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RADICALISM-CONSERVATISM IN STUDENT ATTITUDES

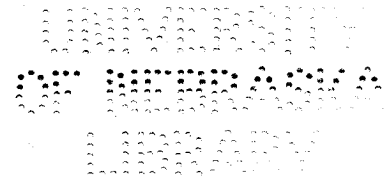
By

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RADICALISM-CONSERVATISM IN STUDENT ATTITUDES

RADICALISM ON THE CAMPUS?

Just how radical are the attitudes of college and university students? Judging from newspapers and popular magazine writers of recent years, American college students are not merely liberal in their views, but are more often described as radical, red, communistic, bereft of personal ideals, indeed, almost ready to abolish the constitution and invert the entire social order! These reports have not come in isolated instances. To the contrary, "great clanking chains of newspapers" (10) have repeated the allegations in season and out. That the frequency of such reports have had their effect on the public can hardly be doubted. Indeed, we already have evidence that legislators have noted a fear partly aroused. They in turn have not been slow in attempting to place the responsibility on the institutions and the teachers of youth. As a result, surprised educators have been called forth to "swear allegiance", or to submit to investigations and other procedures to "save the youth of the land".

Two criticisms may be made of these popular reports. First, they consistently fail to define terms—making for gross inconsistency. In some reports, radicalism has, by implication, meant simply a view contrary to that of the person writing. Consequently we have the interesting spectacle of some writers claiming extreme radicalism on the campus—other writers professing to see no radicalism among the same group of students. Second, the evidence for such sweeping conclusions has been pitifully meager. A small group of students are questioned or a few escapades are reported and published as evidence of student attitudes. Furthermore, in replying to these allegations, the edu-

This article is based on a research carried on in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Nebraska at which place a copy of the complete study is available.

