The Minority Speaks Out

On Tuesday, May 5th, 1970, at a special faculty meeting, a majority of the faculty passed a resolution condemning what it termed "official repression" in the disaster at Kent State and linking this with the military action in Cambodia and the policies of the present national administration. The motion was substantially the same as that brought to the faculty by some students, who claimed to represent a majority of those attending a meeting in South Lounge. The number of students was, we were told, somewhere between 300 and 600. Despite these figures, the resolution claimed to represent "the majority of the faculty and students. Furthermore, the faculty extended this claim to represent "Grinnell College as an institution." The joint faculty-student resolution, then, claims to be representative in two ways, and both of these was the basis of the underdoged, ill-founded. But it is the second claim — to being representative of Grinnell College as an institution — that merits censure, and we are appealing to you, the trustees, to make that censure. We argue as follows:

1. Although the meeting was well attended by faculty and administration, there were no representatives of the trustees, the parents, or the alumni.

2. The claim by one part of the institution to represent the whole institution necessarily involves those who dissent; and such a claim is especially unfair, when many members of the institution had no voice at all in the proceedings.

3. The majority resolution is highly political in nature — an unprecedented and, in our view, improper kind of resolution for a college to make.

4. By suspending classes as a part of the resolution, the faculty alienated those who wished to dissent in an impossible position morally and perhaps, legally.

5. By linking together diverse issues, and by failing to revise the extreme language of the resolution, the resolution probably prevented a rational conclusion from being reached.

We would further point out that even if the meeting was highly emotional, so much so that the majority openly violated a long-established tradition of the College, to respect the rights of the individual conscience. We therefore wish to dissociate ourselves from the resolution, and we request that the trustees make a similar statement available to public notice.

A symbolic Commencement was held on Central Campus May 13. Five students — Susan Fowler, Jonathan Jenkin, Helen Lindblom, Arthur Szep, and Sharon Vander Jagt — and four faculty members — H. G. Apost, John Cressett, Edwin Kuhweke, and Ralph Lunde — attended. Several other students and faculty asked to participate in spirit.

SGA President's Statement

Because of my role as chairman in the various meetings that have taken place recently I have not been in a position to state my views on the issues before us. However, in my role as S.G.A. President I feel it my responsibility to make these views clear.

We have reached a critical point in our history. Decisions are being made that will determine whether Grinnell College can continue to carry out its traditional functions or whether it will become in the near future which will determine what path our nation will follow — self-determination or intervention abroad, liberty or authority at home, indeed, freedom or repression in all our national and personal choices.

Letter From Faculty Head On Closing

To the President:

Sincerely,

[Name]

Student Gov't Ass'n.

President's Statement 1

To Parents

As you have probably heard, either directly from your son or daughter or indirectly through news reports, the student vote to close Grinnell College officially at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13. This is two days before the formal ending of classes, as previously scheduled, so that only the period of final examinations and commencement activities could remain. The copy of my formal statement to faculty and students on this matter follows. On Wednesday, the faculty voted 9-1 to support it in a separate meeting. At a general faculty and student assembly held Friday afternoon, the student vote to support the statement was virtually unanimous.

The reasoning behind my statement is essentially as follows: No one can reasonably regard the attitude of students here and throughout this nation, toward the Cambodian affair and the violent events, as a fact that almost all students, from doctrinaire radicals to the most conservative, have suddenly become so politically involved that they are no longer able to give complete attention to their academic studies. On this campus, as on many others, their attention over the past two weeks has been diverted into discussions and activities about the political crisis. In some educational institutions, as you know, this activity has taken violent forms. Though there have been some threats of such violent activity here, it has not yet happened; demonstrations here have been disruptive, but not on a major way. But the important fact, as I say in the statement I enclose, is that the existing atmosphere and climate make it impossible to continue the normal and educational institution.

I am not suggesting that any of you believe that the College cannot continue to carry out its educational function, but that you believe that activities such as demonstrations, political organizing, and student unions would have to be curtailed in order for the College to continue in its educational function.

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Letter From Faculty Head On Closing

To the President:

Sincerely,

[Name]

Student Gov't Ass'n.

President's Statement 2

President's Statement 2

To Faculty and Students

Regarding the grave political and educational crisis which this nation and this college presently face, I believe that the College cannot continue to carry on its normal and educational institution. As you know, this crisis involves such an array of activities as political organizing, the Kent State incident, it is a fact that almost all students, from doctrinaire radicals to the most conservative, have suddenly become so politically involved that they are no longer able to give complete attention to their academic studies. On this campus, as on many others, their attention over the past two weeks has been diverted into discussions and activities about the political crisis. Though there have been some threats of such violent activity here, it has not yet happened; demonstrations here have been disruptive, but not on a major way. But the important fact, as I say in the statement I enclose, is that the existing atmosphere and climate make it impossible to continue the normal and traditional functions of the educational institution. Accordingly, I believe it is best to close the school and permit students to carry on their political activity elsewhere than on this campus, not under what might be interpreted as the authority, formal or informal, of the College itself.

I am not talking here about anything less than the great majority of Grinnell students, I would have recommended to the faculty and students that alternative ways be initiated of approaching the problem of completing the school year, so that those students who wished to complete their school year in a regular fashion may do so. I think that the present environment does not allow for such an option, rational and proper as the case for it may appear to those who believe the College ought to be able to manage it.