

Who Shall Lead Them?

Kenneth Husemoller and Polly Tomlinson

Leadership

The current trend of student demonstrations may reveal a serious lack of official leadership provided by the college. People filling leadership positions apparently have neither the skills nor the experience that is adequate to guide students in difficult situations. This is not surprising because college officials, until recently, have not been called upon to establish unpopular goals for students. In the past they have had a highly motivated, unemotional group of followers. The student in the classroom wanted to understand the professor and meet his objectives and the student out of class didn't present any problems because he stayed in the dormitory and studied as he was expected to.

College officials traditionally have been qualified for their jobs not because they were trained, skillful leaders, but because at one time they had been good students. Now that they are faced with large numbers of students who have objectives widely different from those of the administration, the quality of leadership evidenced by administration and faculty is found to be severely wanting. College officials have apparently not been able to perceive the true objectives of student demonstrations; they have been unable to communicate their own goals to the students in such a way as to gain student acceptance of them, and they have failed to learn, after the fact, what to do about the next demonstration.

The story is told that one night during the French Revolution a howling mob was running through the streets of Paris. A little old man was seen running along behind. Someone caught up to the old man and said, "Sir, these are violent times. You better get out of here or you are going to be hurt," to which the little old man, Robespierre, replied, "but you don't understand. They must wait for me; I am their leader."

This illustrates the position of official leadership today. It is running along behind the students saying, "But you must wait for me; I am your leader."

To reverse the trend of widespread demonstrations, colleges must make major changes. They must teach values, not just react to them. They must learn revolution so they can stop it. They must make commitments to values and they must believe in their idea of what is right and wrong so strongly that they are willing to teach these convictions to their students.

The Student — Condition

A student demonstration is not just an annoyance; it can be a political weapon with deadly potential. If it is controlled by the wrong people, it can redistribute power on the campus or topple a government.

It arises out of the student-condition. On a campus, large numbers of uncommitted young people live in close proximity to each other. They are seek-



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ing meaning to their life and until they find it, they are vulnerable to a variety of interim commitments. They live in a world apart — in an environment that is synthetic.

The student-condition imposes emotional stress that has so far been only vaguely understood. The student lives in an unreal world populated by unreal people; he associates with professors insulated from reality, and students who have not yet met reality. The student is a non-productive recipient. His infancy is prolonged during the time he is a student. He has left the position of senior teenager and is thrust rudely into a position of apprentice adult. He must constantly meet the expectations of others who have little or no regard for his expectations of himself. He is cut off from his old familiar friends and environment.

He is bored. He faces no variety of challenge. In high school he proved himself a scholar, yet he is asked daily to repeat the exercise. He faces the same challenge year after year — he is asked to read a book and then answer some questions about it. Everyone is his judge and under no circumstance is he allowed to control his own destiny. He is the victim of

constant and elaborate evaluation, and this may be why he demonstrates, so that he too can evaluate. He can even evaluate his evaluators. He apparently wants to become involved in something real. He wants to participate in something that can result in visible change. He wants a goal that can be reached now, long before graduation day which is years in the future. He needs a cause that will capture his active attention, one where he can make decisions about issues that are real in the world. He is immediately attracted to a cause that allows him to consider a question and decide on his own answer, and anyone who can provide such an issue will be his leader.

Issues

The official campus leaders must be skillful enough to separate the issues that need change from other issues that can be and are frequently used by demonstrators to stir up controversy and redistribute power into the hands of demonstrators. It is easy to make critical judgements of many campus practices. There are always issues that can be raised, such as "Why don't we get beer in the student center?" or

"Why do we have hours in the dorms?"

It is also easy to make critical evaluations of many less-than-perfect aspects of national life. There are always social problems; the application of the law is not totally fair; the opportunities for all groups are not equal; wars are regrettable; the draft is unpopular; and national wealth is not equally distributed. It is easy for students to focus on these inequalities and to crystalize opposition against the establishment that they hold responsible.

These situations have a special appeal to students because they are not as close as tomorrow's tests. Many young people who can't handle their own problems find temporary relief from them in trying to solve problems they have never met and only vaguely understand. This has been called *Afghanistaning*, implying that it is easier to solve the problems of Afghanistan than those close to home.

The Demonstrators

A student demonstration attracts many different kinds of people with many different motives. To adequately understand a demonstration, the varying motives of the participants must be distinguished one from another:

1. There is the student who is bored. He will do anything for a little excitement. A demonstration provides this.

2. There is the student who is an idealist. Sincerely interested in the issue, he honestly wants to correct a situation he feels is unacceptable.

3. The lonely student walks beside the demonstrator carrying the sign. He was too shy to join the Young Republicans, but in a demonstration he gains instantaneous membership in the club simply by being there.

4. The intellectual thinks of the demonstrators as being intellectuals like himself, so affiliation with them is almost automatic.

5. The misfit is avoided on the campus by other students until they need him to add one more voice to their cause.

6. The "pen" can have any of the motives mentioned above, but he has a special ability to write so as to move others to action.

7. The "Messiah" is the leader. He has charisma. He personifies the goal everyone else wants to achieve.

All of the people mentioned above have one thing in common. They limit their interest and activities to

the issue in contention. In contrast there are people who participate in demonstrations on the campus who have ulterior motives.

These people may or may not be students. They seek power for some cause apart from the apparent issue by transforming legitimate protest into a political weapon. They are political activists and are extremely dangerous to the tranquility of the college and the security of the nation.

Revolution

The political activists are clearly revolutionaries. They have studied and understand the business of revolution. Most of the successful insurgencies of recent times have followed a particular sequence of objectives with remarkable similitude.

These are the steps that facilitate a revolution. Revolutionaries try to:

1. Weaken as many elements of the "power structure" as possible by discrediting the political, military, economic, social, law enforcement, legal and educational institutions.

2. Select issues to confront and embarrass the establishment.

3. Develop leaders, symbols and slogans such as "free speech," "black power" or "police brutality." Broaden their power base by joining with sympathetic groups.

4. Confront, antagonize, challenge and weaken the establishment until it can be easily overthrown.

A desire for power is the common denominator for all revolutionaries. Their objectives are ultimately to organize, overthrow and seize power.

Each nation has certain elements of national power. They are the political, economic, military, psycho-social, educational, legal and scientific. These elements form the base for a nation and protect it against attack from without or from within. If they are destroyed, the nation is destroyed. The institutions that support these elements of power are collectively called the "power structure" or the "establishment". Elements of power are constantly under attack from forces outside the country, and most nations take elaborate precautions to protect, preserve and defend these sources of internal strength from external attack. Governments are not usually as well protected against attack from within, and against this kind of force they are especially vulnerable.

The United States has become complacent in recent years and unaware of the reality of revolution and it

has taken few steps to prevent one. Yet, the United States at this moment is ripe for revolution; in fact, it is experiencing what could be the early stages of a violent revolution. Many elements of national power are under attack from within. Historically, the military is at what may be a low point of popularity. Agencies charged with the responsibility of enforcing laws are under systematic attack. Recent political conventions were used for an attempt to gain public support for the revolutionaries. The highest offices in the land have been attacked verbally as well as with gunfire.

The educational institutions are not exempt from attack. In fact, because of the sheer number of people involved, attacks against the educational institutions are most serious. Attacks emanating from the campus against any element of power should be viewed with deep concern. A student demonstration is no game. It can change the course of history. Many organizations with an apparently honest motive are springing up around the country and on the campus. These organizations can be used as tools for those seeking political power. If organizations can be formed with objectives in opposition to those of the establishment or if existing organizations can be directed against the establishment, then it is possible for them to band together in super-demonstrations or other activities which can destroy the establishment.

If political activists can gain influence over the individual organizations, they can forge a political weapon of unprecedented power. This would be an unusual country if it did not contain some people with such motives.

Conclusion

There are in this country and in each campus acute social problems; problems that need solutions as completely and quickly as possible. Social friction occurs when men of different ideas clash over the means of solving them. Today in the American setting the student has joined the ranks of people who are willing to assume responsibility for social change. This is undoubtedly desirable. At the moment they accept a variety of issues as proper for their concern, but they have adopted some highly hazardous techniques for forcing social change. Student demonstrations can be terribly effective, hazardous and contagious. No college president can ignore widespread incendiary demonstrations of his campus.

College presidents have the official as well as moral obligation of evaluating student behavior and

taking action against unacceptable behavior. Such evaluation is proper and cannot be avoided. A position of non-committal is in itself the result of an evaluation and indicates a position. What is needed is not less, but better evaluation of all the facets that go into making a student demonstration.

Educational institutions are desperately in need of major reforms; and demonstrations which can facilitate these changes must not be suppressed. However, demonstrations organized and carried out simply to build a political weapon, to discredit the establishment, or to enhance the power of an off-campus movement cannot be viewed with the same tolerance.

Perhaps the most important concern in any demonstration is the true motives of the leaders. It is highly inappropriate to try to treat dedicated, radical, highly emotional, professional agitators the same way one would treat a sincere, concerned student who honestly wants to bring about reasonable and orderly changes in his own academic environment. College officials must be able to distinguish one from the other and if they are reasonably effective in their job they should be able to distinguish several variations of motives between these extremes.

College officials must recognize the threat student demonstrations pose to the nation as well as to the college. They must have some awareness of the true motives of the students and non-students who can form or influence campus organizations. They must understand the process of revolution so at least they will recognize it when it is happening underfoot. They eventually have to decide what values their institution stands for and have enough confidence in them to communicate them to the students for whom they are responsible. Above all, the college president must provide direct, popular, aggressive leadership for the students. He cannot accept every goal and every value that can be presented to his students as equally valid. He must decide which values are most important for his students, and he must communicate standards of personal conduct to the student as confidently as he communicates academic standards. He must realize that social goals are as important as intellectual ones.

The college has the first opportunity and obligation to set standards and to select and teach values to its students. If it abdicates this responsibility or fails to utilize the opportunity, it will lose both to the initiative of others.

Students will find leaders. The question is who shall lead them.