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Campus Violence: Actions, Reactions, and Aftereffects

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CAMPUS VIOLENCE:
ACTIONS, REACTIONS, AND AFTEREFFECTS

In recent years student activists on the campus have been successful in intimidating many universities with confrontation tactics. Now, however, many administrators have learned how to control these activities with court injunctions, campus police, and other means. The public and its legislators, angered at previous student outbursts, are now refusing to grant needed financial support to the universities and hence reducing their ability to initiate remedial programs.

An article prepared

by

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The disruptions which have occurred on many U.S. campuses have led to serious questions about the strength and flexibility of our educational system. These questions are serious ones to our allies and adversaries, as pointed out in an earlier issue of the *Naval War College Review.*[1] They are also serious to people in business, Government and the military who question with growing frustration the lack of effective action in dealing with the situation.

The turbulent campuses have given us a group of graduates with views which differ widely from those held by the products of more peaceful academic communities. The recent graduates have observed the failures of some of our best-known educational institutions: the failure to provide a safe environment for teaching and learning; the failure to make adequate responses to the intellectual challenges of the new left; and the failure to take constructive actions concerning the problems facing the institution and our society. Their faith in our institutions may understandably be limited.

Graduates of our troubled colleges and universities are now in junior management positions in the military, Government, and industry. They will be in senior positions before many years have elapsed, and their decisions may well be based on a different set of premises than those held by present senior management.

Both in answer to the frustrations of more senior groups and to correct possible misconceptions by recent

graduates, an overview of campus response to disruptions should prove of interest.

In evaluating the evolving responses to violence, it is advantageous to consider the seriousness of the attack on the universities, the reasons for the initial slow response, the actions being taken now, and the long-range prospects.

There is no longer any doubt that the objective of some key revolutionary student leaders was to destroy the universities, as one step in the destruction of our whole society. Their public statements to this effect were originally written off as mere "rhetoric" (as when baseball fans shout, "Kill the Umpire"). Much hesitation and vacillation might have been avoided had their words been accepted at face value, for these revolutionary students really did intend to destroy the universities by any means available.

Certain other students were striving for some specific goals, such as the development of Black studies programs, the hiring or firing of specific faculty and administrators, or the removal of ROTC units from campuses. These students, when they used violence and/or attempted to close down a campus, did so as a means to an end. The shutting down of the campus was not an end in itself.

It should be stressed that the number of students who participated in violent activities was very small. Most of the students who attended demonstrations did not commit violent acts. Further, most students did not—and do not—condone violent acts.

But the small number of violently inclined students—less than 5 percent of the student body—could cause a great deal of trouble. As an example, the following incidents occurred at San Francisco State College during the disturbances there: An exploding bomb injured a staff member so severely that he will probably never walk, talk, see, or hear again. A student lost several fingers when a bomb he had in his hands exploded. Students, faculty, and visitors were threatened and physically assaulted. One faculty member had his house burned to the ground, and another faculty member had his home firebombed. Two school offices were burned when gasoline was poured under the doors and ignited. Bombs were placed and exploded around the campus. Hundreds of windows were broken, equipment was destroyed, and thousands of dollars worth of damage was done. Automobiles of students and faculty members were smeared with paint, had tires slashed, and had sugar put in their gas tanks. Classes were disrupted, and educational activities were severely hurt.

The incidents at San Francisco State College were not unique. Similar violence occurred, to a lesser or greater degree, at many other campuses across the Nation.

The disrupters did succeed in temporarily closing down various colleges and universities across the Nation. The losses in human distress, educational time, and property were substantial.

Considering the seriousness of the threat to the universities, their slow responses may seem strange. But there were many reasons for the inaction. Both ideologically and organizationally they were not prepared to cope with physical confrontation.

Colleges and universities have traditionally dealt in knowledge and ideas, not in action. Campus problems, like other ideas, were approached through long, careful discussion (and, hopefully, reason). Recent years had seen an increasing trend toward greater faculty self-government and a proliferation in the use of committees in making decisions.

Such an approach is hardly effective against force in a tactical situation. Professor John Bunzel, since appointed as president of one of the California

State Colleges, stated the problem succinctly:

> . . . when an academic community is faced with student demands that are accompanied by the "body-on-the-line" tactic, it responds, not surprisingly, in the only way it knows how: by concession, by pleading for time, by setting up committees, by trying to persuade the radicals of its good faith and intentions.[2]

This approach simply did not stop violence.

It was difficult to get the faculties as a whole to oppose physical confrontation, even on a theoretical level. Radicals devoted serious intellectual effort in an attempt to give moral justification to direct action by students, faculty, and the university as an entity. The revolutionaries pointed to problems in our society (war, discrimination, poverty), argued that reason and discussion had failed to solve these problems, and stated that direct action was necessary. Further, they argued that the university was under a moral obligation to lead the society, whether or not the majority of the people wanted it to do so. That is, they assigned the university (themselves) as a social and moral judge (assuming their own moral superiority)—they consider themselves, as S.I. Hayakawa has noted, an elite.[3]

Their moral attitudes and arguments, in the absence of sufficient carefully designed rebuttal, led to divided faculty opinion—and confusion. The confronted faculties could not agree on acceptable plans of action, even if they had had means to implement plans.

Administrations were similarly slow to act. College presidents and other administrators had not generally been chosen for their abilities to lead in crises. They often considered themselves primarily as representatives of the faculty, a faculty which was itself deeply divided.

There was a lack of organization to cope with disruption. Activity was completely unprogramed. Clear rules of conduct for students and faculty were often lacking. Disciplinary machinery was often nonexistent or unworkable. University personnel did not know what to do, or to whom to report, in the event of an emergency. On-campus security forces were completely inadequate to cope with violent demonstrations.

When individual universities did attempt to set up and enforce rules of conduct, they faced additional problems. Positive identification of specific persons doing specific disruptive or violent deeds was remarkably difficult. People willing and able to testify were hard to find. The school had little legal recourse against disruptive nonstudents; here almost complete reliance had to be made on outside police. In dealing with students, school officials found it necessary to master the rules governing legal due process and what could and could not be done. School officials as well as disruptive students found themselves named in lawsuits.

The university systems have responded to the prolonged disruptions and threats of disruptions in two ways. First, there have been organizational and personnel changes to enable the administrators to take stronger and more rapid actions in controlling disturbances. Second, faculty members and administrators have challenged the theoretical basis laid by the revolutionary groups. The objectives and responsibilities of the university and the need for it to avoid direct involvement in the political arena are being discussed and clarified.

The personnel and organizational changes which have been made in various systems include the following: Stronger presidents have been appointed in a number of colleges and universities. The ability to act quickly and decisively

under pressure has become an important quality sought in prospective presidents. The California State College system provides an example. Two administrators who displayed their abilities to cope with disruptions at San Francisco State have recently been appointed as presidents at other campuses within that system.

Within various universities, lines of communication and responsibility have been clarified. Rules of student (and faculty) conduct have been clarified, and campus courts to handle cases of student misconduct have been established (or reestablished). In some cases additional staff positions have been established to handle problems arising from disruptions. Further, many regular staff members have learned from experience what actions should be taken during emergencies.

Individual campuses have obtained needed legal assistance. The use of court injunctions has come into widespread use. An injunction may be used, for example, to prohibit interference with the rights of students to attend classes. Since defiance of an injunction amounts to contempt of court, the injunction has proved to be a powerful tool in restraining would-be revolutionaries from large-scale disruptive acts.

The use of police on campus has become more acceptable. It has been recognized by an increasing number of administrators and faculty that the use of police is necessary in the face of determined disrupters.[4] Thus there is less hesitation by colleges in calling for assistance when they need it.

Faculties and student bodies show some tendency to elect more moderate representatives for their own groups. The student body at the strife-torn University of California at Berkeley has elected a moderate president, who is currently attempting to repair a badly damaged student image. The faculty at San Francisco State College has voted in a more moderate Academic Senate which has worked more effectively with the administration. These actions may be seen as resumptions of control by middle-of-the-road university groups, after they had previously let control slip to rather nonrepresentative but highly motivated and energetic activitists. The reawakened interest in political activity by the moderates reflected a recognition of the fact that widespread participation is necessary for truly representative self-government. So long as such moderates retain an interest and an active part in campus politics, they will provide a stabilizing force.

Concepts concerning proper university behavior and the university's relationship to society have been given renewed emphasis by administrators and faculty members. Since the colleges and universities traditionally deal in ideas, and since much freedom of action is necessary if members of the academic community are to perform their functions effectively, an acceptable theory of activity is of much more importance in the academic world than in the military, Government, or industry.

David Gardner, assistant chancellor of the University of California at Santa Barbara, has pointed out that the university must emphasize political inquiry, expression, and learning—rather than political action. If it engages in staging and executing political demonstrations and organizes and manages political campaigns, it might as well be counted as a third political party.[5]

Two faculty members from Western Washington State College, Bellingham, have observed that: "Those faculty who cry for greater involvement of colleges and universities in the immediate affairs of society ignore the fact that the involved institution impairs its ability to analyze and evaluate social enterprises." The university's "social conscience

should be vested in the best service it can render the society—objective and scholarly inquiry."[6]

Richard W. Hyman, Stanford's new acting president, has stated bluntly that universities as institutions, must be kept free of political advocacy if they are to survive.[7]

In a statement of policy, the prestigious American Council on Education made the following points (among others):

> Disruption and violence have no place on any campus. The academic community has the responsibility to deal promptly and directly with disruptions.
>
> Student and faculty groups, including the American Association of University Professors and the National Student Association, have recently joined in efforts to improve disciplinary procedures and to formulate clear and realistic codes for dealing with misconduct, and more particularly with violence and disruption.
>
> The historic concern of the university community with academic freedom needs to be restated, reaffirmed, and vigorously defended against all, within or without the university, who would obstruct the right of scholars to investigate, teachers to teach, or students to learn.[8]

John T. Caldwell, chancellor of North Carolina State University at Raleigh, summed up the feelings of a growing number of chief administrative officers:

> I have come to feel, however, that it is absurd for a university head who carries heavy responsibilities to feel helpless and afraid to assert the authority of his office in behalf of the good order of the university community. Or, to state it another way, it is patently absurd for the 90-plus percent of the faculty and students of a university community to be intimidated by irresponsibility or maliciousness in a fraction of that community.[9]

The above ideas may appear to be self evident to most readers. It is, perhaps, an indication of the persuasiveness and organizational ability of the activists, that it has taken so long for some members of the academic community to accept them.

Though the response to violence has been slow, it has come on several levels. There have been organizational changes, personnel changes, and analyses which lessen the possibilities of large-scale disruptions in the future.

Though it appears that there will be fewer large-scale disruptions in the future than in the immediate past, serious problems remain in the college and university systems which have been subject to disruptions.

The disruptions served to help call attention to a number of serious problems in higher education and in our society as a whole. Unfortunately, while increasing awareness of certain problems, the disruptions have both directly and indirectly rendered the universities less able to do anything about them.

Indirectly, the disruptions have resulted in the affected systems receiving less funds. In some states the public has voted down bond issues for college construction, and the State legislatures have cut operating funds far below what could otherwise have been expected. This has resulted in reduced ability to develop ethnic studies and special compensatory education projects, reduced ability to do research, and even restricted ability to continue to handle the regular incoming students. Attempts to improve administrative

procedures similarly suffer when funds are cut.

Of course, during the disruptions, normal administrative and educational processes are severely disturbed, and they do not return to their normal efficiency for a long period afterwards. A general feeling of frustration and hopelessness is likely to sap the energy of many faculty members from all parts of the political spectrum. When the problems are compounded by deep reductions in funds and possibly by punitive legislation, the problems of recovery are multiplied.

The Nation's colleges and universities are displaying the ability to solve their own internal problems. It is vital that they do so. They are, after all, the principal means for transfer of the technical knowledge on which our business, Government, and military depend. They are a main arena for the development and testing of constructive ideas to improve our society. They are the principal agents in providing increased opportunities and broadened horizons for our young people.

It now appears that the voting public may make a mistake similar to the disrupters. The disrupters wanted one thing and took actions that gave them something else. In the name of a better and freer society, they created disturbances which led to a necessarily more restrictive line by college administrators and a lessened school ability to make needed improvements.

Now the voting public, which wants more mature and constructive attitudes and actions from the academic community, is taking actions which cause resentment and reduce the ability of the colleges and universities to take constructive actions. It is not only unjust to punish all faculty and students for the disruptive actions of a few; it is a self-defeating tactic which results in more problems.

It is important that the physical plant of the colleges and universities be expanded to accommodate the increasing student populations. It is important to attract highly qualified administrative and faculty personnel. It is important to avoid punitive legislation which restricts real freedom of inquiry and speech. All segments of our society, including the university, bear some responsibility in each of these areas.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Dr. Edwin C. Duerr, a Naval Reserve officer, holds a B.S. degree in engineering from Illinois Institute of Technology, an M.S. in world business from San Francisco State College, and a Ph.D. in business administration from the University of California at Berkeley. He has had several years of engineering and management experience in industry. When student disruptions began at San Francisco State College, Dr. Duerr was an associate professor of management and a member of the Academic Senate there. In 1968 he was appointed Coordinator of Internal Affairs by college president S.I. Hayakawa, in which position he developed new student disciplinary rules and established courts to hear student cases. A commander in the Naval Reserve, recently Commanding Officer of Naval Reserve Unit SAMAR 12-1(S), Dr. Duerr is presently serving as the Resident Director of the California State Colleges' International Program in Sweden, Denmark, and Great Britain.

FOOTNOTES

1. Howard T. Robinson, "Are Our Institutions Flexible Enough?" *Naval War College Review*, May 1969, p. 66-67.
2. John H. Bunzel, "Costs of the Politicized College," *Educational Record*, Spring 1969, p. 136.
3. S.I. Hayakawa, "Protest, Pigs and Power Politics," *Liberal Education*, March 1970, p. 20-21.
4. See, for example, Edwin C. Duerr, "Police on Campus: Crisis at SFSC," *Educational Record*, Spriug 1969,, p. 126-130.
5. David P. Gardner, "The Power Struggle to Convert the University," *Educational Record*, Spring 1969, p. 117.
6. Ralph Thompson and Samuel Kelly, "The Case for the Ivory Tower," *Educational Record*, Spring 1969, p. 231.
7. Reported by Ron Moskowitz, "The University and Politics," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 August 1970, p. 18.
8. American Council on Education, "A Declaration on Campus Unrest," Chicago, 1969, distributed to ACE members and the press; reprinted in *Educational Record*, Spring 1969, p. 144-146.
9. John T. Caldwell, "Appeal for Action, Unity, Sanity: a Convocation Address," Raleigh, N.C., 5 March 1969, reprinted in *Educational Record*, Spring 1969, p. 138-143.

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Learned institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people. They throw that light over the public mind which is the best security against crafty and dangerous encroachments on the public liberty.

James Madison to W.T. Barry,
Complete Madison, p. 337