

SASS Effigy Burning Dramatizes Crisis and Demands

by Pete Baker

As members of the North American American Student Society gathered on the Thursday prior to Tuesday night to burn an effigy of the College and call for student support of their demands, Black admissions policy once again became a source of widespread campus controversy.

The effigy burning, symbolizing the abandonment of some of the old landmarks in order to build the house on a better foundation, drew several hundred students to hear youth leaders denounce the faculty and administration for failing to accept a list of demands presented in November 14 letter to President Irving Smith. SASS chairman Bruce Edwards emphasized the in-

ability of the College to appreciate the Black perspective and called for a "more humane, more loving, more creative response to persons of different stripes." He cited the destruction envisioned by SASS in working with the College over the last three years in leading to SASS's rejection of normal institutional procedures.

The issue was not only cast as a black-white dichotomy, but also as a conflict between students and the institution. The College was indicted as "withholding the creative input" of its students and perverting the interests of the students and not those being educated. White students were called upon to "protect their own interests" in giving full support to the SASS demands. This is the first time this argument has been

emphasized by SASS and indicates an attempt to mobilize support for an anticipated struggle.

FOLLOWUP MEETING

Burning the College in effigy is the latest, most public and most shocking gesture of Black dissatisfaction and follows Tuesday's heavily attended (story on this page) at which discussion was opened but no action taken on the SASS demands. These demands were presented by SASS in clarification of four earlier demands made at an October meeting with the Admissions Committee and in opposition to the policy recommendations approved by the Committee on December 18. Efforts have been made to mediate the dispute by emphasizing the common goals of both groups, but these efforts have been rejected by SASS as inadequate.

SASS sent its demands to President Smith on December 18 with the injunction to "issue a clear, unequivocal public acceptance of these non-negotiable demands by noon, Tuesday, January 7, 1969" or "the Black students and SASS will be forced to do whatever is necessary to obtain acceptance of same." The document charged the Admissions Committee with disregard of the Black perspective and characterized the College's policies as "overly rigid, conservative, and too preoccupied with protecting its own academic standards." This last contention was supported by the statement of two professionals in the area of Black admissions.

Major demands included the acceptance and enrollment of 10-20 "vint" Black students for next year

and the provision of extensive support programs for them; a commitment by the College to enroll a total of 100 Black students within three years and 200 within six years; and the appointment of a Black assistant dean of admissions and a Black counselor.

Admissions Dean Frederick Flanagan was singled out as the "leading actor in this play," and accused of "undermining the integrity of SASS and Black students on this campus" and the "vicious use of power vis-à-vis a student group." SASS maintained that "the present Dean of Admissions is not able to deal with a Black viewpoint," and demanded that he be replaced by September 1, 1969 "unless present admissions policies change or unless the attitude of

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the official Board of Administrative Change."

The report of the Administrative Policy Committee, requested by SACS as "unavoidable," was approved by the committee on December 14 and contains recommendations pertaining to three broad areas: recruitment and enrollment of Negro students at Berea; the College's contribution to Negro higher education in general; and the academic and social needs of Negro students enrolled in the College.

The report proposes that the Administrative Office intensify its recruitment of highly qualified Negro students, that the College strive for a minimum of 20 Negro students in each class, and that 5-10 students be recruited who fall just below normal admission standards who are "believed to possess other qualities which will enable them to 'close the gap' in their academic preparation" given special assistance at Berea. This last recommendation is suggested as an experiment and while aimed at increasing Negro enrollment, may include some who are not Negro.

UPWARD MOVING

With respect to Negro education in general, the College is encouraged to continue its support of Upward Bound and its participation in national and area programs to further the education of Negro students. It is also advised to investigate the establishment of a program similar to the ABC Program, a summer preparation for entering freshmen, and to explore a summer program for local high school students.

Negro student life at Berea is to be enhanced by the addition of Negro clubs to the community and the organization of informative programs to make Negro students "felt needs" known within the College.

SACS regards these proposals as the product of the "white Anglo-Saxon Protestant liberal mind" and as an inadequate commitment to Black education. It has remained steadfast behind its demands and has rejected offers of mediation and compromise.

The first formal reply from the College was a letter from President Smith to the faculty expressing his strong objection to his receipt of the demands. He expressed his "great sympathy for the underlying concerns of SACS," but maintained that "this College has never and must never be governed by demands or served by threats." He further hoped that SACS would meet the demands in the form of proposals for faculty con-

in a formal meeting with 11 SACS members on January 4. President Smith expressed these views. SACS repeated its demands and insisted that President Smith make a strong statement to the faculty calling for the College to accept and implement SACS's demands. The President responded that it is the entire College community, and not SACS alone or the President alone, that must consider conscientiously and imaginatively the best ways to achieve the goals he believes almost everyone in the community wishes to achieve.

Both the Student Council and six senior faculty members of the Council on Educational Policy attempted to mediate the issue. These statements pointed out the substantial agreements in objectives between the SACS demands and the Administrative Policy Committee report. They also called for emphasis on the substantive issues at issue.

The "Dialogue for Truth and Understanding," sponsored by SACS and Student Council and held Tuesday, was a further effort at mediation and at bringing the College community to the Black perspective. Vernon Williams explained the importance of this perspective and its absence in deliberations of the Administrative Committee. He maintained that Berea must take the view that it is in a social vacuum and can detach itself to look inward, truly at its problems, but that it is really a microcosm of the outside world and more sensitively to that world is needed. After a detailed review of the events leading to the present situation, he criticized the "conscious seeking, however, left work it out" attitude of the white liberal or freedom real commitment.

Patrick Henry, Assistant Professor of Religion and a member of the Administrative Committee, responded by describing myths which had arisen on both sides and the need for judgment which involved the emphasis on the amount of agreement present and hoped that dialogue could be useful in reaching the remaining conflicts. There was SACS member responded, "Nothing is accomplished by talk, action."