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U C R P E R S P E C T I V E

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May 16, 1972

Washington State University

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POLITICIZING THE UNIVERSITY?

UCR, the University Committee for Rationality, was organized in late Spring, 1970, at the time of the strike which disrupted university functions for approximately a week and which resulted in final exams being made optional that semester. Its membership consists of faculty, staff, and teaching assistants with widely varying views on substantive policy issues (like racism, the Cambodian incursion, or the present mining of North Vietnamese harbors), but who were then and are now in complete agreement that politicizing the university is incompatible with its essential nature and purpose. It has been the oft-stated position of the UCR that individual professors and students should be encouraged to voice their opinions on all issues, but that no official spokesman or body (like a university senate) has the right to commit the university, even indirectly or by implication, to a position on a public policy issue which is not directly and closely related to the university's functions AS A UNIVERSITY.

It has been argued that the German intellectual community condoned by its silence Hitler's attempts at thought control, dramatized in part by systematic book-burning. Similarly, it has been argued that the American academic community, if it is not to condone American policy in Viet Nam, must officially oppose this policy through university spokesmen. A crucial difference between the two situations lies in their relation to the essential functions of all universities. In the former case, attempts at thought control by a government strike at the heart of universities' special responsibility to protect, practice, and extend freedom of thought and inquiry. In the latter case, foreign policy decisions, although they affect all of us, are not directly and closely related to universities' special responsibility. Other institutions exist (like political parties, pressure groups, and legislatures) through which it is appropriate to express our convictions on foreign and domestic policy questions. Attempts to use the prestige of the university to affect policy decisions clearly outside its area of responsibility not only jeopardize performance of the university's appropriate functions, but also open it to possible political reprisals which could undermine its intellectual independence. Furthermore, to act as if all members of the university community are unanimous on any controversial public issue, is to contradict fact.

UCR does not argue that members of a university community must for that reason be political eunuchs. On the contrary, to the extent to which we are aware of, informed about, and concerned for the nation's most urgent problems, we have an obligation, AS INDIVIDUALS, to work in and through those political institutions, existing and emergent, which are responsible for developing public policy. But, because you are here and the university is within reach and is vulnerable, to attempt to use it to advance your political views is to take the easy way out and to make the university pay a potentially high price for your convenience.

## SENATE EXCEEDS ITS AUTHORITY

It appears to us that the University Senate has exceeded its jurisdiction by sending the following resolution to all U.S. Senators and Representatives from the State of Washington:

"The Washington State University Senate is opposed to the blockade of North Viet Nam and demands an immediate withdrawal of all American forces from South East Asia."

This statement was adopted during the May 11 meeting by a vote of 33 to 17, with 2 abstentions.

According to Article I, Section I of the Senate Constitution, "The purpose of the University Senate is to provide a representative body of the University community to consider and to make recommendations to the President and appropriate administrative officials of the University, and through the President to the Board of Regents, on matters affecting the general welfare of Washington State University and its educational, research, and service activities."

Thus, it is plain that the Senate has no authority to address a resolution or other communication to anyone other than the University President and, through him, to the Board of Regents. Furthermore, such action may not be on political matters.

If the Senate were to continue its present course, then some members of the University community might very well request the Senate to take positions on the following political matters: 1. The British occupation of Northern Ireland; 2. Capital punishment; 3. The damming of rivers by the Army Corps of Engineers; 4. The effectiveness of the SALT talks; etc.

Obviously, the University Senate cannot take political stands of any sort.

Those who agree with this position are urged to express their views to their departments' Senators.

## WHO'S FRIGHTENED?

In a letter to Pres. Terrell (dated May 13, see EVERGREEN, May 16) and in a covering letter distributed to WSU faculty members on May 15, the CMC (Citizens Mobilization Committee to End the War) made certain allegations which ought not to go unnoticed. The Committee levelled against the university administration (and the faculty) very serious charges of political oppression. The gist of the charges is that more faculty members would participate actively in anti-war activities and provide "leadership and academic information," except for "fear of political reprisal." Specific examples of possible reprisals, as listed by the committee, include "not granting tenure, non-renewal of contracts, etc. to rid the campus of 'activist' faculty members."



In its constitution, the UCR (University Committee for Rationality) has set as its guiding principle, Thomas Jefferson's statement pledging "eternal vigilance against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." The UCR is firmly "committed to the defense of academic freedom and therefore will encourage, support and defend WSU as an open center of free thought and free speech."

In view of the seriousness of the charges against the university by the CMC, we strongly urge and encourage that organization to present all evidence it has supporting the claim that faculty members might have been subjected to political reprisals to the proper authorities. The AAUP and the ACLU have long espoused the cause of academic freedom and have the machinery as well as the expertise with which to press charges against offending institutions and obtain justice for the wronged persons.

It is our feeling that the university community is and has been free of intimidation from the administration. Thus, fear of reprisal is not at all the reason for a lack of participation. Furthermore, a very large number of WSU's faculty members is tenured, but still does not participate in the committee's activities. The fact that "not more than five or six members of the regular faculty have participated in anti-war activities" may very well be, and we believe is, due to the realization on the part of faculty members that the methods employed by the CMC would politicize the university.

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