

The face of the enemy

or is it?

Bob Heilbroner

1969

(Liberation News Service) The New York *Daily News* says these are our real enemies—the good wholesome American kids who hate beatniks and commies and unpatriotic draft dodgers.

They are the healthy kids, the good solid backbone of America who will hold the country together, who will not succumb to the creeping decadence which seems to have a frightening, unexplainable hold on so many of our young.

The *New York Times* says these are our real enemies—ordinary American kids who didn't have the advantages of culture and education that brought their movement contemporaries to revolt. They are small-minded and self-interested they can't grasp the movement's message because they haven't the quality of idealism.

The *Daily News* thinks we're the plague, the *New York Times* thinks we're refreshing, and both agree that it is our inability to communicate to kids such as these that will doom our movement to irrelevance. If we can't begin to reach them, our movement will fail.

They're right. Without them there will be no movement.

But we think they're wrong about those kids. We can't afford to believe the *Times* or the *Daily News*. If we look into these faces and see only enemies, our movement will become insular, idiosyncratic, paralyzed.

So look at these faces. Do they seem such invincible, invulnerable, bedrock-American golden boys that we cannot touch them? Or so narrow, threatened and petty that they cannot possibly understand what we're all about? Don't they look above all like we have already touched them?

Some of the faces look glib, silly, like at a football rally. But we are often glib and silly ourselves.

Most of them don't look at all glib. The kid clutching his flag so desperately looks threatened, angry—a defensive kind of anger, maybe a little fanatic even, but he is not untouched. It could be a dangerous anger if we cannot find a way to reach him, but he does not look like an unreachable enemy.

And the guy next to him looks downright calm—surveying the scene, considering. His hand on his friend's shoulder seems to be expressing solidarity, and yet restraining, consoling.

Look at the kids with the cop. They look in-groupy, confident. Sort of swaggering with their superior...what? Masculinity? Coolness? But so what? We do it too, and we do it most when we feel most threatened. We can't be trapped into defensiveness of our own—resting on the security of our own superior cool.

And finally, look at the anger of the boy in picture No. 3. It looks like a fine anger—serious, sober, moved. If the caption 'aid "Protester"' wouldn't we be proud of him?

The *Times* and *Daily News*—the liberal and the fascist elements of the establishment press—have a stake in convincing us that it is these kids (and their parents) that are our real enemy.

Because if they convince us of this, we will fail to build a movement relevant to the needs of the vast majority of Americans. Our movement will become an isolated, amusing fad for certain well-fed and well-educated youngsters; we will pose no serious threat to this country's corporate establishment.

And by telling us that our enemy is the “average American”—the future worker, or the future clerk—they divert our attention from our real enemy: the enormous corporate capitalist interests that built the ghettos that some of these kids grew up in, that run the plants and the bureaucracies that some of these kids will rot in, and that made the Vietnam War that some of these kids will die in.

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