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CAMPUS REVOLT — 1968

THE PROPENSITY OF MANKIND to regard complex situations in terms of black and white has seldom been more clearly demonstrated than with recent outbreaks of student unrest in many parts of the world. Reliance on the notions of simple cause followed by equally simple solution has led to feckless action and ill-considered pronouncements, while providing comforting justifications for both. The matching risk of over-complication seems worth taking, if only because of the wide currency given to more simplistic approaches.

While the emphasis of this paper will be on this year's uprising at Columbia University, the issues facing the major factions at Columbia were not peculiar to that institution, and most of them are fundamental to university unrest generally. The event with the widest significance was certainly the revolt at the Sorbonne, which almost led to the downfall of the French state. In retrospect this may appear to have been an accident of history. Columbia was probably the model for the Sorbonne, and the lessons it taught may have contributed to the success of the French uprising. It is not, therefore, inappropriate to use Columbia as the focus for this paper.

The students of today, with the idealism of youth, seem to perceive more clearly than earlier generations of students the imperfections of the established order. How, they ask, can they be expected to support a system that has failed to deal with war, disease, poverty, race-relations, hunger and most other gross forms of injustice. Even if they can propose few practical improvements, surely (it is implied) they can hardly make the world worse than it is. They see only what remains to be done.

The representatives of the status quo point to the need for evolutionary change, to the impossibility of wiping out injustice and suffering in a day, a week, or even a generation. They see only what has already been accomplished.

That such divergent viewpoints should lead to conflict seems inevitable. The revolutionists meet the evolutionists head on. Having justified (perhaps

tenuously) the need for the destruction of the status quo, the young are forced to seek answers to a number of vital questions. How does one go about changing institutions which have fortified themselves with legal, moral, and economic battlements? Where legal protest fails, what forms of action are justified? What constitutes legal protest? When may unjust laws be broken, and who decides what is just and unjust? The defenders of the battlements cry out that they and only they should decide these questions, but their cries are lost in the din.

It should be no surprise that universities have become the major battlegrounds of youth against the establishment. The mere concentration of the rival factions on campuses in rapidly rising numbers is an invitation to a showdown. The increasingly impersonal and institutional nature of university life, which is partly a function of growth in enrolment, helps harden both positions.

It is not difficult to identify some of the major issues arising from this campus confrontation. How appropriate are existing forms of university government? What role if any, should students play in university government? Has democracy a place on campus? Can any government function without the consent of the governed? And, perhaps even more basically, who owns the private universities and to whom are the administration and trustees ultimately responsible—to the community? the faculty? the students? the major donors? or an abstraction called "The University"? In more concrete terms, when students seize a university building, whose property are they seizing?

There are other issues raised by size and the competitive nature of academic life. How can a student maintain his individualism—the buzz word is "identity"—in a punch-card society? How reduce the growing gulf between student and professor in the face of such educational techniques as language labs, programmed learning, and television? Where does the student fit into the contest of "publish or perish"? What is the relevance to real scholarship of admission tests, examinations, and grading systems, and does anyone really care about scholarship?

In the midst of this ferment of questioning, university administrations must continue to purvey their academic wares, maintain a semblance of law and order, and raise ever larger sums of money from donors who doubt the sanity of students and the competence of administrators and faculties. In attempting to resolve these difficulties the authorities have been driven into novel situations which have given rise to a series of new issues—police on campus, the university's role in the community, and academic freedom in con-

flict with government financial support, to name a few that seem currently most urgent. For the first time, moreover, they are being forced by overt threats to their authority to negotiate issues that previously were subject to the administration's unilateral decision-making power. It is natural that there should be resistance to the threat, to administrative prerogatives. To make matters worse, the bargaining process is itself a strange phenomenon, in which administrators are as ill at ease as are the faculty and students with whom they negotiate. Not only is the bargaining a tri-partite process without as yet clearly-defined roles, but it is subject to the interested scrutiny, criticism, and gratuitous advice of parents, donors, the government, and the public at large, each of which groups claims a stake in the outcome of any dispute.

All the elements and issues referred to above were involved in the Columbia riots earlier this year. Most have also been at stake in unrest at such widely separated institutions as the Sorbonne, the London School of Economics, the University of Cracow, and Simon Fraser University. There have been reports of unrest from many other campuses around the world, and there seems no reason to doubt the operation of a sort of demonstration effect linking at least some of the incidents.

There seems likewise little doubt that this unrest is related to other events in the wider community. An earlier generation began questioning moral standards and social structures, and was instrumental in creating a revolution of expectations as well as a technological revolution. Emancipation of racial minorities, the flight from farm to city, the breakdown of class barriers, colonial empires, and other power structures have made fashionable the practice of challenging constituted authority. Educational levels have risen dramatically, and the notion of equality of educational opportunity has become a convention, particularly among the young.

In the United States, the general malaise of youth has been compounded by the Vietnam War and the draft. The universities are involved, willy nilly, with these unpopular events, because of their unsought and unwanted power to decide which students shall be entitled to deferment. To many students, the universities have thus acquired guilt by association with policies they neither control nor necessarily support.

Apart from the draft, educational pressures and competition have been made more intense by changing technology, rising employment standards, increased wealth, and shortages of space in even the fast expanding universities. The young have been troubled by violence, the apparent popularity of political assassination, and the growth of mob rule. The civil rights struggle has both

excited their sympathy and confused their value-systems. They have come to believe in the Kennedys' call to youth as the saviours of mankind.

United States youth has reacted to these influences with draft card burning, civil rights activism, anti-war demonstrations, drugs, amoral behaviour, flower power, and the idolization of Mao Tse-tung and Che Guevara. If their reactions and their heroes seem strangely lacking in logic or consistency, youth can at least be applauded for abandoning the apathy and conformity of most earlier generations.

It was rumoured at the time of the Columbia uprising that the university charter had suffered no major amendments since it was granted—by George II in 1754. While probably an exaggeration, the rumour serves to emphasize the archaic nature of the organization. Real power rested in the hands of the President alone and, as Professor Alan Westin said, in the *New York Times* of May 2, 1968, Columbia was "being run like a 17th or 18th century private university".

For more than forty years, from 1902 until 1945, Columbia was the private fiefdom of Nicholas Murray Butler, one of the greatest of university presidents. His autocratic rule was appropriate to the time, the man, and his task in building a great institution. When the mantle passed to General Eisenhower, and later, to Grayson Kirk, time and task were as unsuited to the system as were the men.

An able scholar and educator, a dignified figure looking like a shy corporation president, Grayson Kirk has seldom been described as warm or sympathetic. His relationships with faculty and administrators were distant and correct, while he appeared to shrink from contact with students or their representatives. A man who grew used to having his wish become law, he was advised by men of his own choosing, and was slow to respond to initiatives for change. Perhaps his most noted success while President was as a fund raiser, culminating in the successful launching of a \$200 million appeal in 1967. At the time of the strike he had been President for fifteen years and was due to retire in 1970 at age 67. On August 23, in an apparently conciliatory move, he announced his premature retirement, to be effective this fall. While it is too soon to assess the effect of Kirk's retirement, some observers have concluded that it is unlikely to lead to any short term benefits. No permanent successor has been named.

President Kirk was nominally responsible to the University Trustees. Appointment to this body rested with the trustees as a group, but most par-

ticularly with the President. While their role was advisory, the major emphasis was on fund raising. Administrative policy they left to the President and the administrators.

The administrators—the deans with their associates and assistants, and the bursar, registrar, and others—seem to have enjoyed responsibility without authority. Resignations were frequent, and key positions remained unfilled for extended periods. Decisions that should have been made by these officials were funnelled to the president's office, where they waited, often for long periods, for attention. In 1967, in the wake of growing criticism, the President appointed the popular Dean of Columbia College, David Truman, as Vice-President, Provost, second-in-command and reputed dauphin. Truman had been in office less than a year when the strike occurred. Major administrative problems existed in Columbia College (undergraduate) and in some of the academic graduate faculties. In most of the professional schools, however, the deans were largely free to run their separate kingdoms, and where this arrangement prevailed there appeared to be relatively little dissatisfaction with the system. There was, however, little cohesion or consistency.

The faculty, lacking a senate or other formal representative body, were isolated within their own schools and departments, and still further isolated by their pursuit of knowledge in individual fields of interest. Underpaid by comparison with their peers at many of Columbia's rivals, they nevertheless normally seemed little concerned about disturbing the status quo. Only occasionally did faculty-administration battles become public. An example was the selection in the winter of 1967-68 of Barbara Ward, the noted English author, as occupant of a \$100,000 chair in Economics. The choice was apparently made by the administration against the advice of or without the knowledge of the department of economics. After an acrimonious public debate, the department continued its refusal to accept Miss Ward or the chair. In a compromise settlement, Miss Ward joined the Schools of Business and International Affairs. There was open resentment of the appointment among the faculties of these schools. Promotions, tenure appointments, and other administrative decisions also caused resentment, which may have been no worse than at some other institutions.

The hundreds of junior faculty—instructors, demonstrators, lecturers—were in a worse state. They complained of low pay, heavy teaching loads, poor research facilities, and little contact with their Ph.D. advisers and other senior members of faculty. They existed in a no man's land between faculty and students without the benefits of being one or the other.

To generalize about these various campus bodies is to give an impression of homogeneous and united groups, which they were not. The student groups were even more heterogeneous. There were more than three thousand undergraduates, all male, mostly white, generally very bright, amidst a sea of 14,000 graduate, professional, and special students. Most of them lived on campus. A second group consisted of the older undergraduates in General Studies, many of whom worked full time and most of whom lived off campus. Identifiable, but less homogeneous, were the students in the academic graduate faculties. There were the students in several professional schools—law, business, engineering, and journalism—career-oriented and less academic in outlook. On the fringes, geographically, academically and administratively, were the students of Barnard and Teachers College. Medical, dental, and pharmacy students and some others were isolated from the main campus and not generally involved in this year's events.

Crossing these more or less sharply drawn lines were various campus organizations. The students' council included representatives from all schools and departments, but was largely ineffectual in the face of slow administrative procedures and of the failure to delegate to the council any wide areas of authority. Various other student groups therefore claimed to be the real voices of the student body. Of these, the most militant was the 150-member Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a Marxist group whose platform contained only one major plank—the destruction of the institutions of U.S. society, starting with the universities. While noisy and persistent, SDS attracted little support outside its own membership. Worthy of mention, not because of size or influence, but because of its major role in the strike, was the students Afro-American Society (SAS), which represented Negro undergraduates.

Columbia stands on Morningside Heights overlooking Harlem's black ghetto. On the Heights it owns block after block of elderly apartment buildings and low rental tenements and has, somewhat unjustly, been called "New York's biggest slum landlord". Razing of tenements to make way for university buildings had in the recent past caused frequent protests by students and civic groups. Acquisition of a corner of Morningside Park as a site for a gymnasium was a further feature of the current expansion programme to which there had been vocal opposition.

The gymnasium question, perhaps the most complex external issue at Columbia, warrants a few explanatory comments. Morningside Park is a green oasis on the western edge of Harlem, and provides the only nearby relief from the dirt and squalor of the ghetto. It is part playground, part woodland,

and is frequented by gangs of thugs. Whites (and well-dressed Negroes) enter the park at their own risk. Use of the park site by Columbia had been approved by the city administration and by Harlem's political leaders several years ago; but racial tension has grown since the deal was made, and new and more militant leaders have appeared in Harlem. Despite the agreement to provide facilities in the gymnasium for Harlem youth, the deal was depicted as a land grab by white Columbia, and it had become clear in recent years that large segments of the Harlem community objected in principle to its construction. It was not so much the loss of an unattractive and unfrequented corner of the park that mattered, as the symbolic importance of the deal. Columbia was to own and operate the gym, while Harlem was to have little say and second choice of facilities, but above all, the plans called for a lower, backdoor gymnasium entrance for Harlem. That the logic of the park's topography dictated this arrangement in no way lessened its hateful symbolism, its suggestion of racial discrimination. Columbia, backed by need, by legal right and by logic, insensitive to race and to symbol, proceeded with plans and, in 1968, with excavations. Its investment was already large when the strike occurred.

Several other issues of university policy had also been debated hotly on the campus. A report on the students' role in the university had been delayed for months by the administration and was not released until early in April, as a result of student pressure. Recruiting by armed services and by makers of napalm, Columbia's participation in the Institute for Defence Analysis as well as the whole relationship between the university and the government and its war policy, drew the fire of the campus activists.

The news media provided thorough coverage of this spring's events on the Columbia campus. To recount them here in detail is therefore unnecessary, but a brief summary of the highlights seems desirable.

On April 23, SDS members occupied a building, to protest disciplinary action against SDS leaders for defying a loosely enforced ban on indoor demonstrations. The ban was itself the result of anti-war and anti-draft activities by the SDS which had disrupted recruiting efforts. SDS was joined in the building and later evicted by members of SAS who turned the occasion into an anti-gymnasium protest. The SDS, looking for another building to seize, picked on Low Library, the university's administrative seat. Subsequently various other buildings were seized by groups sympathetic to SDS.

What happened during the next two weeks was part low comedy, part melodrama, and part tragedy. First, both sides resorted to the venerable prac-

tice of distorting the facts and issues. The strikers revived almost every grievance that had won campus sympathy in the past year or two, and to the list they added demands for the removal of President Kirk and Vice-President Truman.

They called for "student power" and for "restructuring" the university organization, to give students a major voice in all decision making. Above all they wanted total amnesty—immunity from disciplinary action—for all strikers. Compromise or negotiations were, they announced, out of the question.

The Administration appealed to law and order, to property and majority rights. They pleaded bewilderment at the events that had overtaken them. They pointed to the legality of their expansion plans, the need for the gymnasium, the innocence of IDA, the impossibility of amnesty, the inviolability of administrative prerogatives. Compromise or negotiation were, they announced, out of the question.

Between students and administration were the faculty—scholars, teachers, Nobel prize winners—flip-flopping like fish on a river bank, unable to slide quietly back into their natural element. Their attempts to act as mediators were handicapped by divisions within their own ranks. Some sympathized openly with the students, more as a means of venting their own grievances than out of sympathy with student demands. A few were steadfast for the administration. Most appeared confused. Their offers to act as mediators were rebuffed by the administration, though most students seemed willing to place faith in even such a divided group. Trustees were neither seen nor heard during the early stages of the strike and appear not to have played a significant role.

Efforts by unsympathetic student groups to evict the strikers by force were prevented by the physical presence of faculty members who, fearing some major blood letting, blocked the entrances to occupied buildings. A stalemate ensued.

On April 30, when President Kirk called on the police to intervene, the university had been effectively crippled for a week and there had been no modification in the position of either side to the dispute. The police intervention gave both sides what they wanted. To the strikers, lacking wide popular support, it gave a generally popular issue—brutality. To the administration it restored the sense of being in command of affairs, the satisfaction of taking positive action.

Whether or not the police were brutal depends largely on the point of view and will be argued as long as the strike is remembered. That there was

blood spilt is not in question, but no student was seriously enough injured to remain twenty-four hours in hospital. That hundreds of faculty and students were convinced they had suffered or witnessed brutality is clear. The Negro students were removed from their building without violence partly because of the restraint of the special task force that dealt with them and partly because of the actions of the students themselves.

Buildings and their contents had been vandalized, books and papers destroyed, windows broken, files raided—except in the building occupied by the black students. The latter did little damage, even turned out unnecessary lights, placed garbage outside for collection, and generally maintained order.

Meetings, marches, "liberation classes", and threats followed the police raid, but an uneasy truce returned to Columbia. Subsequent seizures of buildings were quickly dealt with by police. Strike leaders were arraigned and charged with criminal trespass. The university closed officially for the year two weeks ahead of schedule, but arrangements for extra classes and examinations were improvised by individual faculties and departments.

Some indication of the complexity of the causes of the Columbia strike has already been given. The events of April 23-May 1 served only to add further dimensions to this involved situation and to stiffen the attitudes of the major rivals—striking students and administration—leaving faculty, non-striking students, and public confused and frustrated.

While he may well have questioned the wisdom of some of his past acts, Kirk clearly felt unjustified in bending in the face of force. Close to the end of a long and distinguished career, he must surely have shrunk from the bitterness of accepting defeat. Support for his firm stand came from presidents of other universities, from alumni, and from the men who contributed heavily to Columbia. But, most of all, it seems not to have been in keeping with Kirk's character to compromise or negotiate. When, as the first week of May wore on, he made what appeared to be conciliatory moves, he carefully deprived them of any real meaning and made clear that he had no intention of surrendering any power.

Student groups, now largely united on the issue of police brutality and the President's apparent double-dealing, but divided on all other issues, spent their days and nights trying to arrive at a consensus. They seemed conscious of having won a victory, but unable to agree what to do with it. Active leadership remained in the hands of SDS, who refused, like the President, to compromise on any demands. There were indications that SDS would have shown no willingness to compromise even in the face of conciliatory moves

by the President, but Kirk's intransigence provided SDS with justification for its own stand and won for it student and faculty support. A willingness to negotiate on the part of Kirk would almost certainly have left SDS with little support for its hard line.

On May 1, presumably with the tacit approval of the trustees, the senior faculty met in plenary session, though the powers and legitimacy of the faculty body were not clear. Twelve distinguished scholars were named as an executive committee and received somewhat grudging promises of co-operation from President Kirk. The committee's preliminary recommendations, carefully considered and worded, came out heavily on the side of law and order, but effectively recognized some legitimate student demands. While thanking the committee for its pains, Kirk immediately made it plain that he would follow only those recommendations that he found acceptable, and proceeded to emasculate the formulas proposed by the committee.

This cavalier treatment of the committee confirmed the doubts of many faculty members about Kirk's good faith and his competence to deal with the situation. Some doubts were apparently stirring also in the minds of the trustees, who appointed their own committee to meet with the faculty representatives, as well as to voice public support for the faculty group.

By the end of May, real power seems to have passed out of President Kirk's hands, and the future of the University was clearly to be decided jointly by the now fully aroused trustees in co-operation with the faculty. The changes this alliance will bring about remain to be seen, and will doubtless be settled only after months of hard bargaining and debate. Both trustees and faculty appear disposed to give serious consideration to constructive proposals from legitimate student and community groups.

Grayson Kirk, the renowned student of Government and International Relations, the adviser to heads of state and international commissions, seemed unable to apply to the real world of the university the lessons to be drawn from his own field of scholarship.

History should have taught Kirk the futility of trying to deal with symptoms rather than with causes. It should have taught the danger of losing touch with large segments of his constituency, of being unresponsive to expressions of legitimate aspirations, of assuming that consent of the governed was unnecessary.

It was not his handling of the revolt so much as his behaviour in the months and years that preceded it that need be questioned. By the time

the students struck he was the captive of his own policies, of his own public utterances and private undertakings, and he probably could not have acted otherwise than as he did. He was neither fool nor demon, but an ordinary—as it turned out, very ordinary—individual whose past mistakes had returned to haunt him.

Nor were they all his own mistakes. He might, in his early years as President, have been willing to share and delegate power, had anyone expressed a desire for change. There seems little evidence, however, that during his first several years in office trustees, faculty, or students seriously questioned his right to rule autocratically. He thus acquired the habit of power and probably the taste for power. After the strike, faculty members admitted that their own lack of involvement or concern for the university had in large measure contributed to the events of 1968. The trustees, for their part, faced serious problems merely in raising the enormous funds needed by the university, and should not be blamed too severely for failure to correct abuses of which they were hardly aware.

Lacking effective representation or any real links of communication with the seat of power, the students nurtured a multitude of minor grievances—about disciplinary, academic, housing, financial, and other matters. Their growing social consciousness responded to the racial conflict, to poverty, to the war in Vietnam, and to the draft call. They wanted mainly to be able to state their views on those issues that affected or moved them. But no one was listening. Their views may have been immature, irrational, or merely extreme; serious attention was what they demanded, not agreement or acquiescence.

It is normal that revolutionary radicals seize on resentment over legitimate wrongs as a means of pursuing illegitimate ends. It is a credit to the sanity of Columbia students that few were attracted to the SDS banner until the issue of police brutality gave SDS a semblance of respectability. It is a further credit that this support melted quickly in the wake of SDS failure to use its advantage wisely.

Seen in this context, the gymnasium, the IDA, campus recruiting and even amnesty become symptoms and symbols rather than causes. The cure did not lie in yielding to student demands for changes in these matters of policy. What was required was more fundamental. It can best be summed up in the one word "respect". Respect was what was lacking at Columbia and can now only be regained at great cost over a long period. Respect for property is important, and was a major rallying cry of the Columbia administration. Far more important, however, is respect for persons, their opinions

and aspirations. It was this form of respect that was so largely withheld by all sides to the dispute.

Supposedly civilized and intelligent students wrecking property, shouting scurrilous epithets, destroying research papers and using library shelving for barricades provide a shameful episode in the life of a great university. Their elders, however, failed to display the wisdom that might have prevented these outbreaks. Negotiating from a position of seeming strength and legitimacy they made full use of the most provocative of weapons—self-righteousness. Having broken old promises, they made new ones. Having failed in the past to listen, they closed their ears anew. Resort to violence is not justified even in the face of intense provocation, but the truly wise do not provide the provocation.

Assuming urgent need for change in Columbia's administration, how was it to be brought about? There had been peaceful demonstrations, articulate protests, enquiries and promises. Major changes failed to materialize. There was little reason to believe that any were imminent.

A government can, at least in theory, enact legislation, outlaw activities and invoke strictures so as to cloak with the semblance of legitimacy whatever course of action or inaction it chooses to follow. In extreme cases, such as those of pre-war Germany and Russia, citizens must choose between law and conscience at their own peril.

Abe Fortas, President Johnson's nominee for the position of Chief Justice of the United States, in an article (*New York Times Magazine*, May 12, 1968) written in the wake of the Columbia riots, discusses the permissibility of breaking unjust laws. He draws a careful distinction between such acts and illegality as a form of protest against social or other injustice, not aimed at a specific law or laws. By his definition the Columbia riots lack all legal and moral justification. But can such a conclusion be justified? Can powerful institutions be changed only with the consent of the powerholders or, as in Eastern Europe, when they soften with age and good food? An impatient generation in all parts of the world is clearly answering "no" to these questions.

Industry is probably ahead of most of society's institutions in devising peaceful solutions to the type of dispute that occurred at Columbia. Violent labour management disputes in the first thirty-five years of this century have led in many western countries to new formulas and new ground rules for bringing about peaceful changes within organizations. Strikes still occur, to be sure, but major industrial disputes today are usually orderly affairs.

The right of workers to a voice in matters that affect them is widely

recognized in fact and in law. The right of management to resolve the conflicts of interest which face an organization is likewise taken for granted. Neither labour's nor management's rights are absolute.

However distasteful the industrial analogy may be to university authorities, it is close enough to provide clues to the direction in which changes should be made. It is true that universities are not operated as businesses, and that students are not employees, but these distinctions are largely irrelevant. What matters is that administration, faculty, and students are parts of a single organization with sometimes conflicting opinions, needs, and aspirations and that in this respect they are similar to industrial management and labour. To achieve an effective partnership in the "enterprise" requires meaningful representation for each interested group. Students can not be given control over the university any more than labour should control industry. Both, however, have clear rights to a voice in decisions that affect them directly. It may be difficult to define precisely the limits of such areas of interest, but that does not alter the argument.

Some universities are far ahead of Columbia in making such changes. In providing for effective student and faculty representation, however, some institutions miss the key point, which is that these bodies must to an increasing degree be viewed as bargaining organizations, not simply as advisory or subordinate executive groups. As bargaining organizations they have the right and the duty to challenge policies and decisions.

Industrial experience has shown that the first struggle between labour and management always concerns labour's right to representation. The second major struggle involves labour's right to challenge policies and decisions. Only after this second issue is settled can the parties live in relative peace and hopefully progress. Unless the universities can benefit from this industrial experience, they will continue to make the same mistakes that industry committed in resisting union organization. In doing so they will be fighting an aimless rearguard action foredoomed to failure. Today, many large industries, strikes notwithstanding, have worked out effective labour-management partnerships that are benefiting industry, labour, and the public. A major test of the university's ability to adapt to changing times must lie in its skill in developing the same kind of co-operation among students, faculty, and administration.