

POWER AND REASON

I commend both the wisdom and the courage of the students who are sitting in at the Old Union. They show political wisdom, because they rightly understand that the issue is one of power: the power of students to determine their own affairs. Where one group has almost all the power in an institution, one must be suspicious of appeals to "reason." For "reason" in such contexts usually means docility to the way those in power perceive things. Students have very little power in the university; hence their views are not often taken to be "realistic." "Realism" is defined by those who exercise or defend present power. By sitting in, however, the students create a new factor in the situation, which the "realistic" must take seriously. In this way - and often in this way alone - do human beings make progress in genuine communication. The old "realism" must be altered. The new realism must take account of a new consciousness and a new power. The students sitting in today, by their courage, are creating this new consciousness and this new power. Many of us are grateful for their creative act.

Finally, I would like to call attention to the fact that the substantive issue beneath all this debate is not legal or procedural. It concerns the University's ties to the CIA and to other government agencies. What do we, students and faculty and administration, wish our university's policies to be? The seven convicted students should not be penalized, they should be commended, for awakening us to Stanford's moral responsibilities when no one else cared. That is what education is all about.

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