

Swarthmore College  
Swarthmore, Pennsylvania

January 15, 1969

To all Students, Faculty and Administration

From Raymond F. Hopkins, Assistant Professor

As a faculty member in the political science department, I would like to express my views relevant to the crisis at Swarthmore precipitated by the direct action of SASS's occupation of the Admissions Office.

1. Swarthmore College is governed by a set of rules which define the decision-making process. Some of these are written, many are unwritten, and together they constitute the constitution of the College's political system. I look forward to President Smith's early public statement describing our constitution since some aspects of it are unclear to me.

2. At this point I favor changes in the Swarthmore constitution including increased participation by students in areas of concern to them, as a minimum along lines suggested by the EX-SAC report, and by the faculty in areas where they may desire greater participation. This week has reinforced my judgment on several matters. First, it would be wise to identify the interests of different members at Swarthmore and to distribute power accordingly. For instance, students should decide the question of black integration or separatism among students. This decision should include consultation with other constituencies. Please read a statement by Christian Bay on "Academic Citizenship" which I am circulating. Many of his comments I agree with. Emotional action can be unwise and large decision-making groups are unwieldy. The student plenary sessions amply demonstrate this point. Needed changes should be made orderly, thoughtfully and soon.

3. Changes in the political system of Swarthmore can occur in two ways: first, by changes according to the procedures provided by the constitution, and second, by changes based on methods not among the rules. The latter process is revolution or non-constitutional change. Threats, demands and the use of force, including direct action, are, I believe, not methods provided by the Swarthmore constitution. Any member in the Swarthmore political system who would like to change the decision-making structure could act in one of these two ways.

4. A dissatisfied member of a political system who judges that reforms he deems important cannot be made within the rules of the constitution has two alternatives--emigration or non-constitutional action. When the political system is corrupt, both alternatives are commendable and the latter is courageous in many instances. In my judgment, in spite of my discontent with some aspects of the way things are done, Swarthmore is not corrupt--it is a healthy and vital organization. Non-constitutional actions are not justified.

5. The action of SASS has been interpreted by some as a use of direct action which has brought changes which could not otherwise have occurred. Except for certain questions of wording and immediate responses to the action of SASS, this is not true. The faculty has moved with urgency and speed, the need for which is evident from the short time remaining before next year's admissions acceptances are decided, and was communicated effectively by SASS's action. The faculty's substantive action to recommend changes at Swarthmore was not based on coercion or threat. Once the need for change was made evident, I believe the faculty would have come to some similar conclusions, though surely over a longer period of time. Since I do not believe the faculty has acted substantively in response to duress, a non-constitutional change has not yet occurred.

6. In conclusion, I wish to say that I am unalterably opposed to change by revolution at Swarthmore. Its preservation as a viable college is more important than the speed or substance of needed change. If anyone--the administration, the faculty or students--should attempt to make or have made decisions by force or fiat, I will oppose it with all my vigor.