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Milo Rediger Writings & Addresses

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### Affluence Bores, Power Corrupts, and Bigness Proportionately Diminishes the Stature of Man (chapel talk)

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Chapel - Summer Session  
June 24, 1969

AFFLUENCE BORES, POWER CORRUPTS,  
AND  
BIGNESS PROPORTIONATELY DIMINISHES THE STATURE OF MAN

AFFLUENCE BORES - It has been said that tensions tend to increase when times begin to improve. When the degree of achievement exceeds the measure of striving, the satisfaction decreases proportionately. As wealth and the mad rush for it increase, permissiveness and neglect in family, school and church increase. A generation grows up without work to do, and with the feeling that money and fun and freedom are automatic and without responsibility.

This permissiveness has grown to disgusting dimensions in some educational institutions. Anchor points are gone, authority and responsibility are not clearly defined, and there is almost no communication among students, faculty, and administration. Perhaps the kindest thing you can say of these faculties and students is that they deserve each other.

Hard work, generosity, courtesy, consideration, kindness, and concern are still the framework of a viable social order, and these are often eroded during a period of affluence like the past 15 to 20 years. This is how we get bored. It's like "what do you give a man who has everything?"

This is a bored generation we are dealing with. Having everything may be momentarily pleasant and wonderful, but it destroys the excitement of striving, eliminates the motivation and exhilaration of anticipation, and introduces the

blah unfulfillment of satiated desires and blunted urges. "The get-rich-quick disease of my youth has spread like wild-fire. It produced a civilization which has destroyed the simplicity and repose of life, its poetry, its soft romantic dreams -- and replaced them with a money-fever of sordid ideals, vulgar ambitions -- and the sleep that does not refresh. It has created a thousand useless luxuries and turned them into necessities -- that have satisfied nothing."

POWER CORRUPTS - The peril of power has always been one of the greatest human dangers. As far back as Old Testament Israel, God warned that when they should become prosperous and powerful, they would forget Him and His law. Empires have risen in power and declined in corruption to tragic demise. It is undefined, unlimited, undisciplined, irresponsible power that corrupts. It is the demand for decision-making power without the willingness to be ultimately responsible that is so unrealistic and dangerous. In some situations, some students and even some faculty members want power without limit, but when things go wrong they will accept no blame. Long since, the lawless behavior of students in Latin American countries has reduced the value of their college and university diplomas and made their institutions anything but centers of learning. Recently here in our own country, power without responsibility is the new name of the game. Everybody wants it, and in the struggle for it, the autonomy and, with it, the quality and freedom of higher education could be destroyed.

He who desires power probably shouldn't have it, and he who has and must

be responsible accordingly probably won't enjoy it. Two other things inevitably go with the acquisition of so-called power in colleges and universities: one is the ultimate responsibility for being right or wrong, and the other is the continuing responsibility for financing the program. Seeing to it that the doors stay open and that the quality of the educational experience remains high soon takes the thrill out of having the power.

BIGNESS - Now In America we have come to worship bigness -- in business, in agriculture, in government, in education -- and bigness proportionately diminishes the stature of man. When man comes to the place where he is completely subordinate to the group and exists for the state, greatness has given way to bigness.

It is specifically at this point of "the stature of man" that the gospel is relevant. God so loved the world -- the people of the world, every man, woman and child, -- so much and so well that He gave us His Son to save us from destruction. Jesus always focused on the individual. He was moved with compassion by the multitudes, but he ministered to the sick person, fed the hungry person, healed the lame person, helped the weak person.

The gospel is the pattern for our growth toward maturity. It is by receiving and implementing the gospel that we wield our influence upon our fellowmen and serve the society of which we are a part.

How can we be relevant here at Taylor? For many years we have worked together as students, teachers and administrators, and there have been no unreasonable power-grabs on the part of any single component. We have been disposed to recognize the dignity



and importance of each individual as a member of his group in the total community. We have tried to listen, first to Christ and then to each other. We need to establish these priorities as we sort out what we hear as we listen. My conviction as a Christian adult who was once a young person is that you listen first to Him. He is the way, the truth and the life. Then you listen to us, the adults, not because we have all wisdom or have succeeded so well, but because if you don't, you will build an establishment with all the same faults and weaknesses of the one we have built. Remember, you are well on your way to adulthood, and the responsibility goes with the stature. (I hear the 18 and 20 year-olds saying "Don't trust anyone over 30," but it isn't coming through very loudly from the 28 and 29 year-olds.) Finally, listen to your peers. Not all young people are saying the same things. The great majority are not anarchists, wanting to destroy without any plan to replace the chaos or rebuild the rubble. They are pretty serious people, not taking themselves too seriously.

This is where the militants are making a mistake. In their impatience they surrender the very goals they claim to espouse. They assume there is a generation gap, and they polarize the issues and blame the establishment for all that is wrong. The only way to build a better society is to begin with what is already good and right, and from these points go on to correct the wrongs and improve what is not good.

There isn't really a generation gap. That there is a gap is granted, and sometimes parents and children are on opposite sides of it. But it really has nothing to do with chronological age--or with skin color, for that matter. It isn't between

old and young or between white and black. It is between different kinds of people, similar or different in age or color, but of widely different ideas, ideologies, values, and commitments.

This is why the gospel is relevant today. It emphasizes the dignity and worth of the individual, first in relation to Jesus Christ and then in relation to other individuals, and society is a community of people with its institutions built around objectives that express the commitments of the individuals. We don't join an age group or a color group; we accept a set of beliefs and values which, in the case of Christians, express our commitment to Christ.

I've just returned from the national convention of the Y.M.C.A. where I was a delegate because I serve on the board of the Marion Y. There were confrontations between the militants and the majority, and each listened to the other. But the difference is that the militant minority didn't hear when they listened--and they concluded with ten demands and a threat of violence. The majority pledged a willingness to work in and with the establishment, beginning with what is good out of a 125 year history, and finding together the appropriate instruments for change toward improvement in a program of goal-oriented action for the betterment of individuals in communities.

And I predict that the demands will not be met because they are impossible, but that the goals will be realized because of the willingness of old and young, white and black to work together in the spirit of Christian love, hopefully achieving



a more adequate timetable than the past records, and catching up with the tremendous proportions of today's needs and problems. This is not only good for the Y.M.C.A.; it is the *modus operandi* for education and for the kingdom of God in the world.