

WHAT IS THE ALIENATED GENERATION TELLING US?

Brother P. Smith, B.A., Dip.Ed.
Director, Boys' Town, Beaudesert, Queensland

SPOT THE ALIEN

John was born of parents living in a defacto relationship. It was an unwanted pregnancy and an attempt was made unsuccessfully to abort.

The parents were seasonal workers and moved up to three or four times a year necessitating constant changes of school. Two other children had followed John. The parents thought only of themselves even to the extent that they would eat first and the children shared what was left.

The children learned to fend for themselves being left home during the day. They did as they liked and stole to eat.

When John was 12 he had proved most difficult to manage. His mother blamed him for all the upheaval within the home. She rejected him and told him he wasn't loved.

John ran away, committed some petty thefts and was institutionalised. Shortly after this the relationship between parents reached a crisis and separation followed. John was placed with his uncle and aunt but after six months this broke down and he was again placed in an institution.

During this last placement he was raped and received fourteen stitches. He absconded on several occasions and was found in the company of homosexuals.

He was sent to Boys' Town.

Last year his mother remarried and John, desperate for some family contact, wrote asking to be allowed to change his name to that of his mother and if he could live with her.

The reply reads:

"I am sorry John but you can't come to live with me. My new husband doesn't want you so you just stay where you are. I won't look after you. Just accept that. If you carry on like this I won't even bother to write to you. If you come here I will send you away. You just have to learn hard. Why don't you write to Nanny? Bye for now.

Love from Mum
xxxxxx

Alien in terms of this conference is simple — John.

But what of his parents — his schools — the homosexual group who quite clearly seduced him and because of the law have not been charged?

SPOT THE ALIEN

Bill was born illegitimately. Details of his father are not known. His mother has had a long history of alcohol and drug abuse. She did not want the child and could not care for him. He was ill-fed, poorly clothed. His mother frequently beat him for no reason other than her own frustration.

On one occasion he was locked in a cupboard and only after five hours was allowed out — he was unconscious and a doctor was called.

He slept in the same room as his mother and her endless line of companions.

His criminal history was one of frequent break and enters. These were done in the company of his mother's friends. His mother was pleased with this source of income.

Bill has been institutionalised for his own protection and is now at Boys' Town.

Recently he wrote to his mother.

"Dear Mum,

How are you going. I haven't heard from you at all. Please

write to me. I miss you a lot Mum and I pray you are alright. I worry when you don't reply to me.

I love you a lot Mum so please write back. I want to run away but I say it's not worth it. Anyway Mum I love you. Please eat some food so you can put on weight.

Anyway I love you Mum.

Goodbye.

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

P.S. Please write back."

Again, in terms of this seminar, Bill is the alien.

But what about the mother? Her alienation through drugs. Her companions and their disregard for the law, for Bill.

Bill was suspended from schools and expelled for disruptive behaviour.

THE ALIENATED GENERATION

I spent considerable time mulling over the word alienation trying to see its meaning in the context of this seminar. I would like to propose three interpretations.

The alienated generation — the younger generation seen as "not belonging", need not be offenders as these are simply the ones caught, not the total number behaving in an anti-social manner.

Their behaviour, values clash with the traditional, time-honoured standards. This clash is clearly seen in some of the alien garb — their hair style, their jewellery, their dress, their decoration (tattoos), as irksome to some as if they were green men with antennae. Certainly it doesn't fit in with a more acceptable and safer role we would like to see them play.

They are seen to be threatening, defiant and very deliberate. The last description I think most relevant. The assuming the role of alien for many of our adolescents is very deliberate. It is almost as they are making a stand, stating a case or posing a challenge. The question they are implying is "Well, what are you going to do about it?" And I suspect it is the answer to this question that brings about a Seminar such as this.

A second interpretation of alienated generation is that in fact we have become the aliens. We have been excluded, we and what we stand for are no longer acceptable. The onus is now on us to establish our good faith, our values and standards. To be placed on the defensive like this evokes considerable apprehension.

I believe the apprehension is justified. This younger generation is a mirror image of ourselves. They reflect back at us in a far too honest manner our own fears, failures, instability and hopelessness. The problem youth are a caricature of ourselves, of our own lack of inconsistency, of our double standards, of our economic instability.

Because of their immaturity, their inexperience and lack of well-developed defence mechanisms their method of coping is obvious and unsophisticated. Their very obviousness, their wolf pack mentality, highlights them and possibly distracts us from the root cause.

The excesses of juvenile behaviour — theft or general lack of respect for property, violence and vandalism, drug abuse in the form of sniffing or smoking are no different to the way they perceive us.

What values do we present to them? The beauty of the family unit? — love and loyalty, care and concern? No, look at the

divorce rate and where separation is avoided the traumas and tension in the majority of families (especially the families of the offending juveniles).

If one's own family is unstable then what other models can youth grasp hold of? In the media whether radio, T.V., film or press the same lack of respect for family, for relationships exists. People are there to be used. It is the adults who portray this and the younger generation that reflect it.

What are the property values we signal as important? Our pursuit for possessions is all-consuming, our ardour in obtaining money and possessions accompanied by our smugness in exhibiting them. To have is paramount, to earn less important. Success/failure is often times measured in having.

Advertising is a clear example of this pursuit for possessing — needing is overlooked for wanting. The appeal to greed ever present. Popularity, social acceptance, sex appeal all are clearly determined by what toothpaste we use. I am open to suggestions here, as my current brand hasn't proved all that successful.

How in that barrage of appeals to our basic instincts can the younger generation determine what is important, relevant and obtainable?

We present the values that we consider important whether consciously or sub-consciously, yet we balk when we see them reflected back at us in our troubled youth.

Maybe the alienated generation is us and it is ourselves that need renewal and restatement of our values, of what is important. The two-car family as opposed to the two-parent family? It is important that delinquent behaviour, obvious and frequent, does not distract us from the world that they reflect.

A third viewpoint on alienation I think relevant is the one that sees the youth under question as alienated from themselves. I believe that many of our youth have pathetic morale, self-confidence, self-image and much of their behaviour is to distract from this.

They are finding themselves in a situation that reinforces only that they are failures — that their lot is hopeless. They are coming up against a relentless oppression that leaves them little dignity, has no pity and seemingly few answers.

If we cannot **heal** the hurt, the suffering, the confusion then much of what we do will be token.

To pity someone and to punish someone who dislikes himself only compounds the problem. The only solution is to let him see that he is loveable, that he does matter. And that is the hardest task of all.

Many of our youth receive knockbacks at home, at school, in job applications.

One thirteen year old boy who arrived at Boys' Town introduced himself by saying —

"Hi, I'm Tommy. You would have heard I'm from Mt Isa and I'm uncontrollable."

"Good Tommy, now wait over there."

"Yes, Sir."

And off he trotted. At present Tommy is very settled and making fine progress. But how well had we conditioned him before this? Uncontrollable had become his surname. He believed it and I'm sure acted out the appropriate role.

The loss of dignity, of confidence, I believe is at the heart of our delinquency problem. With the word alienation there is an implication of guilt, of blame. To be different, to non conform is threatening and evokes a negative response.

The attitude we display of caution, of suspicion also reinforces negative behaviour.

A simple example: The boys who are stopped by the police every weekend and their name, address and reasons for being there noted — how are they to interpret this? It is further cause for showing off, for feeling hostile.

It may be a tool in crime prevention but I think in the long run counter-productive.

I know boys from Boys' Town are constantly exposed to this form of censure and I do believe it reinforces them in a negative role play.

A further example and of greater import, is where the welfare system advises the judicial system that intervention is required and a boy needs to be removed from his home. Reasons can be twofold; either for protection or for control.

A Care and Protection order could be for a boy/girl who is an habitual glue sniffer, truant from school, in moral danger — homosexuality, is in danger of physical abuse or unmanageable. A Care and Control order usually follows a series of criminal offences — breaking and entering, unlawful use of motor vehicle etc.

I believe intervention is necessary but I am concerned in the message we are relaying to the child. I think there is considerable ignorance for why such action is taken. They are scapegoats, made to feel responsible for actions and behaviour that are really only symptomatic of much greater problems.

Once intervention takes place and a child is placed in an alternate care situation I do not believe much further work is done with the family, so often the root cause. The child "more sinned against than sinning" is often hurt and confused. He sees the action as punitive, not caring.

And when the period of control or protection is over the child usually returns to the same unsatisfactory environment he was unable to cope with initially. The transitional stage is the greatest concern of Boys' Town.

This is a serious area requiring appraisal. I think the family should be involved to a much greater extent in court decisions and appearances. Their attendance should be compulsory. They should be involved in the decision-making, should have the magistrate's judgement carefully explained. I was quite shocked to see how few of our boys knew what court order was handed down against them and indeed for how long.

Parental and familial involvement in court decisions I think would have a twofold advantage:

1. It does not isolate the offender and ostracize him from the family.
2. It helps the family also be accountable for the actions of the child and hopefully help in assessing their own neglect where relevant.

The actual children's court hearings I believe at times to be too formal, too summary. Welfare officers are asked for background information, extenuating circumstances, in a disinterested manner — in some cases almost a cynical manner.

Where family background is unstable, violent, alcoholic then if the parents were present to hear this in court it might help them accept some responsibility.

Whether a child is taken into care or returned home I think there must be a follow-up involvement by welfare officers. So often I suspect this follow-up occurs only after further trouble. Surely, it is not a waste of time to visit a family, find that it is coping well and the child seemingly settled and give praise accordingly. That is crime prevention.

Whilst having mentioned the court system I would like to make several observations.

I think we present the offender with a dual standard. On the one hand we have the police attempting to establish guilt and responsibility and on the other we have representatives of the legal profession helping them escape blame and responsibility. I don't wish to be confused about respecting the juvenile's rights. However, I think we help pit the child against the law.

"You don't have to answer any questions" approach does little to assist the child in developing a social conscience. It

makes him take part in a game that he doesn't understand or benefit from.

We had an incident of three boys absconding by car from Boys' Town and two Brothers following in a second car. The Brothers did not wish to overtake or cause the boys to travel too fast in case they had an accident. The whole defence of the legal aid was that in fact they were being supervised during the enterprise and were being encouraged. They had admitted taking the car — in fact were stopped by police whilst driving it. The line of defence taken I thought totally unhelpful to the boys and their accepting responsibility for their actions. When I suggested that to the boys' legal aid the response was "Well it worked, they only received an admonishment." Incidentally two of the three boys have since been in Westbrook for car theft.

One further point that I see clearly in the boys is that they know in fact that little can happen to them. The whole question of accountability and restitution is a vexing one.

A boy commits a theft. If he is already under a court order and is in an alternate care situation then little can be done. "Nothing will happen" is a fairly common response and usually accurate.

A token gesture towards this at Boys' Town is where we make the boys appear before the owner and apologise and if appropriate have them work off some of their debt.

I would like to comment upon the education system and what I think the "alienated generation" is telling us. I have had thirteen years teaching in Sydney and Melbourne before coming to Queensland. The last ten years was in Melbourne in a secondary school of some thirteen hundred students.

It is in the area of education, attendance at school, achieving a certificate that I believe many of the offending younger generation experience a real alienation, a sense of hopelessness and failure.

In our present Year 10 population at Boys' Town we have thirty-nine boys. Twenty-nine of these had been suspended from at least one school, many of them two or more times. Twenty-two of them had been expelled from at least one school.

We are admitting thirteen and fourteen year old boys unable to identify the letters of the alphabet. One boy, 14 years old, asked his remedial teacher to show him on a map where July was because his friends are going for a weekend camping in July. He read his first book a week ago. He had been attending a normal school and was in Year 8 and had been promoted each year. On his referral file he was described as being a stirrer at school, disruptive, insolent and a frequent truant. Surprise if he wasn't.

His anti-social behaviour would be his only defence for his illiteracy. It would distract his peers and teachers alike. He is not an isolated case.

I believe much of his offending behaviour — his glue sniffing, his wandering the streets, his breaking and entering offences can be tied in with his traumatic school experiences.

The constant failure, fear of ridicule would destroy any self-confidence and peer status. He would have no alternative but to find it in other areas, usually with boys of similar backgrounds.

I believe our education programme is one that must bear a considerable responsibility for offending behaviour, at least indirectly.

Firstly the struggling students must be identified and special programmes offered. The need to obtain a certificate at the end of Year 10 is irrelevant to many students. Class sizes should not be proffered as an argument for continual promotion.

The teachers exist who can be used in identifying the potential drop-out — I believe they can be more effective than school counsellors in this work. Experienced teachers could be released from a teaching load and used exclusively in

identification of problem children, analysing the causes, involving the families in the programme. I know schools have parent-teacher evenings but how often do the suffering minority have their parents attend — but rarely. Education increasingly so must go into the homes, involve families in awareness of alternatives that exist.

The transition to work scheme is a step in the right direction — the boys see it as relevant and something that is obtainable.

At Boys' Town the boys are graded vertically not horizontally for Maths and English — taught at the level they can cope with and succeed at. It is amazing how the most disenchanting and fearful will respond. There is a heavy emphasis on manual skills. apprenticeship training, driver education etc.

I do believe the alienated generation is telling us that in school they are lost, that it simply is reinforcing their hopelessness. Their families often are ill at ease with the educational process and shy clear of involvement.

A constant cry of the alienated generation is that they are bored, they have nothing to do, nowhere to go. For many their only distraction is pinball parlours or wandering the streets.

This is an area again I think that requires a determination by local governments to overcome. The resources I see as existing but untapped.

The many service organisations that exist could employ their energies gainfully in this problem. Sporting clubs could be approached for the use of their facilities for multifarious activities. So many schools have amenities that lie idle over weekends or at night time. Co-ordination of these within a shire should be possible.

When I was in Melbourne the police ran Blue Light Discos regularly throughout the suburbs — they were well attended, well supervised, and fulfilled a real need. I don't know whether that is a practice in other states. It also proved an excellent public relations exercise between police and the youth.

The role of the police as seen by the alienated generation is not a complimentary one. It is seen to be more a punitive role than a serving role. I believe the Juvenile Aid Bureau as it exists in Queensland is a step toward redeeming this situation. It should be a group that is chosen for its rapport and ability to relate. It should promote an image of concern not fear. I stress a point that I made earlier that it is important to reinforce good behaviour, to follow up an admonishment at a later date with a well done rather than wait for a further offence and be forced into the role of bogey man.

A further point. I think increasingly so many of our youth are quite amoral. They have little to no respect for authority, for the rights of others.

I had a boy returned from a weekend after he had completed two break and enters. I pitched my best line at him pointing out his irresponsibility. He dropped his head in total remorse. At last, I thought smugly.

Well, what have you got to say?

I'm sorry Brother, I'll try not to get caught next time.

Another boy asked not to be sent home for six weeks over Christmas vacation because he would only get into trouble. He went home for seven days and returned with nineteen break and enter offences. All of it food and money that he had taken home to his parents and family of eleven.

And there I think lies a real problem we have. He clearly was not being punished or censured at home, in fact he was being of assistance.

To condemn him is to condemn his parents. I believe we are in an invidious position in that we are forcing a child to make a choice — our values as opposed to his parents'. Acceptance of one implies a rejection of the other. The emotional fragility of many boys and girls makes this most difficult. I think we lose in many cases till they gain in maturity.

We sent a group of fifteen boys into town to see the "Entombed Warriors". This cultural pursuit was not a high

priority for one who absconded. Seven days later we picked him up after he had committed six break and enters. His father had driven him and his mates to three of them.

I believe in our case we can simply continue to present the boys with the values we hold as important and hope that eventually they will take hold of them and see their relevance.

A similar fight you have is presenting models of behaviour that are different to the peer groups. Acceptance by peers is more important than your approval and in the short term yours probably will be rejected.

What I have presented is some rather disjointed reflections upon the alienated generation and what I believe they are saying to us.

Their existence isn't a 20th century phenomenon — even in the times of Plato they were complaining of the youth. I think before we apportion blame we need do much soul-searching ourselves and if we see them as a product of our times then we have much to answer for. But clearly there are areas we can look to.

We need to provide models that are consistent. We need to be patient and forgiving.

For some I think the hurt is so deep that we will never really touch them or heal them.

I believe a real cry of the "alienated generation" is stop, look at me. Take notice. I matter, I hurt. And in many cases the message is simply HELP!

Supporting Crime Prevention is the

VILLAGE CARAVAN PARK

★ In the heart of Latrobe Valley ★ Excellent Tourist Facilities
★ Furnished Cabins ★ On-site Vans ★ Tent Area ★ Children's
Play Area ★ Kiosk ★ Recreation and Sporting Facilities ★ Large
Swimming Pool ★ Conveniently located midway between
Traralgon and Morwell.

Aerodrome Rd, Traralgon, Vic. 3844
Telephone: (051) 74 2384

SUPPORTING CRIME PREVENTION IS THE

CANOWINDRA HOTEL

Mine Host: LOUISE FITZGERALD

• Cold Beer • Warm Welcome • Excellent Counter Lunches
and Teas • Accommodation Available • Well Stocked
Bottle Department

CANOWINDRA, NSW 2804
Phone: (063) 44 1407

*Supporting Crime
Prevention is*

DOUG & TOM
of ...

GOLDEN BROS TRANSPORT

108 Mitchell Street
Maidstone, Melbourne
Vic, 3012

Telephone:
318 1422

*Supporting Crime Prevention
throughout the Metropolitan area is*

M.G.K. CONSTRUCTION PTY LTD

28 Lynch Street,
Hawthorn, Melbourne,
Vic. 3122

Tel: (03) 819 5011

BALLARAT CHILD MINDING CENTRE

(REGISTERED)

Available to Children 0-5 years old
Hourly — Daily or Weekly Rates

All Enquiries

(053) 31 4912

**255 VICTORIA STREET,
BALLARAT, VIC 3350**



● Emperor's Crown

CHINESE RESTAURANT
28 John St., Salisbury, 5108

(Rear Entrance from James Place)

We Specialise in Seafood and Chinese Take Away

● Fully Licensed

Tel. (08) 258 9617



GEORGE PANNELL REAL ESTATE

Licensed Agents, M.R.E.I.

Your property can be effectively and confidently SOLD — By our professional staff. ALL SUBURBS. Houses under \$45,000 wanted in Southern Suburbs.

**114B BEACH ROAD,
CHRISTIES BEACH, S.A. 5165**
TELEPHONE (08) 382 1974
AFTER HOURS (085) 56 5417

Best Wishes from

PAPPY'S SEAFOOD

Where a warm welcome awaits and freshly cooked fish. Also crabs, prawns, oysters and mussels when available.

4431 GYMPIE ROAD, KEDRON, QLD, 4510
Telephone (07) 359 7164

LOCKWOOD medeco



METROPOLITAN LOCKSMITHS PTY. LTD.

141 SOUTH RD, RIDLEYTON
46 8262 or 46 7445

- Lock Repairs & Key Cutting
- Security Grilles
- Sales & Strongrooms
- Auto Lock Service
- House & Business Security
- Electric Latch Specialists
- Electronic Access Controls
- Master Keys & Restricted Systems

After Hours
383 8545 or 252 2039



● YOUR SECURITY IS IN GOOD HANDS ●



MASTER LOCKSMITHS

YOUR
PROFESSIONAL
GUARANTEE

G.T. (Tom) EVANS WEEDSPRAYER

Contractor to the Perth City Council
and Local Government Authorities

**170 CRAWFORD ROAD,
INGLEWOOD, WA**

Ph: (09) 271 3621

L. & D. BACHMAN

PLANT HIRE, IPSWICH

Radio Controlled—Excavation Buckets, .457m (18") to 1.524m (60"), Rippers; Drott, Bucket Cap 1.2m (1.5yd); Chain Digger, Width .102m (4") to .254m (10"); Water Tanker, 13,638 litres (3000 gallons); Tip Trucks, 6m and 10m; Backhoes, MF 50B's CASE 580C's; Mini Loader Bobcats, Backhoe Attachment and Rippers; End Loader, Bucket Cap 1m³ (1.25yds³); Low Loader, 20.32 Tonne (20 tons). Also a Backhoe Mounted Rock Breaker.

39 Chubb Street, Leichhardt 4305
Phone (07) 281 4140

(ALL HOURS)

Kindly sponsored by Frank Mazzacca, your host of

DONCICCIO

If you enjoy top class Italian Food then the DONCICCIO is the answer. It is the newest Italian Restaurant and Pizzeria in Melbourne. 16 different varieties of Pizzas to choose from. The DONCICCIO is open 7 days a week and is BYO. No corkage charge.

608 HIGH ST, THORNBURY, VIC. 3071
(100 metres from Croxton Park Hotel)
Telephone: (03) 480 4129