

SASS Explains Issues, Needs

In a "Dialogue for Truth and Understanding" sponsored by the Southwestern Afro-American Students' Society and Student Council Tuesday evening, Don Mink and Russell Fricks presented SASS' position on the issues of the Ad Hoc Black Administration Committee report, the status of black studies at Howard, and the black cultural center. These issues represent areas in which SASS feels the administration has shown a "lack of commitment to a viable black community."

The dialogue drew a capacity audience to Commons and listeners filled the hall outside. Soon after 10 a.m. Fricks and Mink seated themselves at a table in the middle of the room and Fricks began reading a prepared statement.

CRISIS PROPORTIONS

He explained that SASS had called for the meeting in order to express its concern about the overall relationship between the black community at Howard and the administration. The situation has reached "crisis proportions," stated Fricks, due to the "total neglect" by the administration of the needs of black students. But, he asserted, SASS will not be "deterred by short-term looking solutions."

Fricks proceeded to outline three areas of grievance for SASS, starting with the area of black studies. He quoted extensively from the article in last Friday's Phoenix, questioning whether the College was truly committed to a black studies program. He concluded that the entire situa-

tion had been "a series of steps designed to prevent further black expression."

Fricks next questioned the state of the SASSAC report in the Administration Policy Committee, asking whether the Committee was attempting to dilute the points of last January. He told the College must clearly move direct responsibility for education to black people.

CULTURAL CENTER

The great threat of the action concerned the status of the black cultural center. Mink at this point took over, reading from last year's statement by SASS on the need for such a center. The cultural center should not be a move to placate black students, continued Mink, but a basis for the reinforcement of black identity — "a base in a white sea."

Attempting to show the need for a black cultural center, Mink referred to a case before the Women's Judiciary Committee last year involving two black women. The court concluded, Mink said, that there are at least two identities on campus.

Mink charged that the "inequality" of distribution causes tension on a racial basis when they are used for social purposes.

In addition, a physical facility would help to establish relationships with the surrounding black community, he stated.

Mink felt establishment of a black cultural center would be a "major step" in providing a situation for "cultural interaction." He added that the center could be the focus for black freshmen during orientation week, providing "an authentic black culture." For prospective black applicants, the center would be visible proof that Howard is abandoning its policies of past neglect.

A fairly extensive review of the black cultural center's development since its inception last spring followed. In May 1968 the College agreed in principle to the establishment of a black cultural center. In September, SASS was informed that no room was yet available, and was given primary use of Lodge 4 as a temporary solution. According to Mink, President Cross promised something would be built if nothing else could be found.

In December, SASS suggested Action, Welfare, and Student House as possible sites. In February, President Cross sent a letter to SASS

(Continued on Page 4)



Russell Fricks and Don Mink present SASS position on Tuesday.

showing lodges 1 and 4 for NAACP next year, explaining that the College could not afford to give up any of the expanded income because of the shortage of dormitory space. Mr. Cross also expressed the view that a location near the center of campus would be desirable rather than one on the fringe. He suggested approaching Student Council for any special activity funds.

NAACP reply was a letter sent February 14 to the President. It repeated the offer of lodges 1 and 4. Whitt explained, however, that the members of NAACP were very much disappointed by the attitudes represented in the proposals and questioned Mr. Cross' priorities. Whitt stressed that the expanded facilities were necessary for black students.

CENTRAL LOCATION

In addition, Whitt felt centrality of location should not be a consideration in site selection, stating "our belief is that the best location is where the best facilities are." He rejected the idea of obtaining funds from SC as "totally inacceptable."

He concluded by stating that until provisions are made for a theological and viable black campus, "we will be unable to cooperate with the College." "We are determined to hold further discussions," he added. "We are no longer interested in outside money."

Foster again spoke briefly, explaining that his communications were received from Mr. Cross following the February 14 letter and on the March 3 letter containing the Wednesday 11:00 deadline was met.

"We propose to prosecute any action necessary to achieve and improve our goals," he said.

He reiterated the rejection of a letter submitted to the "Newest South" rights, based on the letter's being

signed "Birmingham Afro-American Students' Society" rather than with individual names. The Phoenix editor has imposed his "white philosophy of individualism" over the "black cultural value of collectivism," charged Foster.

The proposed portion of the "Birmingham" signed as Foster expressed his view that the administration views black students as an unorganized minority, and thus nothing to worry about. "The College," he said, "does have something to worry about."

A question and answer period following consisted of elaboration on various topics covered in the statement: the status of the black studies director, the legality of a black cultural center in Alabama, the AUSAAC report, and the urgency of the need for the center. In response to the question, "What will you do as it becomes?" the audience and Whitt laughed. Whitt gave no answer.