

## Our Man Hoppe

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# Puberty Rites In America

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**G**OOD NEWS! As soon as a youngster reaches the ninth grade, the government's going to give him his very own Social Security number — to have and to keep for the rest of his whole life.

No date's been set for the program to begin. The Social Security Administration is worried about "the psychological impact of mass early enumeration of individuals."

So they're looking for a way to overcome the fact that "many Americans are concerned about government initiatives that seem to treat individuals en masse 'as numbers.'"

Nonsense. There should be no trouble here. The government simply has to make young people want their numbers. Fortunately, a ninth grader is at the ideal age. At 14 or so, he is just entering young manhood.

The answer, then, the government's problem is obvious: conferring a Social Security number on a young boy or girl should be conceived of as a puberty rite.

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**P**UBERTY RITES have been with us since the dawn of time. There is nothing a boy looks forward to more eagerly than passing the ritual and being accepted as an adult member of his tribe.

Take, for example, the Ugulap savages. We might well learn much from them. Among these primitive natives, the puberty rites last three days.

On the first day, the young savage must find his way through an incredibly complicated jungle maze, employing nothing but his wits to accurately read the signs which seem purposefully designed to confuse him.

With luck and skill, he will succeed in

reaching the correct clearing in the jungle. There, confined in a rudimentary cage, he will find an old and irritable alligator. He is forbidden to approach it.

For the entire second day, the young native must stand motionless in front of the cage, stoically bearing the heat, the insects and being pushed, shoved and trod upon by his elders.

At last on the third day, he enters the cage and, though weakened by his long ordeal, tries to pin down the alligator with his bare hands.

If he emerges victorious, he kisses The Sacred Cloth, recites The Oath of Devotion to the tribal gods, is tattooed on the forehead and, having proved his ability to deal with his environment, is accepted to full membership in the tribe.

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**N**ATURALLY, the Ugulap ritual would have to be adapted to our culture. There is no reason for your young men to find their way through jungle mazes or pin down irritable alligators—there being no jungle mazes nor irritable alligators in our environment.

Instead, we should merely send our 14-year-olds down alone to apply for their Social Security numbers.

If they have the wit to find the right window, the patience to stand in line long enough, and the skill to pin down the government. And they thus deserve to take have proved their ability to deal with their environment. And they thus deserve to take the loyalty oath, have their Social Security numbers tattooed on their foreheads and take their rightful place in our free society.

The only question is whether this puberty rite could be accomplished in only three days.