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UNIVERSITY

REFORM

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STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

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Anybody can attack the university in a number of places, but often the university shrugs off the charges as of the same level of importance as a march of army ants on New York City. Part of the reason for this is that the university is not structured to respond to student thought, but a large factor is that the student's blasts are often aimed at effects and not causes. If it is true that the hospital gives students inferior service, it is probably due to the overall university stance that relegates the mere student to a very passive role. The student is here by the grace of god and the administration. The faculty is here to waste time with the students because the administration doesn't want to deal with them. I would suggest that this attitude rubs off on the clerks, etc. who actually deal with the students; who waste the time they could otherwise use in doing valuable work. Similarly, the library problems the students attack, with all their massive editorial sarcasm, are not root problems. That the inane library hours have existed for years is due in large measure to the fact that students have no role in the university. Surely an effective student government would have the power to amend library hours and have a say in library procedures as well as participating in the decisions that affect students. Students can take the easy way out and attack immediate problems, but it gets little in the way of results. I submit that the first necessity is a fundamental criticism of the university. The second is a search for methods of implementation of our vision.

Those of you who have read "Student Social Action" by Tom Hayden will recognize my blueprint for an ideal university. I don't intend to repeat his examples or his arguments in developing an outline for Duke, but I do draw heavily on both.

I feel that the university should be made more democratic. This means that the largest group, the student body, should be able to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. The situation that now obtains is the playground theory of student government. Let them practice now so that when they go out into the big world they will be able to conduct themselves properly. In translation: don't let them have any decisions to make that mean anything. The result is immense apathy, student government types, and bigger and better beach weekends. The student governments are not willing to even ask for more power. The Duke student government recommendation for the revision of chartering procedures does not call for this power to be put in student hands but for the deans to carefully examine the new group's constitution before it comes to the student government so they will have an easier time of it. It is very clear that the choice one makes in coming to Duke, as opposed to getting a job, is one between being a student and being an adult. In coming to Duke one is forced to surrender his rights and privileges under the constitution and to submit to a totalitarian regime. There is no reason why there could not be democracy at this school. This is an outline of the sort of basic analysis that should be done in order to underlie our stands in this area. We should fight the idea that the

brightest people in our society need the most supervision, that they are not competent to function without deans to supervise their activities. We must fight the idea that going to a university is a privilege and not a necessity in our culture. Once again we must firmly state that a democratic university is possible.

What actually do we want to change at Duke? Can we actually hope to do anything? After we produce a fundamental analysis of the type of place we would like to be at, we can offer several areas in which students could begin to make their presence felt, the object being co-government of the school, along with the faculty. These are the areas with which we should concern ourselves: curriculum reforms, free speech and action, money grubbing, in loco parentis, and grievance procedures.

I would state as an ideal that students should share in the formation of curriculum requirements. To a great extent, the faculty is the natural leader in this area, in that they should be responsible for the professional competence of the graduate. This is clearly seen in the case of the engineering school where the student depends on his having the right courses to get a job. But there is usually little curriculum reform to keep up with the passing of years. Ideally, each year, there should be a battle in each course; the students challenging and evaluating ideas and determining their relevance to the new age. In practice there is no controversy since the courses are academic in the worst sense, they have little meaning to the student and little relevance to the world outside the university. We should examine the whole Duke curriculum and offer amendments from the students' point of view. I can suggest better freshmen courses, and more free choice-- also less research and more teaching. The aim should be a functioning student-faculty committee on curriculum reform.

I think that at the university a student should not be denied the rights of free speech and action. There is an undercover tendency to limit the rights of free speech when the speaker begins to criticize the university, in other words, when he begins to be significant. We don't have the problem they have at Chapel Hill, a speaker ban law, but there is very little controversy on this campus. I would suggest that unless you are prepared to appeal to the faculty for support that you not criticize faculty housing leases and that you be careful in your choice of speakers. We are working for the right of students to hold and disseminate all kinds of political and social views, on and off campus, and the university's support and encouragement of this right.

I would suggest that some parts of the university are run as money machines and that this situation is based on a false premise. The university is short of funds, and students are treated as monetary assets, figures in a ledger and not individuals. Somehow these two things are linked together. A university should not be run like American Tobacco, and a robber baron should not be a university's patron saint. If anything this attitude intensifies the fund raising problem

since they will never get adequate funds from the alumni they added and subtracted as students. Our goal should be student participation in the Duke University stores and in the cafeteria. The policy should be to give students the best cut they can and the logic here says that they should be non profit making. The University should get its money somewhere else.

It is true that most of my points could be subsumed in a ferocious blast against in loco parentis. Most families are not run democratically, and neither are universities. The attitude that determines the fact that students are excluded from decisions is the one that says that our parents delivered us over to the university for care and supervision and that we are not capable. Neither was the less than 20 shilling freeholder capable of voting. But in particular, girls should be able to decide on hours, to leave school for weekends without special permission, to drink if they want - Why go on? They should be able to conduct their lives as any girl of 19, working in a cotton mill, conducts hers. Paternalism is debilitating and you can't learn to build sky scrapers from playing with mud pies. There should be a student-faculty committee to regulate student affairs, with an eye to building selfreliance on the part of students.

Lastly, there should be a defined grievance procedure. We should have an unbiased source of appeal and advice. What do you do if a professor disagrees with your politics and lowers your grade? What can a generation of students do about an unfair or incapable professor? Further, how does a student make himself heard if he has criticism of his dorm, his walks, his food -- you name it. Democracy would mean that students would share in reviewing plans for dorms, for example, and be able to fulfill a historic role of the student as innovator. Is it out of the question that students in a university dorm have apartments? That coed dorms be established? The principle is that where students are concerned, students should be able to make their opinions known and to have them have weight, directly.

What I have sketched should demand a little work, the work of students: thinking, analysis, reason. We should derive a mature criticism of the university and perhaps append a student bill of rights. This is a firm basis for action in detail. Individual gripes, the kind you and I have plenty of, should be systematically organized under major headings of wrongs. My system is one, but it could easily be replaced. With a criticism and a list of grievances we should be able to find allies in the faculty. They are as much concerned as we. They want to have closer contact with students, they want reality in courses as much as we do. I don't think they want sleepy conformity and acceptance of the past as the guide for the future. Maybe I speak as an idealistic future college instructor; I hope not.

A coalition is possible on the campus as well as in the community. In both places the coalition could produce democratic reforms and in both places it is made up of the excluded groups in society with many things in common. Perhaps in an new university, students might not be driven

into apathy by concentration on trivia, might be able to serve the society in their traditional role of critic. Perhaps then the university might not produce ticky tacky props for the status quo. Perhaps then the society itself might change.