

above their heads.

These were the men I had voted for; some were my "scratches," and they had nothing to do with me, my country, or even "right." I will cast my vote, but yes, I am willing to leave "right" to the majority. It seems that in order to do *something*, I would have to do everything, and that is too much for a woman.

## Social Pressures and Conformity

Linda Dodson

ARE WE really free in this country? We are guaranteed certain irrevocable rights, but nothing guarantees a free mind. We may speak out against what we do not like, or write against what we do not like, but social pressures often do not allow us to decide for ourselves exactly what it is that we dislike. Our mind governs our actions; social pressures influence our patterns of thinking. Fettered minds are for weak people. Our minds *are* in chains. We are herded into categories, informed of our needs and beliefs, and goaded concerning matters which should be individual decisions.

This deplorable situation sinks strong roots into the high-school youth. High-school students band together naturally; a certain standard is set up and they adhere to it with amazing loyalty. They seem afraid to dress, talk, or act differently from the person sitting in front of them in class, afraid to break away from "the crowd" and follow their own preferences. The student learns early and well to conform to social pressures, to the "accepted thing." How can one develop individuality in such an atmosphere?

A more dangerous problem of pressure in high-school concerns the making of important decisions pertaining to objectives and morals in life. For example, parents, believing they are encouraging their child to apply himself, are actually brow-beating him so that he will enter medicine, law or some other field which will bring status to themselves. Or another instance can be cited: Students who want to be "popular" often become superficial, insincere people. Their objectives are concentrated on impressing those around them; their values are governed by what people think constitutes being popular. These people must adhere to the stereotypic patterns set up in their high-school society.

Although the idea of conformity to social pressures is not as prevalent, the same trends are definitely extended into the college level. People have a definite idea of what the college student should be like and the student follows along; in order to achieve a degree of popularity, he is pressured to conform to the accepted perspective on campus. A veneer of sophistication reigns, but an undercurrent of ineffectiveness is always present.

There is no escaping this pressure; many students do not even realize they are being influenced because they are so accustomed to it. An even more disturbing fact is that no one seems to want to oppose the situation. Pressure begets conformity, and with conformity comes a sense of security which, although false, is reassuring. And so it remains.

After conforming to group standards and social pressures throughout youth, the individual is unprepared to live independently. Suddenly there comes a time in his life when he must depend on setting his own standards, but he is incapable; he is too accustomed to having ideas and decisions established for him. Returning to the group, he patterns himself after business and civic leaders. He is pressured into associating with the "right" people, joining the "right" clubs, and working for the "right" causes. He pushes himself forward to become known to the public, to capitalize on his name by progressive repetition; this is the "right" thing to do. He may not even believe in what he is working for or respect the standards established in his society, but he is pressured socially to conform in order to be accepted.

We conform in high-school; we conform in college; we conform in adult life. Social pressures have fettered our minds; they have determined the degree of individualism which one attains.

## American Civilization

### The Meridian or the Morning Star?

Cynthia Barron

"CONSISTENCY," according to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "is the hobgoblin of little minds." Van Wyck Brooks defined little minds or lowbrows as those people whose sense of things has been formed by the give and take of life. Their ideas stem from inherited folk wisdom, folk art, or prejudice or from myths conveyed to them by the mass media, the club, the church or the union. The lowbrow lacks the ability to see, to utter truth and to create. He is a "mere thinker" rather than "Man Thinking."

Lately it has come to be believed that science has proved group thinking superior to Man Thinking. The group is superior to the individual. Yet, people very rarely think in groups. They talk together, exchange ideas and information, and make compromises. But they do not think together; they do not create together. No one was with Newton when the apple fell. Martin Luther's ninety-five theses may have been influenced by other men, but his ideas did not come out of a "togetherness" session with other churchmen. One may point to the fact that the atom bomb was brought into being by the teamwork of huge corporations of scientists and technicians. It is extremely important, however, to remember what an eccentric old