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CURBING CAMPUS VIOLENCE

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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania**

21 February 1972

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USAWC RESEARCH PAPER

CURBING CAMPUS VIOLENCE .

A MONOGRAPH

by

Lieutenant Colonel Anthony P. De Luca,
Infantry "

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
21 February 1972

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FORMAT: Monograph

DATE: 21 February 1972 **PAGES:** 24

CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED

TITLE: Curbing Campus Violence

The right of dissent is guaranteed by the Constitution's First Amendment; however, the form which the dissent takes is not without its limitations for violence and destruction are not justified by either the Constitution or Laws of the United States. Campus protests of the sixties have taken the form of unlawful, irrational and violent dissent which resulted in serious confrontations on campuses throughout the nation. Despite popular opinion as formulated by the mass media, dissent is not the dominant mood in American college students, and active demonstrators constitute a very small minority of a student body. Student unrest is attributed to the war in Southeast Asia, the conditions of minority groups, the changing status and attitude of youth in America, the character of today's university, public opinion of student protest, and changes in the culture and structure of society, to include the lengthened period of adolescent dependency and the desire of youth to become involved in controversial issues. To cope with the problem of campus unrest colleges and universities must establish rules of conduct to be observed by students and faculty, student government must be revitalized and become involved in institutional administration, channels of communication must remain open, and an attitude of understanding and cooperation must prevail.

PREFACE

This paper was initially prepared as part of the course work toward an advanced degree in Counseling at Shippensburg State College, Pennsylvania. Specifically, it was submitted in partial fulfillment of the Course in Psychology of Late Adolescence and Early Adulthood.

The subject was selected based on a personal interest in understanding today's college students, why they dissent, and why they select a particular form of dissent. The subject is pertinent to today's Army in which dissent is a major issue, and to tomorrow's Army which will strive to attract more and more college graduates to a service career. It is likely that the factors which have led to campus unrest and to a challenging of the authority of school administrations are also basic to the restlessness of today's young soldiers. Although this paper was written for a civilian audience, it is hoped that the military reader will see the parallel between the student on the campus and the soldier in the Army.

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PURPOSE

Upon my return from Vietnam in 1968 I was thrust into the world of today's college student with an assignment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. Although, admittedly, this was a select group of young men, it was nevertheless a cross section of America, drawn from varied home and community environments, and differing educational systems. My duties at West Point could best be described as those normally performed by the Dean of Men at a civilian college - with responsibility for all areas of cadet life except the purely academic curriculum. This responsibility included activities aimed at the physical, moral, and leadership development of all cadets, with emphasis on personnel services, regulations and discipline.

As the campuses across the nation reacted to various forms of student protest during 1969 and 1970, I cautiously searched for indicators of similar protest at our own institution, for here was a group of approximately 4,000 young men exposed daily to the mass media's exploitation of the student dissenters. In addition, this group was undergoing a form of education that imposed numerous restrictions on their personal freedom, and was facing the very high prospects of fighting an unpopular war. Fortunately, the indicators did not appear.

I was intrigued by this contrast, but the duties of "den mother" did not permit the luxury of adequate time to analyze the situation. Now time is more available. This project is, then, an attempt to acquaint myself with the general subject of dis-

sent, to analyze the nature of dissent, to arrive at relevant conclusions that might explain why dissent in the sixties has become so violent, and to suggest guidelines which will minimize or hopefully eliminate the reasons for such violence.

THE RIGHT OF DISSENT

The terms "dissent" and "protest" have recently taken a new meaning because of the violence that has been associated with these forms of expression. Seldom, today, are these words found by themselves; they are normally used to form a phrase such as "violent dissent", "irrational or irresponsible dissent", "ugly dissent", "unlawful protest" - and these phrases in turn have been associated with another term, "civil disobedience."

Contrary to current belief, dissent in itself is not unlawful and is, in fact, guaranteed by the Constitution's First Amendment which states in part that "Congress shall make no law.. abridging the freedom of speech or of the press." (8,p.13) The right to express opinions on matters of public and personal concern is secured to the soldier and civilian alike by the Constitution and Laws of the United States. (8,p.13) The controversy arises, however, in the form which that expression takes: this right of free speech, as with most other rights, is not without its limitations. This limitation is exemplified in the expression that "your right to swing your fist ends where the other fellow's nose begins."

Although specific dissent is within the American tradition it does not justify violence and destruction. As Eric Sevareid

pointed out in an address to the 75th Congress of American Industry, just because dissent is good in principle it does not follow that the more dissent the better. Nor does it follow that because the right of dissent is sacred, the might and violent form of the youthful protestors of today is sacred. (29, p.251)

The dissent that has characterized the United States in the sixties has been attacked by some elements as being divisive of the country and as lending comfort and aid to our enemies. Former U.N. Ambassador Arthur Goldberg challenged this assertion by pointing out that "loyalty and love of country do not express themselves only in unanimity, but also in honest dissent and loyal criticism. Our adversaries should not deceive themselves that such dissent is a sign of weakness - for in truth it is a sign of strength." (19, p.4)

FORMS OF DISSENT

Dissenters of today make reference to Jefferson's "Right of Rebellion" as the charter for their actions; and yet, this work was predicated on the denial of democratic means. If there is no popular assembly to provide an adjustment of ills, and if there is no court system to afford the disposition of injustices, then there is, indeed, a right to rebel. (20, p.472) We do have a democratic system, and a court system for redress of wrongs - so current justifications for radical action are based not on the non-existence of democratic institutions but on the ineffectiveness of those institutions. This attitude is reflected in the impatience of civil rights and labor leaders alike

when they rely on sit-ins, boycotts, or mass picketing to gain solutions to their problems. The force of these "demonstrations" has been credited with the granting of concessions and has been the inspiration for further actions such as the recent attempts to block traffic in the Washington area. These actions, although a form of dissent, were also a denial of the rights of non-protestors to move freely to their places of employment. (20, p.473)

Besides demonstrations, which tend to result in riots and in violence, dissent is often reflected in "civil disobedience" in which the protestor deliberately violates a law, but shows an oblique respect for the law by voluntarily submitting to its sanctions by neither resisting arrest nor evading punishment. In effect, he breaks the law but not the peace. Protestors who choose this course of action believe that although they are legally wrong, they are morally right. (20, p.473)

Demonstrations and civil disobedience are not the only forms of protest - petitions, non-attendance at functions or classes, mail-ins are others to mention a few - but are the forms of most concern to this paper since they are associated with the "unlawful, irrational and violent dissent" that has characterized the campus protests of the sixties.

STUDENT PROTEST IN THE SIXTIES

The history of American colleges during the early 19th Century is filled with incidents of disorder, turmoil, and riot. These incidents generally arose over food, primitive living conditions, and harsh regulations. Even today such traditional com-

plaints spark many campus protests. The student discontent of America, unlike in Europe, was largely apolitical.

The pattern of protest began to change during the early 20th Century. During the 1920s, the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS) emerged as a forerunner to today's Students for Democratic Society (SDS). This group led the campus protests against ROTC, denunciations of curriculum, and attacks on the "imperialistic" foreign policy of America. During the depression years there was still greater student discontent. So it is not unrest that is exceptional, but rather the twenty years of quiet that preceded the wave of protest of the 1960s. As tensions in the Cold War lessened, students felt less obliged to defend Western democracy and more free to look critically at our own society. This self-look caused the American campuses to again become a center of protest. (27)

The decade of the sixties bore witness to a remarkable paradox in higher education. Phenomenal growth and development went hand in hand with the unlikely specter of irrational, emotional upheaval, reflected on our campuses by intimidation, confrontation, violence and bloodshed. This upheaval was manifested in the specific destructive acts by some misguided individuals and a mood of negativism among many more of our youth. (24, p.82)

Initially in the 1960s, student protest adopted the form of moral and political persuasion. However, in the Autumn of 1964, critical events at the University of California at Berkeley transformed campus activism into the complex pattern of

today. These events were preceded by civil rights and peace movements, appeals for better quality of education, and for the plight of the poor, and, significantly, by a reorganization of the SDS in 1962 with the adoption of a platform of "participating democracy." The years that followed are well known for the violent confrontations on the campuses at Berkeley, Columbia, Kent State, San Francisco State, and Jackson State (Miss.) to mention a few.

The deaths, injuries and destruction which accompanied these confrontations prompted President Nixon on 13 June 1970 to establish a Commission on Campus Unrest to study dissent, disorder and violence on the campuses; to identify principal causes, suggest ways to protect academic freedom, the right to obtain an education free from improper interference, and the right of peaceful dissent and protest. William Scranton, former Governor of the state of Pennsylvania and Commission Chairman, reported that "campus unrest" is not a problem; it is a condition - it is an expression of an intellectual restlessness which prompts a search for truth; and that young people should be encouraged to seek the truth and participate responsibly in the democratic process rather than to achieve their goals through force and violence. (27)

What is the extent of recent student protest? There were at least 221 demonstrations on 101 American campuses in the Spring of 1968, with nearly 40,000 students participating in them. In the first six months of 1969 there were 292 major student protests (formal demands or attempts to disrupt college

activity) held on 232 college and university campuses. Forcible tactics (strikes, seizure of buildings, and disruptions) were used in half of the incidents but violence (actions resulting in personal injury or fatality, property damage, or student-police confrontations) was not characteristic. Injuries occurred in 7% of the protests and two deaths resulted. Arrests were made in 17% of the incidents. Significantly, the longer the protest, the more likely that the protestors' demands were met - in 70% of the cases where strikes, seizure or disruption lasted more than two weeks, demands were granted. (36)

A survey of 29 colleges and universities (large and small, public and private, black and white) experiencing student demonstrations in early 1969 revealed that active demonstrators were only a small minority of the student body, usually less than 1%. Of 9 demonstration tactics, only 3 (class boycotts, protest marches, and orderly presentation of demands) did not interfere with the rights of others. The other 6 tactics (building sit-ins, property destruction, office invasions, verbal and physical abuse, class disruptions, jamming of telephone switchboards) were used more than twice as often as the non-interference with the rights of others tactics. (16, p.10)

Dissent is not the dominant mood of American college students, as the mass media would have us believe. Professor Keniston presents a figure of 2200 campuses and six million college students in America against which the previous figures of 221 and 232 protest incidents, and 40,000 students involved might be compared. He points out that dissent tends to be concentrated

largely at more selective, progressive, and academic colleges and universities in America; and that even where dissent takes place, generally well over 95% of the students are interested onlookers or opponents rather than active dissenters. (22, p.109)

Erikson points out in his Reflections on Dissent of Contemporary Youth that youthful disorders rarely assume the nature of concerted rebellion except when most students have reason to feel that the system does not give them their due place within it. (11, p. 171)

As for the future prospects of student dissent, it will most likely continue and increase, though not with the violence that has been characteristic of recent years. Each year since 1966, representative samples of about 200,000 entering freshmen have completed Student Information Forms for the Cooperative Research Program of the American Council on Education. Questions dealing with campus and social issues, and involvement in protests and demonstrations have revealed students to be increasingly disenchanted with the status quo and likely to protest for change. During the four years of the survey, the proportion of students who had participated in demonstrations in High School rose from 16 to 25%. Thus, with one-fourth of all college freshmen experienced in protest tactics, and larger majorities concerned with potentially explosive issues, campus dissent is likely to continue in some form in the near future. (1)

CAUSES AND FACTORS IN STUDENT UNREST

The specific causes of student unrest are as varied as

the authors who attempt to define them. As one writer pointed out, if anything is clear, it is that no one really knows what the root causes of student unrest are. (6, p.16) We can, however, identify the major areas which, when provided with the proper catalyst, did lead to eruptions on the campus.

The President's Commission on Campus Unrest listed the causes of student protest as:

1. Pressing problems of American society, particularly the war in Southeast Asia and the conditions of minority groups.
2. The changing status and attitude of youth in America.
3. The distinctive character of the American university during the post-war period.
4. An escalating spiral of reaction to student protest from public opinion, and an escalating spiral of violence.
5. Broad evolutionary changes occurring in the culture and structure of modern Western society.

This same Commission identified the students' perceptions of the causes, in priority, as:

1. The position of racial minorities.
2. The war in Southeast Asia.
3. The university itself and its regulations which deny personal freedom.

(27)

Professor Keniston identified the three main issues in campus conflicts as racism, the war in Vietnam, and student power - all aggravated by the lengthened period of adolescent dependency necessitated by society's extreme valuation of higher education. (23) This prolonged adolescence is brought about by

a biological lowering of the age of puberty and a sociological raising of the age of entry into the adult world of work. (10) Other writers support racism as the number one issue and cause of 45-50% of all protests (36), however, the major causes below racism vary with the author. The Urban Research Corporation's analysis of student protests of 1969 listed student power as the second most important issue, followed by the quality of student life; approximately 20% were of a war related nature, but only 2% called for an end to the Vietnam war. (36) Other issues and potential issues involved desires to shape curriculum, desires to affect teachers' promotions; control of controversial speakers. student publications, and off-campus behavior; concern about poverty, pollution, crime and consumer protection; legalization of marijuana, and the all-volunteer army. (1)

In addition to the causes or sources of protest just mentioned, there have been factors that have contributed to the formation of what might be called the restless generation. One such contributing factor was the influence of the late President John F. Kennedy who stressed youthful endeavor and involvement, and who issued a challenge to youth in his Inaugural Address - "Let the word go forth from this time and place that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans..." That challenge was reflected in the establishment of the Peace Corps as an outlet for youthful dedication. (15, p.507) A second factor was the increasing tempo of activity in the area of civil rights in the 1960s. This area provided an atmosphere of social protest that has been transferred to the college campus. As the student

commencement speaker at Harvard pointed out in 1969, "You have convinced us that equality and justice were inviolable concepts, and we have taken you seriously." / ^(6, p. 90) Another factor has been the challenge which educators have hurled to our enlightened students to seek the "why" of things. In my own military schooling I recall the Commandant of one school urging us to challenge the instructor, to ask why. It was emphasized with the statement that the man who knows "how" will always have a job, working for the man who knows "why."

Stirring the flames of protest is the realization among students that demonstrations are usually the only effective way to be heard, and that responsible dissent that does not unreasonably interfere with others is ineffective, causing no real changes. (28, p.10) A large majority of young people have not been heard on today's issues - they are concerned and are willing to work within the system to effect change rationally; they want a greater voice in decision-making within universities; they have learned that demonstrations are usually the only effective way to be heard, but welcome legitimate means of real participation. If these means are not available, some of the silent, patient majority may well join the ranks of the active protestors. (9, p.20) As pointed out on the charts on the following page, today's students are expressing themselves more on controversial issues and are desirous of greater involvement.

CONCLUSIONS

Dissent, or disagreement, of itself is good. No free nation

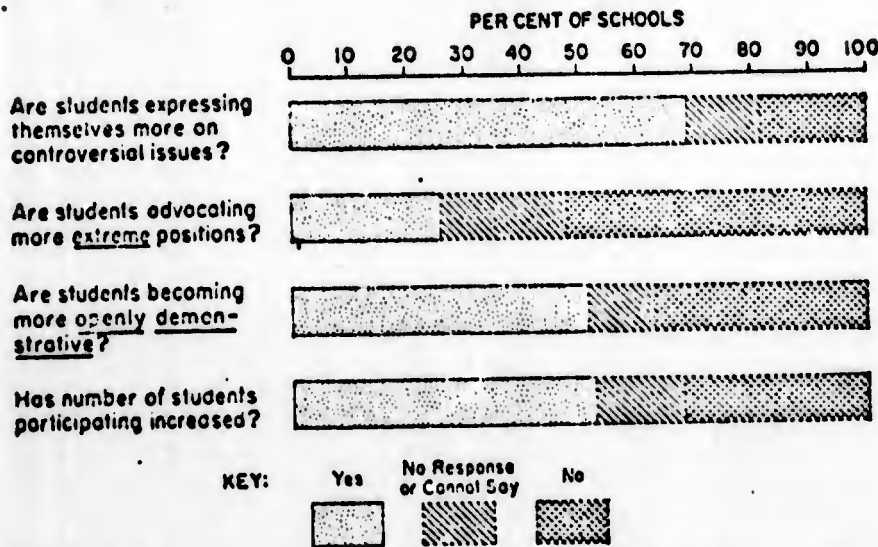


Figure 3. Percentage of Schools Indicating Changes in Student Expression during the Period from the Fall of 1961 to the Spring of 1964 (According to Presidents)

THE AMERICAN STUDENT'S FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

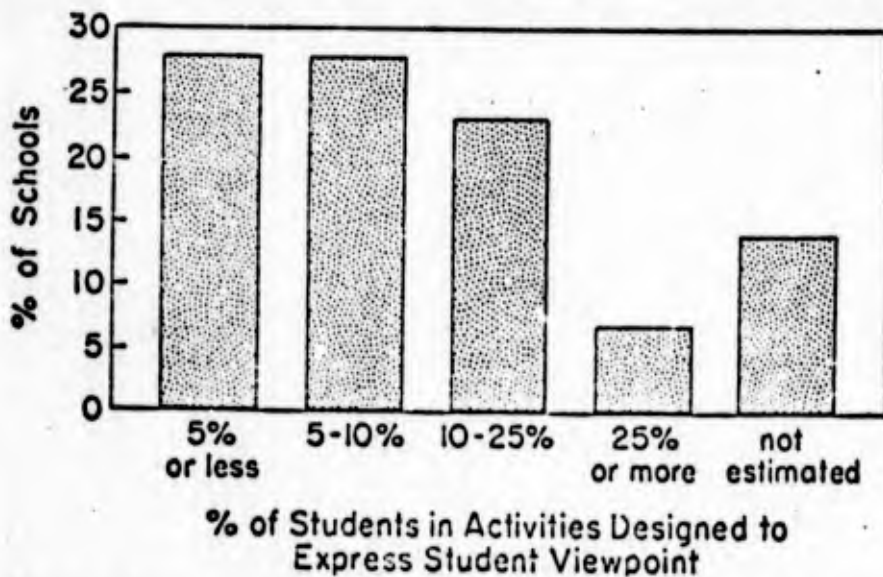


Figure 4. Percentage of Schools with Various Proportions of Students in Activities Designed to Express Student Viewpoints about Controversial Issues (According to Presidents)

can afford to silence dissent, for when it does so, it loses some of its power to correct its errors and to modify its policies. (15, p. 508). However, when that dissent takes the form of violence in any measure, it is not a legitimate means of protest and cannot be tolerated. The right to disagree and to manifest that disagreement does not authorize the protestor to carry on a campaign of persuasion at the expense of someone else's rights. Discipline by force is always a last resort and the society that is driven to it is simply paying the very high final price for the failure of its members to capture each other's attention, understanding, imagination and loyalty. (34, p.67)

Many of the demands made in recent years by campus protests have been reasonable and probably in the best interests of higher education to accept, or at least consider, seriously. These are demands which have resulted from sincere concerns of responsible students and faculty members in such areas as participation in governance, curriculum development, discipline, personal freedom, and size of classes, to mention a few. (24, p.83) The problem has been the manner in which the demands have been presented.

This problem has been magnified by the mass media and has resulted in a false identity attributed to the college student of today. Most student protestors are not violent, nor are they extremists. A very small minority are bent on destruction and must be identified, removed as swiftly as possible, and vigorously prosecuted. (27) For the majority, a suitable means of expression must be provided. This freedom of expression and protest does not automatically encompass the right to be heard and taken seriously - that right must be earned by the students.

This brings me back to my introduction and to the purposes of this paper. The nature of dissent in its violent expressions are well known. The sources, or causes, of this dissent, as previously discussed, do not of themselves result in violent dissent. Also required are the militant activists who organize and direct the violent confrontations. These activists are now, for the most part, recognized for what they are - interested not in improving conditions on the campus but rather in smashing colleges and organized society. (12, p.455) Enlistment of support by these elements will be extremely difficult in the future.

Still another element of confrontation is the proper environment - and institutions create that environment through errors and a failure of communication. It is this latter that I identify as the major element leading to campus disorders - its presence at the Military Academy to a high degree serves as the balancing element between student body and administration. At West Point the cadets have an effective means of communication through a cadet organization known as "the chain of command". The First Captain, the highest ranking cadet in military leadership, commands the student body and is held responsible for its actions; so too with his subordinate commanders who bear responsibility at their respective levels of command. This chain of command extends from the squad leader, with his eight or nine cadets, to the platoon leader, company commander, battalion commander, regimental commander, and finally to the First Captain. This organization administers discipline and serves as liaison to the administration. The cadets are consulted on major issues, their views are considered, and decisions are made - not always

in accord with the student view, but at least the cadets feel that they had their say. Complementing the responsibility placed on the cadets is a corresponding degree of authority and an open door to the administration leaders at all levels. Students and faculty share views regularly through such committees as the Human Relations Council and the Alcohol and Drug Dependency Intervention Council. These councils serve to identify problems before they occur and thus head them off. An organization such as the cadet organization is necessary in our colleges and is possible with minor modification. Student involvement must be more than the election of a student body president.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In concluding this paper, the following are offered as suggestions to prevent student confrontations and violence on the campus.

First, all colleges and universities must establish rules of conduct to be observed by students if they are to continue at the institution. These rules should be along the lines of Father Hesburgh's "get-tough policy" at Notre Dame, announced at the height of campus disorders in 1969 : (27)

1. Lines of communication between all segments of the community will be kept as open as possible, with all legitimate means of communication of dissent assured, expanded and protected.
2. Civility and rationality will be maintained as the most reasonable means of dissent within the academic community.

3. Violations of others' rights or obstructions of the life of the university are outlawed as illegitimate means of dissent in this kind of open society.

Secondly, the faculties of these institutions must recognize the consequences of their sympathetic attitudes toward protest movements. Rules of conduct for faculty members are as important as rules of conduct for students.

Thirdly, student governments must be revitalized and student involvement in institutional administration must be increased. Through the use of student-faculty teams, the rules and regulations, curriculum, and teaching methods can be evaluated and modified as necessary to the best interests of both the institution and the student body.

Fourthly, channels of communication must remain open and an attitude of understanding must prevail. Included in this area might be a procedure for direct communication from individual student to the top echelon of administration. An example of this procedure is the establishment of a telephone crisis center such as that established at Southern Colorado State College in November 1968, and more recently at the Air Force Academy. At the former institution, volunteer students staffed the service after being trained by professional counselors. The service operated daily from seven PM until midnite and was widely publicized on campus. Over the first seven months, 380 calls were received, with referrals made on 113 calls. These referrals were most often to a college counselor, instructor, minister, or student health service. The center proved successful as an anonymous listening service, information service, and referral service. (35, p.343)

The recent lowering of the voting age should aid considerably in providing youth a means of expression on national interests of great concern to them, and in providing a real feeling of political participation. The potential impact of the student vote is enormous, with 25 million new voters eligible in 1972. The impact may never materialize, however, if the Congressional race in Maryland in the Spring of 1971 is any indication - only 2% of the 47,000 eligible 18 year olds voted in that election. (26, p.58)

This has been a sketchy examination of a most complicated and very real problem. It has provided the author, and hopefully the reader, with a better understanding of dissent and a knowledge of the steps which must be taken to channel student unrest, to arrest it at the stage of lawful dissent, and prevent it from expressing itself in more extreme forms. So far, it has been the disruptive forms of protest that have resulted in change. What is now necessary is to impart to the student the belief that needed changes can take place without violence, in an atmosphere of cooperation, and in a manner consistent with their roles as students and with the character of the educational institution of which they are members.

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