

Crisis '69: Semester of Misunderstanding and Frustration

By Ross Bengtson, Doug Blair, Bob Goodman

The crisis over the admissions of black students which has faced the College in recent weeks was kindled in the first days of the semester, when it was learned that the incoming freshman class contained only eight blacks, in figure, comparable to those of the previous two years but substantially fewer than earlier numbers.

Relations between the Admissions Policy Committee (APC), chaired by Head of Admissions Frederick Bergman, and the Black students of African American descent (hereby referred to) had been relatively cordial in the three years prior to the fall of 1968. But the APC had conducted its recruiting activities, helping to recruit black high school students from across the country and admit them into the College's academic programs.

BLACK ENROLLMENT

A self-study committee about black enrollment in the College, known as the Black Enrollment Task Force, Chairman Elmer Johnson and Dean Billard sent a letter later published in The Phoenix to Dean Bergman quantifying the College's commitment to increase black enrollment. They cited statistics from the Department of Education, President Johnson's Executive Order 11250, and urged the consideration of a pro-black-pass program for disadvantaged students to improve their lot. Southwicks' work, utilizing Rockefellers Foundation money, was also cited.

The letter received a favorable reply. The letter stated that the College would increase its efforts to recruit black students. Dean Bergman on October 12 is a letter to The Phoenix. He expressed several of the statistics mentioned by Billard and Johnson and argued that "What we want is good candidates to try to play a major role, plus, we want to recruit them, and we want to keep expansion of our capacity for the individual student."

Dean Bergman also addressed to the College the release of a working paper on the recruitment of black students which he believed overemphasized the APC. The APC, writing before the letter was received, responded that the complete report should be made available to all members of the college community. Copies of the paper were sent to each department and to each black student. The additional copies that were placed on Reserve in the Library on October 14.

REPORT

The 15-page report reviewed the College's efforts in recruiting black students in the five years since the Rockefeller Foundation awarded the College a \$100,000 grant to increase the enrollment of black students. The local efforts were summarized in the context of the national black enrollment problem. The paper concluded several alternatives are presented to addressing it, and observed that significant opportunity exists for the College to expand its recruitment efforts.

According to the report, among eight tables of comparative data which Bergman termed "useful" to informed consideration of a change in admissions policy, The data, which were presented in tables both without and with the grant, were used to help determine the relationship between recruitment results and the present rights of blacks in higher education.

Rashid Sharpe, Elmer Johnson, after meeting black student concerns on the report, called Dean Bergman for a meeting following publication of the paper to discuss what he felt to be the future of the report. According to Elmer Johnson, Bergman responded to his concerns by concluding that "We shall do Bergman and the Admissions Policy Committee should have some representative black students, likely to be a black APC member, to sit in on the final draft before the formal presentation of the report." By definition, "black" refers to the disclosure of "your racial information" contained in the header data at the end of the report. While Sharpe argued that representation of different categories of students should be brought to bear, he agreed that there is a "compelling and compelling right of the black students to privacy from their white peers." Finally, the black felt that several changes in RAE's impact on recruitment should not have appeared in a formal report.

REMARKS

Bergman responded with the request to review the report, but after further discussion, the APC did not meet again.

As the beginning of the semester, a meeting of the APC and the black students was set for Monday evening (October 14) in front of the dormitory that night. After reading a

memorandum indicating RAE's refusal to accept the Committee's "all the expert to recruit, retain, and recruit," Elmer Johnson, felt a student of all but eight of the black students blacks who attended the meeting, in protest against the report concerning the General Reserve, RAE.

BLACK STUDENTS

The black students demanded the report and their students' reactions to it. They generally concurred with the view that the "racial data" presented to the public was presented in the paper. During the two-hour-long meeting, several students expressed concern about the number of black applicants, including a black professor, counselor, utilization of black alumni and students as mentors, and various preparatory programs for disadvantaged students. The "representative" question was raised and the black students felt they should attempt to make demands for the "racial data," explained, post-meeting.

The meeting closed with a recommendation from the students that the Committee return the report from the library. Afterward, the APC met again and agreed to follow the recommendations.

The APC began deliberations about this issue on the formulation of new policies related to black admissions. In addition to the report, listed above, Ordner and Sharpe also referred to Dean Bergman, who introduced the University's laws and took of communication with the APC.

APC REPORT

The report of the APC was prepared by the Committee on October 16 and was sent to the faculty for consideration after Christmas vacation. Copies were distributed to the college community on December 10. The report contained recommendations pertaining to three areas: the recruitment and retention of black students at Princeton, the College's involvement in black higher education in general, and the academic records of black students enrolled in the College.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Two days later RAE met and formulated four demands which the group termed "presentations for consideration with the Admissions Policy Committee." They demanded that the working paper be kept prominently in General Reserve and that the APC and a RAE committee review the report.

The report proposed that the Admissions Office initiate the recruitment of highly qualified black students within the next year, that the College strive to



Students met in Clark Auditorium yesterday afternoon to discuss the report.

RAE sent a "classified" set of demands to President Courtney Smith on December 10 with the intention to "force a change, unprepared public response of these demands, and to demand that the APC respond to them." On December 14, the APC, along with RAE, responded to the demands and RAE will be forced to do whatever is necessary to obtain acceptance of some." The document charged the APC with disregard of the black perspective and characteristics of the College as an "irresponsible, conservative, and discriminatory institution."

BLACK DEMANDS

The major demands included in the letter were the acceptance and enrollment of 10 to 20 "top" black students for next year and the presentation of a "black admissions policy committee" to administer grants to those "admitted" to the College to attend until 1970 black students within four years and the appointment of a black American Dean of Admissions and a black treasurer.

The demands were rejected only by the APC, who in addition to the original proposal of accepting the "topology of RAE," and black students on this campus." The group maintained that "the present Dean of admissions is not able to deal with such demands" and demanded that it be replaced by December 1, 1969. It was proposed that the APC make changes or refine the position of the current Dean of Admissions changes.

The first official reply from the College to the demands was a letter to the Faculty from President Smith on December 12, stating that while the demands were extremely important, "with the exception of the classified demands themselves and of the APC policy recommendations, if they are given special attention at this time, they will not receive special attention at that time. This last statement, and, more seriously, the proposal that the APC make changes or refine the position of the current Dean of Admissions changes."

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The second official reply from the College to the demands was a letter to the Faculty from President Smith on December 13, stating that the APC's demands were reasonable and that the APC should make a strong statement to the Faculty calling for their acceptance of the demands.

Princeton officials in the Office of the Head of the College, the Office of the President, and the Office of the Council on Educational Policy issued statements noting the agreement on objectives in the APC demands and the APC report, in an attempt to reconcile the two positions. In a later meeting, the Student Council recommended a resolution to the College to join a joint meeting of the APC, the RAE, and the RAE's demands.

The group was to study "the long-range philosophy governing black admissions policy" and "work out the details of implementation of faculty demands."

DISCUSSIONS

"A 'working truth and no demanding' one" proposed by RAE and the Student Council, was held Tuesday afternoon (January 1) to discuss the report before a panel of students on an amateur basis. Several students from RAE also pointed out that the APC had failed not to include professional



John Sharpe presiding over first plenary.

the paper for publication. They also asked that the faculty and administration form a Black Interest Committee to work with RAE. In addition, they demanded that "the College actively recruit, admit to our review, a high-level black admissions officer." Finally, they demanded that the RAE, Head of Admissions Committee, and Dean Bergman, and the APC "on the formation and evaluation of ways and means for the recruitment and admission of black students."

The issues contained in the new paper were presented only slightly differently than the original RAE memorandum. The same little differences was reached on the "racial" application operation. RAE presented several recommendations to the Committee, all based on the assumption that the College would accept some students in the "racial" category if black students were admitted to the College in increasing numbers.

The black students also proposed a number of suggestions designed to protect such students for work at the College, including summer programs at local government, such as Workshare and Green River, expansion of the formerly existing part-time liberal arts program, sending them to the College, Princeton High School, and establishment of a non-discrimination on campus by black students.

REMARKS

For the most part, during the discussions, RAE presented the desirability of the "cooperatively" mode for admissions poli-

cy. The issues areas in contention were a variation of RAE's remaining in the report in light of their status in the subject. The organization had been accused of "turning off" some interested black high school seniors who sought an integrated situation in regard to its racial, segregated, status. In the words of the working paper, "RAE must do more to recruit black students for the College in an affirmative action program."

At the same time, the College must do more to recruit, retain, and recruit black students for the College. The demands of the black students and RAE will be forced to do whatever is necessary to obtain acceptance of some." The document charged the APC with disregard of the black perspective and characteristics of the College as an "irresponsible, conservative, and discriminatory institution."

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Thursday, Jan.

January 8, 1969

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In the Black meeting, the Black students of the College decided to support the demands of the APC and to support the demands of the RAE.

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members of student government and Administration Office. Other demands made at the meeting were to increase the number of students in the dormitories by adding rooms to the College's building projects. It also asked people participating in professional organizations to attend more meetings. At that time, RASH demanded to know what the College was doing about discrimination in housing, and G. L. Hunt, then chairman of the Board of Trustees, denied they had taken any action, but students and one who had participated in that meeting.

BALTIMORE

Student demonstrators who block occupied houses in Baltimore began to leave their homes to go to jail, and would continue to do so until the College accepted all their demands. On January 15 the students left the city, and at the same time, G. L. Hunt, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, accepted the demands of the students.

DIMINISHING

Society and students who demonstrated outside the offices of various bureaus, beyond the Board of Trustees, continued their blockade until the meeting in which Mr. Hunt agreed to meet with the students.

James E. Moore, Vice President of the Board of Trustees, was in a press conference that the administration had agreed that the present situation will be "settled in a friendly, amicable way." Mr. Moore stated that he would still want to be recognized by the College, and as such to enter into the meetings with other members.

MEDIATORS

Our hundred students holding services as mass meetings met in Conference Hall to prepare for the student meeting in Clinton Thursday. The group organized around the idea to make a protest against the administration's handling of the demands. It then the proposals concerning the consideration of the decision-making processes of the College as contained in the cables, and the continuation of a meeting with the Board of Trustees.

PLENUM

On Tuesday night, students, joined in a plenary session, voted down, as proposed, the RASH demands of December 30 and January 15 and to submit them to the College. This approach was a move to get the students involved in the demands, but the days previous, the College made a statement of its own, concerning the demands of December 30 and R.C. President Ellen F. Gitterman was designated on the Planning Committee. This group

of students organized a protest and obtained subsequent plenary support.

Following their walkout, the students meeting at the Clinton building, succeeded in forcing the Student Council room to become a forum for discussion rather than a room for student planning.

RASH DEMANDS

Numbering about 100, the group again sought maximum to support and help the RASH demands of December 30 but also the RASH demands in support of those demands. Meanwhile, the group met in Main Hall around four o'clock, during the noon hour, making their demands last two days, forcing black students to stay the night, causing the next day to start earlier.

The demands, in the midst of action on the part of the Black students, were as follows:

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held. Instead of doing nothing to keep classes closed they opted for a short night and trying to get classes off the ground. The issues involved in the present crisis. They also started a Fund to help supplimental with food while they were in the Administration Office.

In the student plenum held Sunday night the students adopted a resolution calling for the inclusion of black people at all relevant levels of decision making in the college. To point out that this was not a student power issue, the resolution stated that this could eventually be used by black faculty and black administrators but because of the lack of such principle at the present time there is one black faculty member currently. And it would be used by the inclusion of black students. They also passed a resolution asking for a composition of ABASC that was substantively the same as that asked for by SABR at the faculty meeting, although they were unaware of their request.

PLAUSIBLE

Finally, they considered several resolutions concerning the suspension of classes. After two hours of debate for each one, the students voted to be in total majority supporting the recommendation of classes until the faculty had acted on SABR's demands and SABR had responded to the Faculty action. When this had occurred it was decided that the plenum would need again to decide whether classes should be held. Throughout all the discussion of classes, it was recognized that any vote should be taken in fact as representative of the view of the student body and not a "strategic" vote; the position taken was irreverent.

In a marathon evening meeting, lasting until 11 p.m. on Sat., the Faculty acted on all SABR's demands of Jan.

Monday, Jan. 13

Monday was spent waiting for SABR to respond to the Faculty resolution on black admissions and student life. In further developments four black students, i.e., "radical action" started a fund to help until the demands were met and forty non-SABR black students joined the ones already in the Admin. Office.

President Smith took the opportunity of the audience in assembly to address the College community. He opened by saying that what the faculty had actually done was a "non-violent and imaginative consideration" of the "widely-held concerns of SABR and the Admissions Policy Committee" in a way that "has done much this year in themselves."

After saying that he would strongly support the faculty's actions before the Board, President Smith made a plan for "a spirit of mutual trust" and a future committee to "do better next time and always see just and not one way."

SABR RESPONSE

All the evening plenum the students finally got SABR's response to the Faculty resolution. After a 45 minute speech by Father James Woodruff, an activist minister in the Philadelphia area, analyzing the basic issues of racism in America from an historical perspective and calling for "the need to distinguish institutionalized racism as distinct from individual racism," SABR outlined its stand which is different from the Faculty resolution.

Aside from minor differences on the general role of "a black committee" and the specific number of black students that the College should be admitting to, the only major difference involved seemed a Black Interest Committee and the power of the ABASC.



Students plus administration to be used at main meeting.

portion of a resolution voting, "The Faculty affirms Displeasure of the President in his letter of 11 December 1969 that this College has never been and must never be governed by demands or threats by students" . . . "The faculty reiterates . . . terminating black admissions were passed because the faculty believes they are right."

BIGOTRY THROWS IN.

In response to the first demand made on January 8, the Faculty passed three resolutions. The first of these stated the "Ministry making up of the college" shall be described "as a matter of days after the resumption of normal academic business." The second states that in the previous resolution the faculty had "stated that the participation of black people in decision-making in matters relating directly to the operational interests of black students" and that "the faculty is determined to adhere to this principle whenever it applies."

Finally, the faculty stated that it does not contemplate any discriminatory action against black members for their actions to this point. However, it was unwilling to give them authority for any Police action. At the end of its meeting the faculty decided to postpone Monday classes because they were all tired.

Following the Faculty meeting President Smith and Vice President Monday called an open meeting on the crisis and issued a statement to the press later.

The Black Interest Committee, which had been requested by SABR in October and not considered by the Faculty, was viewed by SABR as accepting the representation of the black viewpoint on the cultural level. The main problem would be the attempt to avoid incidents of black disruption of cultural events likely in official Black Day, walking out of Collective before a Black African is to speak, by negotiation with blacks before the event takes place.

In regard to the ABASC, SABR wanted it to be able to "formulate" policy with the "final approval or disapproval of its policies to act with SABR" so that black people would "participate in decision-making" not just representation of policies to the body via the faculty who actually makes the final decisions. Unfortunately, because of the detailed nature of SABR's response there was a great deal of confusion as to whether it was an invitation or not and a great deal of misunderstanding as to the actual differences between SABR and the faculty. For this reason the next day was spent clarifying SABR's position. By Wednesday evening it was generally agreed that they were not as far from the faculty as had originally been thought.

DISCUSSIONS

When SABR had finished its statement the student plenum moved about to its initial function, after quickly passing their resolution, was asking for SABR to include all black non-members in its deliberations, especially