

ON ADMITTING "SLUM PRODUCTS" --- An Anatomy of a
Campus Crisis

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They were mostly slum products on scholarships and loans who otherwise would have scant opportunity for higher education. When the university and the taxpayers try to do something for their benefit they respond by kicking their benefactors in the groin.

-- Chicago Tribune editorial, 9/11/68

Today if a young American's academic ability puts him in the top fifth at the secondary level, the odds he will go on to college are 19 to one -- if, that is, he is also in the nation's most affluent quartile. But if his family belongs to the poorest 25% his chances are barely even; furthermore he is much less likely to have made it into that ability group in the first place. Barriers of environmental deprivation plus further hurdles of poverty and race for those who surmount their disadvantages lead to a national college population with seven times more students from the top income quartile than the bottom, and severe under-representation of minorities.

After reviewing the nation's manpower needs for the next decade Clark Kerr's prestigious Carnegie Commission on Higher Education called last December for substantial new federal support, sufficient to educate an extra one million students annually by 1976 -- the bicentenary of the Declaration of Independence and its "promise of equality." To channel this new capacity to those who most need it the Commission proposed that this expanded aid -- \$13 billion in 1976 -- take the forms of direct grants and loans to students from families with less than \$6,000 annual income, and supporting grants to institutions which admit them. "We have not yet achieved equality of access to education; financial barriers and racial barriers block the way for many potentially able young Americans," the Carnegie report said.

Educational policy makers saw the implications of these proposals at once. They would force institutions to attract students from the lower socioeconomic strata in order to receive badly needed funds; this is ^{not} a segment of society toward which they have generally been oriented. Within hours of the report's release officials of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges were expressing "disappointment." They urged that all funds go directly to the institutions, to be administered by them.

Money is clearly central to any change in the socioeconomic complexion of our student bodies. At present it is critically short. However, as the nation's headlines have repeatedly suggested this year, it is equally important that our colleges face the formidable task of learning how to cope with poverty-linked characteristics, including minority group backgrounds and previous educational disadvantage. The experience this year at one land-grant state university, the main campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, will suggest the magnitude of the challenge the Carnegie Commission has issued -- and why some institutions will resist taking it up.

In the fall of 1967 only 259 students, or 1.2% of the 22,017 undergraduates enrolled at Urbana, were Negroes; this was one tenth the proportion of Negroes in the state. In September 1968 over 600 new black students, most from economically deprived backgrounds, arrived on campus tripling the black enrolment overnight. Since then constant crisis has been the lot of the Illinois administration, headed by David Dodds Henry, its president since 1954 and, as it happens, a member of the Carnegie Commission.

The fall 1968 black influx represents more than a change in the racial balance at the university; in 1968 69% of the white freshmen at Illinois came from families enjoying more than \$10,000 annual income. Fully 93% of their families had more than

\$6,000 income. (For contrast, at predominantly Negro colleges 60.6% come from families earning less than \$6,000 annually.) These statistics support a general impression of student affluence at Illinois which is borne out by the chronic complaint of local employers that student help is increasingly scarce; at the same time there seems to be plenty of ready money in the hands of most students, perhaps because they pay about \$1,500 a year less (typical total expenses are about \$1900) than they would at private schools.

Until 1968 the UI's admission policies had been typical of American universities. Serious pressure on available space developed in the late fifties and early sixties as it did for most institutions. It seemed natural and efficient-- because pertinent data are available, because it appeals to faculty and administrators, and because it has been most defensible to middle class parents -- to select students who "can best take advantage of what the University offers." The translation is, those with top rank in high school class, glowing recommendations, and -- very important -- high scores on college entrance tests. As the ratio of applicants to available spaces continued to climb these "standards" were systematically raised.

For years faculty and administrative groups have occasionally been concerned by the effect of these criteria in excluding the poor, the minorities, ^{and} the students from poor secondary schools along with the playboys and those simply not capable of college work. But no action was taken beyond committee reports, quickly buried, and miniscule "pilot programs." Reasons are not far to seek. In the respected 1962 survey, The American College, its editor, Nevitt Sanford, remarked:

Colleges are, of course, interested in turning out good products, that is to say students who possess desired qualities. One way to accomplish this is to start with students who already possess these qualities... Those who would predict success in college by means of tests or examinations administered prior to the student's entrance,

must be clear in their minds whether they are predicting retention of desirable qualities or predicting change or progress.

Particularly for a state institution anxious to justify its budget to a legislature which judges it on its output, the temptation is very great to take the easiest students to handle and those most likely to continue to perform well.

In addition many faculty are unready to face the task of teaching deprived students. It is fun to deal with witty, urbane, intelligent, polite, well-dressed, broadly interested students. It is less pleasant, for many, to deal with students who appear rough, unpolished, blunt, and culturally stunted. It is all too easy for faculty to acquiesce in a policy of "higher standards" even realizing that these are tied less to innate ability or to capacity for development than to the fortunes of birth.

There is also the matter of cost. Even when low-income applicants are fully and competitively "qualified" it often is the case that it takes more to send them to college than it does to send more affluent students -- some have backlogs of personal needs (eyeglasses, dental work, clothes, etc.); for others, departure from home may mean loss of needed family income. When they have educational deficiencies as well, then must be added considerably higher instructional costs.

Financial aids and institutional resources go further when spent on relatively affluent students; they bring the greatest immediate return per dollar spent. The rueful dictum "those who've got, get" applies relentlessly: the students who get in are just those ^{whose} color and speech do not bar them from, and whose parents often have the connections which land them, lucrative summer jobs. The university can then speak proudly of its scholarship students' impressive "self-help."

Parents are relatively well-heeled; costs are low; summer jobs are better than average: it is the Affluent Society. Liberty, fraternity (lots of it at Illinois, which has the largest Greek system in the nation), and equality -- for those who get in. The problem is how to admit the poor and the disadvantaged once you discover that they have not been getting in. Since Illinois, like other state universities, is already oversubscribed by middle-class applicants who meet competitive standards, there is hardly excess room; ^{and considerable expenditure} it will take time to create new capacity.

The question is whether those who currently dominate our campuses will stand for a reduced slice of the higher education pie, especially if some of the space they give up would go to groups which do not exhibit the standard "qualifications" and are not considered social equals by many. On the other hand, in an age when education is increasingly perceived as necessary for social and economic advancement, will the groups currently excluded be willing to wait for space which, when it does become available, is as likely to go to still more of the same people who already get in as to them? Finally, when we do admit such students are we prepared to face the difficult problems of helping them cope with an alien and often hostile environment, make up the effects of past deprivations, and develop their talents fully?

I. BIRTH OF A PROGRAM

Martin Luther King was murdered on April 4, 1968, just prior to the Illinois spring vacation. Shortly thereafter Champaign's "Let Freedom Ring" (a recorded telephone message described as "an anti-communist service now in 125 cities; hear the TRUTH the managed news doesn't dare let you know!") announced to callers that local Negroes were about to riot. Whites were advised to purchase guns to defend themselves. The anonymous callers phoned Negro families and told them to dial "Let Freedom Ring"'s number. Despite their help, no riot materialized.

Meanwhile at the University a coalition of faculty and non-vacationing students formed "Citizens for Racial Justice" and drew up a set of demands. They wanted University hiring policies examined and the administration to take affirmative action to bring up the percentage of black non-academic employees to the percentage of blacks in Champaign-Urbana (about 10%).

The state of northeast Champaign's black community is not particularly enviable; "Let Freedom Ring" is right ^{at} home in Champaign. "When I was a boy in Alabama," a UI physics professor says, "they used to say if you had an uppity nigger the best thing you could do with him was send him up to Champaign (which lies on the important Illinois Central line from the South to Chicago). Up there they'd take care of him." A Harvard chemistry professor who left Illinois after one brief postwar year says, "I was from New York, a Jew and a liberal. The smug Bible-belt hypocrisy in Champaign, where Negroes couldn't be served in any decent restaurant was too much for me." Such conditions continued into the fifties. Today the cities' past is shallowly buried at best; although there is little overt discrimination there is abundant lingering prejudice, and very real economic sanctions.

CRJ's research indicated that

In 1967 the University employed 306 Blacks; 209 or nearly 70% were employed in the most menial categories of "unskilled laborers" and "service workers." None of the 238 semiskilled jobs and only 9 of the 562 skilled jobs were held by Blacks. Furthermore, fewer than 3% of the 2343 "office and clerical" employees on this campus during 1967 were Black.

CRJ demanded that the University take steps to force contractors working on the campus to comply strictly with the non-discrimination clauses in their contracts and to halt construction if they did not. As for university hiring, the group announced that they would engage in "picketing and peaceful demonstrations until significant action is taken by the Administration. Until such time when actual

class (which had already been filled). The University was to begin at once to find money and personnel, and to plan appropriate supportive services. In turn, the BSA promised appreciable assistance in the recruiting and orientation of the students, cooperating with the campus admissions office. Black students also made suggestions, based on their experiences at the University, for program and supportive aids.

Peltason's intention was to begin countering the UI's dearth of minority group students and at the same time broaden its economic and cultural base. He was consciously avoiding two approaches prevalent at other institutions. On the one hand, it is well-known that the "super-Negro" -- with high test scores, abundant ambition, and little "cumulative academic deficit" from his primary and secondary education -- can practically write his own ticket. An official of the College Board acknowledged recently the existence of an "all-out recruiting war among 500 to 1,000 colleges for a very few Negro youths of moderate-to-high ability" (usually judged by the verbal aptitude tests, etc.). While specifying that minimum entrance requirements be met unless there were other strong indications that a student was exceptional, Peltason nevertheless wanted to admit only students who had received no offers of assistance from other schools and would not go to College unless the UI took them.

The UI chancellor was also wary of the other extreme -- setting up a separate, "easier," curriculum for disadvantaged students. The thesis he and his advisors wanted to test was that students who met the University's minimum requirements could make up *any* academic deficits with strong tutorial assistance, while taking ordinary freshman and sophomore courses. Reduced work loads, perhaps necessitating a five-year program, and reinstatement of several discontinued courses in a few subjects, would be the only formal concessions to the disadvantaged.

Peltason saw in his "Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP)" a return to the historic mission of the land-grant institution: to take the citizens of the state as it found them, help them overcome any deficiencies in their previous education, and get them through an accredited degree program.

"We have ramps all over campus, special buses, and a staff of people to assist our paraplegic students," he said on numerous occasions. "The University of Illinois is world-famous for this program, and no one complains about their "special" treatment. All we will do now is provide "ramps" for people whose handicaps are economic and environmental."

Peltason clearly considered this plan reasonable and unobjectionable, and was convinced that the nation was ready to face what he called a "crisis [which] demands that we take significant action today, not tomorrow." He urged students who had formed a Martin Luther King Memorial Fund to drop their initial goal -- a \$20,000 student aid endowment -- and try instead for several hundred thousand dollars in ready money to launch the expanded SEOP program, only five months away. More permanent funding would be found later to continue the program, he said; what was needed now was seed money. A lot of people on campus were looking for something they could do; the fund would give them something.

At the same time, University officials sped proposals to the Ford Foundation, ^{and the Office of Education} the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. Although hopes were not rewarded that Ford would suspend its usual policy of refusing large requests from public institutions, the Foundation did grant \$37,800 for first year recruiting and staff. The OE made the University a supplemental appropriation sufficient to insure that all of the projected 500 students could receive the full grant to which their economic need entitled them (maximum ^{Educational Opportunity Grant}, which must be matched with equal additional aid, is \$800 per year, for four years).

Adequate NDEA loan funds were available as well. However it was impressed on director of admissions Charles Warwick by the black students that large loans were especially undesirable for students from low income families, some entering as high risks. Warwick's goal was to keep first year loans below \$470. He hoped to get them down to \$300.

Key to keeping the loans down was finding additional non-federal-government support. The University sought tuition and fee waivers from its board of trustees and urged students to apply for Illinois State Scholarships and Grants. And hope was concentrated on the Martin Luther King Fund campus drive.

Recruitment began shortly after the end of exams in June. Students identified by the Black Students Association took a brief training course from admissions personnel and then went out, generally to their own home areas, to find interested and qualified students.

About the same time the chancellor's life was threatened, apparently by local extremists upset by the program. Bullet-proof glass was installed in his office. (Since nothing public was ever said about either the threat or the glass, many observers misinterpreted the precaution as a sign that the administration expected trouble from student demonstrators.)

In the meantime it had become clear that money was even tighter than had been realized, and other people were not as committed as Peltason to "action today." Amid general apathy, spiced by occasional cries of "lowering standards" and "denying education to the qualified in favor of the unqualified", the King fund had met considerably less than its expectations. Slightly over four percent of the student body and 10 percent of the faculty contributed roughly \$32,000. (However discouraging these percentages and the total, the individual contributions were impressive: the average was \$20, some undergraduates giving \$50 and \$100 and faculty up to \$500.) And the Fund had been harassed by a small

group who forged hundreds of bogus pledges.

The UI board of trustees granted 100 tuition waivers for the Urbana program. The UI Foundation, fund-raising arm of the university and depository for income from patents and other University holdings, contributed roughly \$10,000 to the program. The last significant aid source was 94 grants from the state scholarship commission awarded to students who applied before its July 15 deadline. Instead of several hundred thousand dollars from the King Fund alone, the University had received less than \$100,000 from all non-federal sources combined.

Despite funding setbacks, there was no particular administration concern over student aids at this time. Early returns from the recruiters indicated that there might be considerable difficulty in reaching the goal of 500 students. Besides, there were other more pressing problems, including instructional costs of the program.

Worse times could not be imagined, perhaps, in which to commit a university to additional programs. Massive cutbacks in federal aid to science had brought on a near emergency; the UI, like other institutions, had had to rescue researchers cut off from their usual funding sources. One nuclear energy program alone suddenly needed \$1/2 million annually. In mid-spring Vice Chancellor Herbert Carter, faced with a flood of such problems, froze all empty positions and urged austerity on all departments. It was from these same departments that Peltason was now squeezing resources for SEOP, arguing for a re-ordering of priorities.

In early August signs began to appear indicating that the UI might be in a serious financial aids bind after all. At least four unforeseen factors were emerging. First, slow early recruitment was followed by a dramatic increase in

late July and August. Admissions and aid offices, usually finished with new students months before, were swamped with over 1,200 SEOP applications. Of these 768 were approved for admission, assuming the usual two-thirds registration rate; this guideline was to fail: the goal of 500 would be exceeded considerably. In addition, many of the 768 had been identified too late to apply for state scholarships and grants. Next, fewer students from Champaign-Urbana had been located than planned; the savings on room and board which they had represented were not to be possible. Finally, fully 97 students would enter from other states -- a measure, perhaps, of the nationwide need for such programs. This meant considerable unforeseen out-of-state tuition, travel expense, and other related costs.

Compounding matters was the fact that the crest of the application flood came after August 1st. August sees Champaign-Urbana turn into a ghost town as University employees depart along with the summer school students for late-summer vacations. Applications piled up, often over lack of one datum or another; financial aid packages to be calculated accumulated, also frequently delayed by incomplete information. Housing officials obligated by residence hall bond issues to maintain 96% occupancy were tearing handfuls of hair. They always over-subscribe the available space, counting on a number of "no-shows" and first month drop-outs. In July they panicked because it appeared they had saved too many spaces for SEOP students; in August the problem was suddenly reversed. Worst of all, no one could give them an exact figure to work with.

SEOP students began to arrive September 2, a week before other freshmen, who in turn come a week before classes start. They kept arriving, and kept arriving. (The total would exceed 580.) In some cases University officials running the special testing and advising program found that they had no record whatsoever of students who appeared.

As the students became acquainted with each other during this first week, two recurrent topics of conversation were financial aids and, in a way different from that of "ordinary" freshman, the particular college environment in which they found themselves. Recruiters had repeated to them Warwick's \$470 loan ceiling target; but a number of students, especially those from out of state, received from the University financial aid "packages" which indicated that they would be expected to borrow \$1,000 or even \$1,200 during their first year! Further, the grapevine was quick to carry stories about conditions in the twin cities and the unhappy experiences of UI black students in past years. (A 1966 study by UI sociologist Rita Simon had shown that blacks felt very uncomfortable at the University. Many indicated that if they had it to do again they would go to an all-black institution. She concluded that as long as blacks were outnumbered so overwhelmingly by whites they would continue to perceive the University of Illinois as "an institution concerned primarily with attracting and serving the white middle-class taxpayers of the state: a group with which they obviously cannot successfully identify.")

An edition of the BSA newspaper, DRUMS, distributed to the students during the week featured a front page editorial which, ignoring University initiative, claimed that the SEOP program was entered into reluctantly under BSA pressure in order to avoid "the possibility of a Howard, Northwestern, or Columbia revolt." This bit of questionable analysis preceded the editorialist's suggestion that logistical difficulties in processing applications had been deliberate. The editorial went on to the quite constructive conclusion that black students should ignore "efforts Universities in America have taken to keep 'their' schools white" and concentrate instead on finding personal identity and objectives and on helping each other get through. But all of this conveyed the idea that townspeople,

faculty (all but 6 of them white), students, and University administrators might not be wholly committed to the program.

The week progressed with little clarification of the financial aids problem. The new student aid director had himself arrived barely ahead of the SEOP students. He found the over-all prospects poor, to the degree that they could be ascertained; what could be done for each student depended on his particular circumstances, which would have to be reviewed, and on the nature of the limited aid available. Nothing very encouraging could be said to the group as a whole; he could only promise to review individual "packages" as quickly as possible.

Suddenly, at the end of the week, a new problem was projected onto this murky and unsettling background. When it came time to move into their assigned rooms from the modern residence hall in which all SEOP students were housed for their introductory week, a number found themselves in what the UI calls "temporary housing" -- in some cases lounges and sewing rooms converted for occupancy until regular space is identified, in other cases older residence halls used only in the fall and not always in top shape. Complaints about such rooms are routine each fall. Several especially militant black girls -[*]- organized a group of 19 coeds who announced that they could not study effectively in their rooms and would not accept them, *[apparently unaware that "caveat emptor" has never applied to UI freshmen]

The next Monday evening this problem triggered a gathering of several hundred concerned and suspicious blacks demanding clarification of housing and the more threatening financial situation. That meeting found University officials unable to satisfy the students and was eventually marred by acts of vandalism. It ended with the arrest of about 240 students passively occupying the Illini Union "until the chancellor comes to talk to us." It also marked the beginning

of the current major crisis at Illinois.

As it was to emerge, the blacks' growing concern with their loans was justified. In a report to the faculty six weeks later, on October 23, the chancellor would reveal that the average NDEA loan to 88 out-of-state students was \$959; 404 Illinois residents had taken out loans averaging \$623. This was fully \$100,000 short of Warwick's May target. The University was caught in the squeeze of at least 65 students beyond its goal, plus out-of-state tuition and other related costs for about a sixth of the students.

Compounding the students' consternation was the degree to which the program had been over-sold. BSA recruiters had in their zeal pointed a rosier picture than was wise. Further, some of Peltason's guidelines had been lost in the confusion: a number of students had turned down offers of assistance from other schools and now found themselves at the UI saddled with substantial loans.

In the Illini Union on September 9 the BSA charged "broken promises, unkept commitments." Already exasperated by delays in processing applications, BSA spokesmen now took up and expanded their theories of deliberate and malicious administration sabotage of the program. They seemed unable to believe that a great institution like the University of Illinois could be subject to funding difficulties or logistical mishaps; the problems had to be deliberate.

In autumn 1968 this was a view too readily shared by more than blacks. Charges of duplicity, or at least criminal negligence, would be taken up all fall by concerned white students and faculty, many of whom had offered what they were now convinced would have been perfect solutions to SEOP's financial and programmatic difficulties. An overworked central administration which had ignored numerous schemes in May became even more overextended as it paid for this in the fall, dealing with endless requests for "explanation" of its decisions and numberless

renewed demands that a particular funding or program plan be heard. This situation would get so bad that Peltason, who was also besieged by alumni, state legislators, and mothers of nonadmitted "qualified" white applicants, not to mention extremists of all sorts ("I don't show him some of the things which come," his wife said. "He knows what they are like; they would just upset him further"), would say repeatedly that, of them all, the program's "friends" might turn out to be its executioners.

Since then internal discussion of the program's funding has both moderated and expanded. Student aids were merely the top of the iceberg; rhetoric and mathematics departments particularly have had to face the problems of additional staff and staff training; the cost of running the tutoring program and other supportive services is being assessed. Few in the university community still think appreciable relief can be found locally.

Most sympathetic observers resist the arguments of critics that the program was "hastily put together," "ill thought-out," or "done too quickly." In the first place it is easy to agree with Peltason's May argument that "there are no 'experts' in this field; we will have to learn how to educate disadvantaged students by trying it." There was certainly an abundance of such students on whom the University could get started. Besides, in 1965 a distinguished university committee had submitted an outline of what such a program ought to look like; too many observers have seen such programs go back into committee for "careful further study" never to emerge.

What did concern many was whether public recognition of the increasingly urgent crisis in the nation over the future of its poor and its minorities would ever be sufficient to fund such a program properly. Certainly in May, 1968, after Dr. King's assassination the nation should have been as ready as it is likely

to be soon. If Peltason had misread the political signs then, what would happen now?

The answer continues uncertain; unfortunately, in Illinois it promises to be shaped largely by what people think occurred in the Illini Union on the night of September 9, 1968, and not by considerations of the costs of ignoring, or the benefits of educating, youth who are otherwise all too likely to appear on Illinois welfare rolls and police blotters, unproductive, bitter, liabilities to themselves and to their fellow citizens.

II. THE PROGRAM & THE PRESS

The Wednesday, September 11, 1968 Chicago Tribune headlined the Union incident on its front page ("248 Held in U. of I. Riot -- Negroes Go on Rampage After Row"):

The refusal of 19 Negro coeds to accept mandatory room assignments touched off a wave of violence today at the University of Illinois which resulted in the arrest of 248 persons. The arrests came after Negro students and black militants went on a rampage in the Illini Union building. They destroyed furniture, slashed draperies, defaced portraits of university officials, and broke glass. Police officials estimated the damage at \$50,000. The disorders were quelled when university police and city and sheriff's police entered the student union and began the arrests.

The Tribune editorial that day was colorful:

"...more than 200 entering blacks and outside supporters went ape [sic] in the lounges of the beautiful Illini Union building during a sit-in. ... They mutilated the portraits of 12 university presidents, smashed furniture, swung from chandeliers [sic], and tore the painting of Presi-

dent David Dodds Henry from the wall, scrawling the words "Black Power" across the face. ... As the lawbreakers proceeded in the work of destruction they chanted "I'm black and I'm proud" ... Not until a carnival of violence got under way did [Peltason] summon police.

The paper went on to describe the SEOP students:

They were mostly slum products on scholarships and loans who otherwise would have scant opportunity for higher education. When the university and the taxpayers try to do something for their benefit they respond by kicking their benefactors in the groin.

As we shall see, the most remarkable feature of the Tribune's report is that it actually gets two details right: the immediate issue causing the gathering and the fact that Henry's portrait was indeed defaced as described. The rest of the report is hopelessly inaccurate. However, the paper repeated this highly fictional version again and again for 2 weeks, even after several University officials personally supplied correct information. By now it is well implanted in Illinois and must be reckoned with.

Besides believing this account of the incident, many accept the Tribune's editorial perception of the SEOP program as a handout. Given this outlook it is natural to join the Tribune in measuring the program by the "gratitude" which is or is not forthcoming from its participants. Lurking near the surface is the suggestion that "slum products" can be replaced by others who would be more grateful. (On Saturday, September 21, the Tribune said: "An editorial on this page September 13 said this recruiting method was astonishing and suggested that Chancellor J. W. Peltason use some common sense in finding candidates for free [sic] education projects.")

Not many people are aware of the degree to which American "common sense"

has filled her public universities with her rich and barred her poor. Perhaps one reason they assume a Tribune-type stance effortlessly is that no one ever argues to them that such programs are not gifts, but high-return investments in the future of the entire community, their success properly measured by the degree to which harmony and productivity are increased and welfare payments, crime, health hazards, and misery are decreased. That is how the UI administration saw its SEOP, but after the King Fund response and spontaneous comment had indicated the amount and virulence of opposition to the program it made a conscious decision to keep it quiet. Peltason argued that it would be unfair to the students to have them in the spotlight any more than was inevitable. But it was no secret that the administration expected any publicity to stir up more open opposition than support. Thus most Illinoisans first heard of the program through sensational and inaccurate news accounts of its troubles; the University's policy of silence may have made its expectation of hostility a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Under Henry the University of Illinois has kept to itself. Its faculty are heard to complain that it has avoided any significant social and intellectual leadership in Illinois. Then-governor Otto Kerner remarked sadly at the UI Centennial Convocation in March 1968 that the considerable accomplishments of the University, which is consistently rated among the top ten in the country, are little known in its own state. Henry, on the other hand, is reputed to be not a little proud of how well his university has done without help from the mass media or strong public interest. One suspects, in fact, that he prefers it that way. The UI has been able to do very much as Henry has wanted, at least in part because few pay close attention.

What the Illinois public hears from its university is tightly controlled. It is easier and safer to keep a limited number of influential people informed and happy; Henry himself or his immediate aides deal with politicians, industrialists and others who count and he is capable of considerable wrath if someone

makes outside contacts without consulting him. The public information director is a presidential assistant, and the Public Information Office little more than a mailing center, spewing out releases on the latest feed-corn strain developed or resumes of the latest crop of assistant deans. In a crisis this "information" system is first paralyzed and then becomes a mouthpiece for the administration.

When the Union incident occurred paralysis was palpable. The PIO has no reporters; the nearest substitutes are employees of the security office who are ~~not~~ in the habit of assembling news releases. Whatever did finally go on display in the PIO first wandered up and down through the administrative hierarchy and was hardly comprehensive when it did surface. Newsmen were essentially on their own to figure out what had happened.

Several days of discussion had preceeded the gathering Monday. Housing officials attempted to explain their problem and promised to look for better rooms; financial aids personnel were tackling individual cases but were weeks from completion of the task. At 7 p.m. Monday the 19 dissident coeds met again with housing representatives and rejected, at least partly through a misunderstanding, the rooms offered them. A large number of other SEOP students had gathered to give the girls support.

When word of the deadlock got out, the group moved from the residence hall to the porch of the Illini Union two blocks distant. Joined by BSA members the students held an open discussion of their loans and the housing dispute. A drizzle sent them inside and by 9 p.m. they had filled the Union south lounge. In the meantime there were reports that a couple of whites had been accosted by blacks in the vicinity of the Union. Although a dean who happened to walk through the building but knew nothing of SEOP's troubles saw only what he supposed was a social gathering of blacks, laughing and apparently enjoying themselves, other parts of the group presented more informed eyes with a more ominous aspect. Reports of "violent" language and menacing behavior, as well as petty misconduct,

came back to the administrators who had been in on the emotion-laden discussions of the past few days and were assembling now in the office of Paul Doebel, director of housing.

While top administrators were hurrying to this "crisis center" (Peltason, who had just returned to town, among them), BSA representatives and the (white) head of the Graduate Student Association, who happened to be in the Union, were trying to call them at home. Finally contact was made with BSA president David Addison, a law student, by Clarence Shelley, black Dean of Educational Opportunity since July 1. Shelley parried Addison's request that the chancellor come to speak to the group by saying that he, Lucius Barker (professor of political science and assistant chancellor, also black), Stanton Millet (dean of students), and several others who were involved with the program would come.

This meeting was particularly acrimonious. Millet later said, "It was really an act of sheer bravado for me to go in there. There was absolutely nothing that I could offer except a promise that we would investigate all the matters fully as soon as possible." Millet's message was received especially poorly by several vocal blacks who, like some other student leaders, are vaguely contemptuous of him. * He was to get his people out of bed and get answers at once, he was told; the morning would be too late.

As the BSA newspaper's editorial had already made clear there was no reservoir of good faith on which the UI administration could draw for time. Change has been slow at Illinois; black leaders are well acquainted with the frustrations of whites who had been through the two years since Millet's appointment and had been neither particularly successful in gaining greater control over their own affairs nor pleased with administration tactics. A 1966-67 free speech controversy ended in court with the University defending a notorious post-war state law banning subversive speakers. The administration -- symbolized then by Henry and Millet --

*Millet announced his resignation
on March 10, 1969

lost the case to its own students when the law was declared unconstitutional. Its timidity in standing up for fundamental American principles won it little *Campus* favor.

A Dow demonstration in fall 1967 was handled smoothly at the time, but discipline procedures afterward came under attack. There were other points of friction between the dean of students and active students.

Millet's stock in May 1968 ^{*had been*} such that the Black Students Association refused to deal with him, talking instead directly with the chancellor. They also insisted when Shelley was hired that he not report to Millet, but to Peltason. Ironically their success in both matters may have reduced the ability of the administration to respond when things started going wrong: Millet is responsible for both housing and financial aids; because of their disgust with him the officer ultimately in charge of operations central to the program was seriously uninformed.

Millet's ignorance of the situation on September 9 and of possible responses was left mercifully unexposed, however. One agitated local militant, especially upset over the sparse local representation in the program, shouted at Millet repeatedly as he tried to speak, "God damn it you don't have nothing to say." Understandably Millet interpreted this as less a statement of the literal truth than an ill omen for the outcome of the evening.

When it was apparent to both the crowd and the administrators that this last meeting -- which ended after midnight -- was fruitless, some of the more vocal of the group demanded again that the chancellor himself speak to them. Millet's group left for the housing division, glad to be free from the considerable verbal abuse they had taken. When they reached their destination reports were being received of damage being done to the Union.

If the Tribune had bothered to use it there was available early Tuesday an eye-witness account of the vandalism. White students, including the president of the student senate and the chairman of the graduate student association, had

gathered in the Union in the early hours of September 10 upon hearing of the trouble. They pieced together accounts of the dispute and the incident, including an interview with the Union night supervisor who witnessed the single burst which accounted for more than 85% of the damage. This mimeographed sheet was widely distributed on campus after 8 a.m.

It reported (accurately, as lengthy discipline hearings have established):

"[About 1 a.m.] fewer than ten individuals, some of whom were reported by witnesses to be drunk, proceeded to destroy things for about ten minutes. A chandelier and furnishings in two lounges were seriously damaged." The supervisor explained later that these individuals entered a previously empty lounge when janitors, who had unlocked it briefly to recover some equipment, were leaving. The vandalism was committed by members of this group (several of whom the supervisor later identified as non-students), not by "200 entering black students." It was an isolated incident -- neither a "rampage" nor a "riot" -- in empty rooms beyond the sight or hearing of the majority of sit-ins, some of whom had even gone to sleep.

Further, the total cost of repair or replacement of the six chairs, 10 tables, two lamps, and several dozen other smaller items damaged, and for cleaning up the lounges and replacing broken glass, ultimately came to about \$3,400 -- close to the \$5,000 reported in most papers and to be contrasted with the Tribune's 1400% exaggeration. Not only had "The World's Greatest Newspaper" multiplied the number of vandals by 20, misidentified them as students when there was and is considerable doubt that any students were among them, and enlarged the damage by a factor of 14 -- not to mention such evocative touches as blacks going "ape" and swinging from chandeliers, all of them fabrications -- in addition it reported in its headline story that "The students ... were to receive free tuition and free room and board." The student release the day before had stressed the finan-

cial crisis and the unexpected \$1,000 loans.

Fully nine days after the incident the Tribune was still telling its outraged readers-- whose angry letters it was printing, faithfully repeating its own distortions -- that there had been "an estimated \$50,000 damage" to the Union. On September 19, in still another front page article it grudgingly acknowledged the official university estimate, now a week old, but not without one last repetition of the preposterous \$50,000 figure: "University officials estimated the damage to the two student lounges at \$5,000 - \$10,000. Police had estimated the damage at nearly [sic] \$50,000." If the PIO had hoped to appease the Tribune with its rather generous estimate it was not particularly successful.

In the Union, once the vandalism had become known to the body of the students hysteria began to develop. A number were inclined to leave at once but were convinced by others that they would be set upon by police and police dogs. (It had been only a few weeks since the Democratic convention just 100 miles to the north.) Some armed themselves with uprights from ash urns and chair legs for defense against the police violence which they fully expected. When eight dozen or so police did enter the building shortly after 3 a.m., in riot helmets and carrying long riot sticks, the students offered no resistance and the group was arrested without incident.

The university pressed charges of "mob action" on those arrested -- a relatively new offense on Illinois books primarily for protest demonstrations. Generally a misdemeanor, mob action can be a felony. The students were also subject to university discipline for participation in an "unauthorized mass demonstration," but they were allowed to register for classes pending hearings -- to the dismay of editorialists who favored instant expulsion.

The incident occurred two days before the arrival of most students; there are still on campus an appreciable number who, having only the press to go by, do not yet know that the actual event bore scant resemblance to the scenario created by the Tribune. Other papers, though hardly in its league, did little better at the time in reporting the circumstances of the meeting and the isolated and limited nature of the vandalism. Many filled in and corrected the story later, but not on the front page.

Partly as a result of the prevalence and degree of distortion of the early accounts Illinois undergraduates, who were hardly in overwhelming support of the program in the spring, remain on the whole skeptical or just detached. In May¹⁹⁶⁸ a group of residence hall women had voted not to contribute to the King Fund because "these people will be taking places away from our more qualified younger brothers and sisters." One girl finally got the group's attention to announce that they had been mistaken; SEOP students would come in addition to the usual freshmen quota. The girls nevertheless affirmed their previous vote after one of them argued -- at an institution noted for its impersonal treatment of students -- that, if this were the case, then faculty attention would be spread over more students and thus, again, their younger brothers and sisters (this time the ones who got in) would suffer!

Perhaps because it is really widespread, perhaps only because they think it is, some of the black students have felt surrounded by white hostility. In fairness to the Illinois students, they can be extremely hospitable. Even that can be a problem, however. Perhaps not the "Bible-belt hypocrisy" of several decades ago, such acts as breezing up to the only black student in one's class and saying, "Hi, I'm Mary Sue; you must be in Project 500" in one's brightest voice strike some as patronizing, no matter how well-intentioned. (The girl to whom this particular incident happened was an upperclassman. She smiled and said, "As it

happens, I'm not in the project. That was kind of you to come over but please let me ask you not to do it to anyone else. Someone might not take it the right way.")

Actually the program has had considerable support, given the unpromising setting and its inauspicious beginning. More than 900 students and faculty volunteered to tutor SEOP students in the fall. Faculty in the college of education are donating their time to an experimental freshman program for prospective teachers which involves mostly SEOP students. (The new curriculum has been so popular that other students are pressing for admission. It had been under discussion for some time but the pressure of the extra enrolment was necessary to get it off the ground. The problem now is to keep it aloft without continuing to rely on overload teaching by the faculty.)

But for every white who has made some sort of contact with the "Project 500" students -- as they are known on campus, generally to their irritation -- there are ten who are simply "watching." Some of the black students feel, as black students always have at the UI where they are still overwhelmingly outnumbered, that someone is always watching -- in class, on the street, in the dining hall. So far many SEOP students have kept predominantly to themselves.

In the weeks after the Union incident disciplinary hearings and criminal charges loomed large, the University's attitude was uncertain, and the Tribune and others were calling for expulsions. White activists who have been unhappy with University discipline procedures since the Dow incident approached blacks suggesting a radical campus coalition. Rumors of ominous maneuvers by administration officials ~~in~~ in closed preliminary discipline hearings and in the preparation of the security office report which would constitute the disciplinary "evidence", as well as some of the public statements of the chancellor about discipline, caused radicals to conjure up increasingly paranoid -- and very contagious

-- fantasies. These were fed by the continuing public outcry: many students became convinced that, whatever the facts, the administration would find it necessary to sacrifice some black students to public opinion.

It looked for a while as if the student coalition would come off. White leaders held numerous public meetings trying to demonstrate their strength, the administration watching with great apprehension that further disorders would ensue. At one point early in the fall several hundred whites marched quietly through the administration building, under the watchful eyes of several dozen hastily summoned police. But blacks were suspicious that they might be "used"; they saw that the whites had little real popular support and that some were ready to break with the one ethic all parties had shared in the first few days -- that saving the program was above all other considerations.

"You guys are ~~way~~ ahead of us," replied one black leader to a white's description of a glorious campus coalition -- like that between the Black Panthers and the Peace and Freedom party in Oakland. "We aren't particularly interested in making this place over, or burning it; we just want that same middle-class education you cats have been getting all along." ("The program will fail anyway," said a white radical privately. "It's an integrationist program in a black separatist era.") In the end the black and white leaders simply agreed to keep in touch, but essentially do their own "thing."

Both groups pressured for open disciplinary hearings and the dropping of civil charges. The students were surprised when the faculty discipline committee agreed to admit a number of "observers" from student and faculty governments, and even to allow limited questioning of witnesses. Millet and others opposed both moves, as they did demands that defendants be allowed counsel and permitted full cross-examination. These changes, Millet argued, would transform what had always been essentially private, informal hearings, friendly to the student,

into rigid legal exercises, costly, cumbersome, inherently prolonged, and unsuited to a university setting. "Star Chamber" replied the students.

Various faculty groups issued statements of confidence in the administration, the program, and its students. A motion that the University drop the civil charges was introduced into the Urbana-Champaign faculty senate. Peltason replied, correctly, that once charges were filed only the State's attorney could drop them. The students were soon pointing at Columbia where the administration successfully petitioned civil authorities to drop charges brought during its spring disturbances. Why couldn't Peltason do the same? When he didn't, wasn't that evidence he was giving in to public opinion -- no matter how ill-informed? (And what steps had he taken to counter the misinformation!) The suspicion and paranoia was palpable well into November and has never completely dissipated.

Students and faculty also demanded that university hearings be postponed until after disposition of the civil cases, arguing that evidence introduced in the former might be held against the students in the latter. Others, apparently without strong "property hang-ups", argued that all cases should be dropped; there had clearly been misjudgment on both administration and student sides, they argued, and it was best simply to forget the past and concentrate on the future. The University proceeded with the hearings.

It emerged that Peltason had spoken privately with both candidates for *Champaign County* State's Attorney and each had indicated that he would not be inclined to introduce evidence from the university hearings. But both had asked him not to make their discussion public in this "law and order" year. When the winner revealed the conversation after the election one of the faculty members who had been pressing "drop the charges" resolutions wrote to the Daily Illini that he was upset by Peltason's secret "accommodations" and wondered how much this sort of thing goes on.

While on-campus jousting was consuming countless hours of student, faculty, and especially administration time, out in the "real world" things were just as bad. By chance, when the Union incident hit the newspapers a House-Senate conference was in progress working out differences between versions of a new student aid bill, both containing clauses barring aid to students who disrupt campuses. Peltason was on the phone to Washington. Then angry statements from state legislators began to filter in. If the university did not clean its own house, rumbled local representative Charles Clabaugh -- author of the infamous act barring subversive speakers -- the legislature might have to step in. And it was the year for submitting the university biennial budget, which would contain a timid but crucial request for a special educational opportunities program. Then word came that ~~FOG~~ money for such programs may well be cut 87% in 1969-70. The first year's financial crisis, not yet solved, suddenly looked small compared with the dismal long-term prospects.

The real world contains not only irate citizens, threatening legislators, and impoverished funding agencies. It also has real antagonisms, jealousies, and fears. Uncomfortable among their fellow students, worried about finances and studies, blacks in the SEOP increasingly found themselves under duress from black youth in Champaign-Urbana,

Negro students, from ghetto and rural areas especially, often go through "identity crises" much more severe than those which have traditionally caused middle- and upper-class students so much pain. Is one to be black, or Negro? Does one have an obligation to "his people" or is he an individual whose obligations are like others' -- to wife, family, and community broadly taken? Many blacks, just like whites, are untouched by such torments but a large number have to face them in a situation like that in Urbana where there is no way to put out of mind the life you left since a few blocks away youth are still living it.

The local black gangs have been an increasing problem in the campus and

Union area for several years. Police in the Union have been doubled several times; minor disturbances are common. Numerous university committees and community commissions have been formed, and individuals hired to work directly on the festering problems of the black community in the twin cities. Progress is painfully slow.

It appears to have been local youths who did the damage in the Union and thereby "gave the Project a bad name." On the other hand, one of the primary movers of the program in the first place was an articulate young local militant leader. In any event, open hostilities erupted in November between local blacks and members of a Negro fraternity -- symbols of the "sellout" to the white establishment, perhaps -- whose social events were being crashed and disrupted. Just before Thanksgiving a short battle left a gang leader bleeding on the sidewalk from a head wound inflicted with a brick. This incident augured further trouble. So frightened were a number of black students that they left early on their vacations and returned late.

In the classroom instructors have found that few generalizations about SEOP students are possible. Many have handicaps, some of them severe; but the variation among them is too great to suggest any general policy beyond great flexibility and much individual attention. The students, on the other hand, want to be treated as much as possible like everyone else and often reject contrived and distinguishing "special help."

Their presence has definitely shaken up faculty who are looking with fresh amazement at the traditional curriculum and approaches. The feeling is widespread that if the resources are available the special educational opportunities program can stimulate a thorough-going reassessment of higher education in this urbanized, technological era. Most conversations about the program return eventually to money; innovation is always much more expensive than maintaining the old ways and if the University of Illinois is to make maximum use of the opportunities

It will be admitting only about 400 ^{*} new SEOP students in 1969, a 30% cutback, and even that number is uncertain. That will mean that about two-thirds of its students will continue to come from families with incomes greater than \$10,000.

What does happen to a dream deferred?

* in Sept., '69, 277 new SEOP students were enrolled.