

Some thoughts regarding Asmaron Legesse's open letter.

It is my feeling that our concern for our Black students has not diminished, and the discussion will continue starting January 31st. The resolutions made up to the night 12-13 January 1969 were made because the "faculty believes they are right". However, we may find ourselves torn in the near future weighing the pros and cons of what is good or bad for our particular College and the whole student body.

It might have been wise for SASS to realize what had already been achieved in such a short period of time in a real sense of justice and relieving us for the moment of the burden of their grievances. Life shows us that in dealing with human beings you can never carry things to the absolute. Some gradual important gains are worth more than carrying things to the point of being self-defeating. They should, therefore, help us in our work, rather than making an impossible task for a group of men with a sense of justice and good will. I deplore besides, that I have been made aware for the first time of the separation of black and white and I have seen the gap grow larger among good people I know, due to the recent events of the militants in educational institutions. The ideals of a Quaker college keeping within its true Christian spirit and its democratic beliefs is to see and deal with its students as equals, regardless of color. The difference is rather made regarding the potential of prospective students for Swarthmore, and that's why the students of SASS were chosen and not others. When they were accepted at our College they all knew they were entering a very fine college, and there were no grievances then. This very fine college is the product of ideals and hard work of many groups of people who devoted their energy, intelligence, and the best in them to achieve it. It is not and cannot be perfect, but we can strive towards it, as we should strive towards bettering ourselves, looking ahead and making all pertinent changes, but never discarding the real values which have been, are, and will be worth while keeping. A small private college has the right to pursue its ideal to preserve its academic excellence and the changes should be taken gradually, with careful, unpassionate, intelligent study, free of pressures and threats, and taking into consideration how it will affect not only the academic standing but the student body taken as a whole.

Regarding our good President's tragic death, I agree we cannot blame SASS, and I certainly do not blame them, but students should be aware of the responsibility in creating the circumstances previous to his death. We will never know the truth, yet, as a human being, it still crosses my mind whether the heartfelt conflict,

the manyfold responsibilities it entailed, the stress and burdens put upon him by ourselves, could not have been a contributing factor to his untimely death. In my mind this is not a breach of morality. "Violence" was not used by SASS. But they expressed their right of taking "action" again if they deemed it necessary, which is very disconcerting since I cannot understand how any student or anybody can have such a right to ventilate their grievances. Those words ring in my ears as "belligerant" in tone. Besides, we all have grievances of one sort or another and belong to minority groups; I have yet to find a majority group in USA. Shouldn't we, therefore, rather think in terms of the underprivileged of our great family than in terms of black and white? Shouldn't we now and then pause to count our blessings and the progress made, meditate on further progress for the good of all, rather than stress grievances of a group, demands, numbers, deadlines, threats, actions, etc.?

There are few colleges that have cared so much about their students as Swarthmore College. The sit-ins, even if they are carried orderly, disrupt the normal functions of the college and are out of order. The student who applies to Swarthmore College and is accepted by Swarthmore College should know that they are not allowed. Also, they should know that we are against being moved or governed by "demands" or "threats". There are thousands of colleges in the country to choose from if they don't agree in some aspects of our college. If they disrupt its normal functions they should know that they can be asked to leave, and if they do not, they could be deprived of their diploma. In no way should force be used. We should have enough foresight and imagination to be ahead of the students and not lagging behind in their just "demands" for an evolution and not a revolution of the college. As for the students of the recent sit-in, I trust they will use their good judgment, maturity and goodness in them not to take action again, continue their studies peacefully if they want to get their degrees, and to help all of us in our work and common concerns. We will stand firm to our "commitment to justice" and our "commitment to academic excellence" for all. May many small colleges see us as a good example, and may we save them many troubles, so that their energies may be focused on further development of their institution and its just needs.

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