

adam diment

Youth's determined to have a say . . . 19 columnist Diment sees, in the recent protest marches, another sign of the changing times.

The grown-ups—in this instance, Members of Parliament, senior police officials and Civil Servants—were very rattled by the big punch-up over Vietnam, in Grosvenor Square. Signs of panic appeared immediately, the demonstration's leaders being hysterically branded Communists. And a few sinister hints were put around to the effect that next time the Fuzz would be waiting with fire hoses and tear gas. I can see why Members of Parliament and the bureaucracy would get so moody about the riot. After all, we've lapped up a great deal of American aid even though it meant supporting the American policy in Vietnam.

Logically, I can't see why the man in the street, who doesn't give a damn for what's happening in Vietnam, and who has no love for our leaders, should object as he did, so noisily. Traditionally speaking, scenes of the Grosvenor Square variety are, I suppose, a little un-British. And the man in the street is nothing if not traditional. Or could it be the usual howl that 'this time the kids have really gone too far!' Well, times are changing, man.

I thought the riot was most encouraging. In England, till very recently, young people were not strongly committed, politically. Everybody appeared to have lost interest. Very few young people cared what the politicians did. Which included me. And nothing can, I think, kill democracy faster than people not caring.

We had no cause. The States, for all its ills, is basically, I think, in a more healthy situation. To start with, their political figures are more glamorous—or at least the Kennedy family is, even now rallying youth to its standard for the second time. Can you really imagine anyone getting that way over Wilson or Heath? And then to keep minds politically aware they have their problems—colour and, of course, the war. Our Grosvenor Square demon-

stration was not only for a basically American cause, but it also used American methods. It was the US negro who proved, once and for all, that the peaceful protest got you nowhere. (It was interesting to note how the authorities compared GS wistfully with the old ultra non-violent CND binges. And it is worth remembering that CND never realised any of its aims.) It would seem that the middle-aged establishments all over the world are so firmly entrenched

that only a show of force will now shift them.

I see something of a link between the Grosvenor Square demonstration, the draft riots in the States, the war in the ghettos, the uprising of the Polish and the Czech students backing a successful liberalisation movement. I think they are all cases of youth rebelling against a middle-aged authority which has, constantly, shown itself too selfish, too cowardly and too prejudiced to run the world. Now we, you and I, are asking for a go and this was what Grosvenor Square was all about.

It is ironic to think that all this started with derided Pop Music. This grew into a full blown youth culture involving, among other things, clothes, food, magazines, transport—a complete way of life, operated largely by young people for young people. With this background, a scene of our own, we are in the position of a minority culture demanding its own power.

Because we think and behave in a totally different way, have different ideals and goals—we threaten their way of life. When newspapers start wailing and pundits grind their teeth, when the poor, bewildered police begin baton charges—remember which side you are on. These students, militants, whatever you like to call them, are trying to get us a say.

Now read what the students think on page 60

THE LONG HOT SUMMER

