

SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
SWARTHMORE, PENNSYLVANIA 19081

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

(215) KI 4-7900

3 April 1970

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert M. Browning

FROM: Robert D. Cross

SUBJECT: Disruptive activities on campus

I am the last person to feel that every step taken or not taken during the black "vigil" in the middle of March was a correct one. I acknowledge, therefore, the potency of your concern that we may not have a clear enough understanding of how the administration is expected by the Board to respond. Let me add one or two points which perhaps were not brought out in our Sunday meeting.

When the black students came into the office, they did so with the announcement they would not leave except under physical or judicial order. It is possible, of course, that some might at the moment of entry have been swayed by a warning, but I did not think so. It therefore seemed imperative to me to secure legal advice as quickly as possible about what would be necessary in the way of securing an injunction. The advice from Alan Hunt was that we would have a much greater success securing an injunction if the disruption, if that's what it was, lasted for a little longer, and that coming as it did on a weekend, we would be in a better position to get an injunction Monday morning. As you may know, Hunt did visit a Delaware County judge Saturday morning and laid the groundwork for securing such an injunction, had that been necessary. We are also preparing, as we should have earlier, a clear statement of warning to distribute to the students at the proper time. I do not think that the moment of their entry would have been the proper time. This does not mean I disagree at all with your judgment that overnight occupations are to be lightly condoned; I simply do not think that they can always be prevented, without risk of much more serious disruption.

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having given in to anything that the black students asked before the vigil, during the vigil. Indeed it seems to me what happened was that they agreed at that time to a clarification of their demands that was in accordance with my promises. If, as many have argued, the tentative offer of Robinson House was wrong, it was made before the vigil, and should be considered wrong on its own demerits, rather than seen as a result of the vigil.

As you know, I welcome the advice of the Executive Committee. In fact, I assumed we would have it before the vigil was over, and it was the to-me-unexpected abandonment by the blacks of their activities that made the Executive Committee meeting on Sunday seem somewhat after-the-fact. For that I apologize.

I certainly agree with you that it is better policy whenever possible to have disruptions, complications and so forth handled by an administrative official, not the President. That was how I dealt with the potential explosions over recruiting, and I would have done the same thing with the vigil, had it been any place but my own office. Under those circumstances, it seemed to me probably pretty difficult to delegate responsibility. But on that point, as indeed on all those mentioned before, I certainly am open to instruction and conviction.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Robert D. Cross

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