

The following is not intended as a definitive analysis -such a matter is not and cannot be presented objectively. We are not asking anyone to agree with every detail or every aspect of wording -this is not any sort of petition. It is a statement of belief, and we present it because we feel that it is basically true and worthy of consideration. We hope that it will be taken in this light.

A terrible thing is about to happen to our sixth form -it is about to become a body of alumni. St. Paul's is about to become for us a fond nostalgic memory of halcyon days and good friends; a source of prestige; and a depository for future sons. This is a far cry from what we may feel about the school now; but vague feelings of dissatisfaction and even hatred can easily be dispelled by the thought "there's just a few more weeks to go" or "it wasn't so bad after all" or, even worse, "it's too late to say anything anyway." But I would like to assert emphatically that we cannot let this happen to us. It is true that the school has us gripped firmly exactly where it hurts. It dangles the precious diploma before us and dares us to step out of line -dares us to think we have a right to more personal responsibilities. But despite this fact, we must assess our experience here at school, and if we find fault in it we must voice our dissent.

We must make everyone connected with the school realize that it cannot have its cake and eat it too -cannot attract an intelligent and varied student body and at the same time expect them to accept everything that goes on here. Of course it will certainly be asked: why wait so late to find fault with the school? But we think there are very good reasons for this. It is only by the time one reaches the sixth form one has had the medium of outside experience (primarily through summer jobs) which it takes to realize the pettiness and needless restriction of school life. One is often able to see, through an employer-employee relationship, that such a relationship can be based on common sense, respect and reward; that it is possible for one to be taken seriously. Moreover, acceptance into college makes one wonder what is supposed to happen in those three short months which propel you from a helpless kid in need of constant guidance to a responsible frighteningly independent personality. The school is aware that it is hard to take all the absurdities that one encounters in one's sixth form year. It has even introduced a token independent study program -a sort of glorified term paper which is almost pathetic when compared to programs at other schools such as ones in effect at Middlesex, Exeter, and Concord Academy. Like the school's TOKEN integration it looks very good when played up in the right way, but it avoids all those nasty problems that are such a nuisance. "It's a step in the right direction," says the school boldly, as it tiptoes forward to progress.

Of course it cannot be denied that the problem of St. Paul's is the problem of education in general. In Tropic of Capricorn, Henry Miller speaks of education as a "destruction of the life promised in childhood by the mutual consent of those who have surrendered it." Certainly few places are guilty of such destruction more than St. Paul's. Spontaneity, openness, honesty and joy in general are not encouraged. Relationships are often based on one-ups-manship of the most vicious sort. Open frankness is often greeted with cynicism; and as one master has remarked "For someone to say to another 'Person 'I like you' is almost unthinkable." Master-boy relationships are abominable. At meals, tables are regularly segregated - people do not feel comfortable when a master sits with them. They do not feel they can be themselves. In fact, the number of masters to whom one can say anything one feels is minimal. This is a terrible thing to be able to say about the people one lives with. The root of the problem is very deep and it extends back directly to the lower forms. The relationship immediately set up as one built on rules. Of course rules are necessarily more stringent in the lower forms, but no effort is made to communicate the fact that rules are not (or should not be) arbitrary, and that masters are on our side. The reaction is rebellion and the feeling that breaking rules is something to get away with, and

masters are people to deceive. Masters for their part assume a sort of aloofness and tend to enforce rules by the letter. In fact, it is usually the case that the few masters that one is able to communicate with are ones who literally don't give a damn for the rules -ridicule them in fact. They realize that certain rules ought logically to be observed, but more importantly they care about boys in a real sense. They have no compunction to impose any sort of standard of belief or behavior on students. Such masters are apt to be found in disrepute with the "administration." One young master is said to have been warned by elder members of the faculty that he was getting along on too good terms with the students. Presumably he was breaking the sacred barrier of innate superiority and seriousness a master must have.

One of the worst problems is the sort of masters St. Paul's is able to attract and sustain. Most of the young and able masters, those who cannot accept subjugation by the administration, leave early. One immediately suspects those who remain. One feels that they must in time lose some of their objectivity in dealing with education. Of course no one can blame masters for this. Out of the context of St. Paul's they are mostly good-natured people, and worthy of respect. It is only when force becomes a factor that they become distasteful and their standards narrow.

One of the primary factors which tends to destroy objectivity in the school is its isolation. Lack of coeducation is part of the isolation, but we are also separated from Concord, and from more frequent and broader exchanges with other schools. In short, problems go on, and, because objectivity tends to get lost by the wayside, no one does anything about it. Undoubtedly many sixth formers are already in a St. Paul's rut from which they will never swerve. Personalities and emotions have been subjugated for a long time, we have been guided in such a way as to make compliance with "things as they are" a desired goal. Don't try and change the world, change yourself to fit the world. The ways of our school are, as Bill Hamilton has said, incredibly subtle and hard to see from a close up position -and by June 9 it will be too late. We would like to say don't bag it now, there's a lot at stake. The stake is obvious in a quote from A.S. Neil. "The function of the child is to live his own life --not the life that his anxious parents think he should live, nor a life according to the purpose of the educator who thinks he knows best. All this interference on the part of adults only produces a generation of robots.

"You cannot make children learn music or anything else without to some degree converting them into will-less adults. You fashion them into acceptors of the status quo - a good thing for a society that needs obedient sitters at dreary desks; standers in shops, mechanical catchers of the 8:30 suburban train - a society in short, that is carried on the shoulders of the sacred little man -the scared-to-death conformist. "

In summary, the various pressures brought to bear on the S.P.S. student have a warping effect on one's personality. It is easy to laugh at this, but think of the endless trivialities we must continually put up with. In a restricted community, where the students spend a great deal of time worrying about masters' reactions to their appearance, how much education is being accomplished? In a supposedly close-knit community how much communication takes place between masters and students except about sports, weather, or the food in the upper? In a school where masters have to coach sports, teach, and raise families, how much time do they have to devote to us?

The main reason for attending a private school is definitely not to separate oneself from the rest of the world by living in New Hampshire. The isolation and artificial social situation of St. Paul's are the restrictions we put up with to receive the very best in education. The whole reason for existence of any prep school is to use its freedom and endowment to keep abreast of the latest in educational techniques and expose its students to the new and exciting changes in education.

At one time St. Paul's might have provided this type of challenging education. But now the impetus has switched to the public schools of Newton, Mass.; California; and Cleveland, Ohio. The module system, constant curriculum revision, new types of courses, and independent study are all important parts of their outlook. These schools do not worry primarily about getting their students into college but about providing their students with the most immediately enriching experiences they can. As a result, they are now the ones who draw the good and bright men out of college and retain them.

Meanwhile, St. Paul's has a curriculum study once every six or seven years; pats itself on the back about token independent study and such innovations as the ridiculously inadequate Hargate Art Center, and vegetates.

The point is that St. Paul's draws a highly capable student body. By treating the students as perpetual adolescents, as a group apart, as a group roughly similar from ages 12 -18 -- we are made into children or else rebel against this type of treatment by being soured and constantly bad tempered. Whichever path we choose, the classroom suffers. One spends a great deal of time trying to find out who one is, not with the school's aid, but over the barriers it places in our way.

As long as St. Paul's continues to complacently progress occasionally, as almost an afterthought, it will become more and more of an anachronism. A leader through the nineteen fifties, St. Paul's is living on its reputation from this era. If you are still a person you have often wanted to disassociate yourself with this school. The school's subtle way of conquering you is to have you believe that this is a natural reaction but that you are wrong. What one often neglects to consider is that possibly the school is reactionary and in need of incredible change.

It is time for the school to stop worrying about bicycles and to start worrying constantly about new trends in creative activity like photography, about curriculum revision, about the emphasis on student initiative in shaping the educational process. We are tired of being politely listened to, told that our ideas are interesting and promptly being forgotten. We are an integral part of this school; we have as much a stake in this school as anyone else, and we ought to be accounted for.

