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Comment

COMMENT

By STEPHEN WRIGHT*

I FIND Dean McKay's paper to be lucidly written in language that any layman can understand. I also find that I have no really serious disagreement either with his position or its adequacy in dealing with the subject.

I am painfully aware of the fact that our institutions of higher learning are being threatened as never before. In addition to the taking over of buildings and the "kidnaping" of some of the administrators, some institutions have had buildings burned, and other forms of violence may be imminent. I realize that the predominantly Negro colleges have been accused of being behind other institutions in a number of things, but I assure you that they are not behind in this. Hence, some of us who are involved with predominantly Negro colleges have been conducting conferences on the problem of campus disorders. The United Negro College Fund Presidents were called into session on April 15, 1968, to explore the problem. Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, president of the Institute for Services to Education, called a similar meeting a few weeks later for a somewhat different group of presidents. Trustees, administrative officers, and a few faculties are searching for all viable approaches for the preservation of the institutions, and the legal aspect, I think, constitutes only one important possible approach.

I have just a few comments to make on Dean McKay's paper. First, I thought he dealt a little lightly with forbearance. I have come to believe that it has been the forbearance of exercising proper sanctions in cases of student disorders on the campus that has gotten the universities into their deepest trouble.

I think Dean McKay was very correct in reminding us again of the continuing purposes of the university, and I have heard nothing that has changed my mind about what those continuing purposes are. If we continue to be guided by these purposes, and I trust we will, I believe we must give the most serious thought to the effect of every response we make to the current pressures. I have heard nothing to date that persuades me that a citizen of the university is not a citizen of two worlds, the larger world and the academic world, and that when he becomes a citizen of the academic world, that act

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in and of itself requires on his part some deference to the established authority, which is, I think, essential for the operation of the university. On this observation, I think I am much closer to Dr. Logan Wilson's position than I am to Mr. Edward Schwartz's position.

Secondly, I believe that in Latin America, where students already exercise the power being sought by some of our more radical student groups, the universities, in the main, have become weaker as a consequence of too much involvement by students in the administration of those institutions.

Thirdly, I have heard nothing that persuades me that the use of police power should not be employed promptly but judiciously in order that neither a militant minority deprives the majority of its right to the educational processes and services of the university, nor a majority of the students deprives a minority of its comparable rights.

Dr. Marvin Wachman, president of Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, has suggested that it might be fruitful for universities to explore, on some really genuine basis, the possibility of arriving at a separation of powers based not upon rights, but upon the privileges that an institution of higher learning ought to give as a part of the educative process to those who constitute the student body. I would submit that, insofar as the nihilists in the student body are concerned, this cannot be done.

We have seen enough different cases of campus disorders at the present time to suggest that some appropriate agency conduct thorough studies of some of the most representative cases for the purposes of determining the various types of groups that are involved in the disorders, identifying any clear cut constellation of legitimate complaints on the part of students, discovering the genuine causes for the explosion, and investigating really effective responses to the legitimate demands for involvement and participation on the part of the students. However, to observe these phenomena is not enough. I think our obligation — I am speaking now primarily of college administrators — is to make certain that the institution entrusted to our care is not destroyed by those who are in no sense accountable. This obligation may very well require that colleges and universities do the following:

- (1) Examine as thoroughly as possible the adequacy of student involvement and participation in the governance of the institution, and the foundations of any other legitimate grievances that students may have.

- (2) Take the necessary time to think through alternative responses to any effort on the part of students to disrupt or stop the educational activities of an institution.

(3) Decide who will speak for the institution in such situations, and develop a plan for dealing with the press.

(4) Prepare, in advance, for the use of police should any situation so require.

(5) Involve faculty as deeply as possible in the planning.