiscuity may be momentarily gratifying but not conducive to escaping the tortures of crab lice, or the ravages of gonorrhea and syphilis. Glue sniffing, pot smoking, acid dropping and mainlining have filled more morgues and institutions than seats at the United Nations. In fact, none of the common practices and habits in vogue among the protesting set can lead to anything but physical and mental disaster and added human misery.

In Mr. Muggeridge's opinion, “. . .whatever life is or is not about, it is not to be expressed in terms of drug stupefaction and casual sexual relations. However else we may venture into the unknown, it is not, I assure you, on the plastic wings of *Playboy Magazine* or psychedelic fancies."

Gradually, one becomes aware that the causes championed by our disoriented rock festival hordes: universal peace, outlawing of war, ecological purity, anti-imperialism, brotherly love, social justice and equality and instant Utopia are all put-ons that serve as excuses only to justify the gnawing desire that perpetual adolescents have to herd together in slovenly hedonism where they can conform and confirm media-fed biases that their numbers are great, their importance of consequence and that they represent the wave of the future. Unfortunately, they have not only nothing to say, they are fast losing even the capability of saying it.

So, pardon us if we stop listening and await the revelation no longer. The only message that comes through loud and clear is that, as a group, they are far stupider than comparable rebels in any previous generation. Hopefully, for humanity in general, this may be an entirely local phenomenon confined to special areas of Western Civilization and only to a relatively small segment of an overprivileged class of youth. If the future of this country must depend on wisdom coming out of rock festivals, we are in for rough times ahead.