

Through the Looking Glass

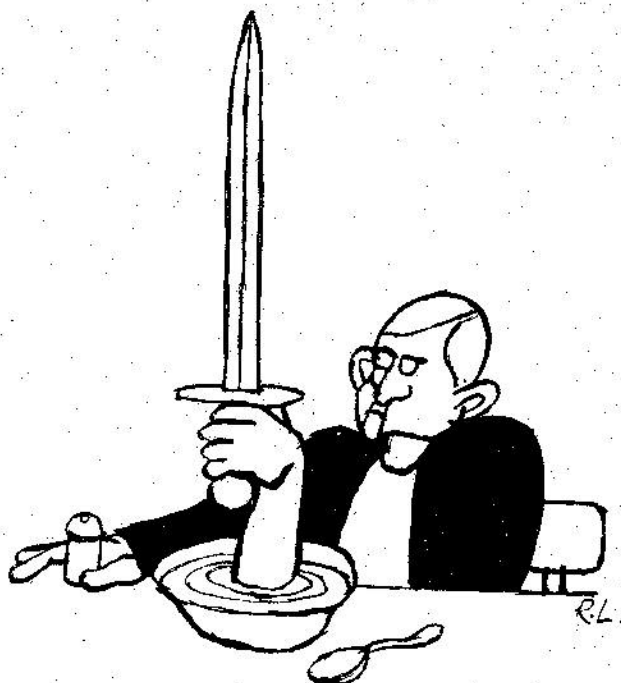
A Radical Guide to Stanford



By Stanford SDS

two bits

INTRODUCTION



Neither Stanford University nor the Associated Students of Stanford University is responsible for this booklet. It was prepared by the Stanford chapter of Students for a Democratic Society. It is both a guide and a critique of Leland's farm. In describing Stanford we have attempted to view the university in its social context and tried to uncover the underlying causes of student problems. Our resources are limited, so we have concentrated on areas that never find their way into official publications.

The Associated Students sponsored a publication called the "Stanford Handbook," which provides a showcase view of Stanford and a liberal description of Stanford life. While claiming to be objective, it is pushing a definite political line. The handbook's discussion of last spring's sit-in is so candy-assed that we must make a selective reply. It portrayed the sit-in as the result of a breakdown in communications admitting no fundamental differences between students and the powers-that-be. For us, the confrontation was necessary to temporarily even the imbalance of power on the Stanford campus.

Some 700 of us sat-in at the Old Union last Spring, to prevent the suspension of seven students charged with obstructing a CIA recruiter. During the sit-in we shared a sense of community and an involvement in learning totally lacking in the "educational process" which we disrupted. We saw--some of us for the first time--that the confrontation was rooted not in shortage of dialogue, but in imbalance of power and conflict of interests between the administration and growing numbers of students and faculty. We began to understand the working partnership between Stanford and the Stanford Research Institute, the CIA, the Defense Department, and big business and its foundations. And we began to define the interests of the administrators, given their explicit responsibility to a Board of Trustees made up of bankers, corporate attorneys, aerospace industrialists, and internationally involved oilmen.

We don't expect the entering student, or even the returning student, to believe everything that we say, but we hope that he will begin to question some of his assumptions. We hope that he will participate in radical dialogue if he disagrees, and that when he finds our arguments convincing and analysis correct, that he will not hesitate to act.

This guide was prepared by members and associates of the Stanford chapter of Students for a Democratic Society. It has been financed, in part, by donations from members of the Stanford Community. According to the tenets of Keynesian deficit spending, the remainder has not yet been financed. Contributions may be sent to SDS, P.O. Box 7333, Stanford, California.

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Community

The students of Stanford University do not have a community. We have no Telegraph Avenue, no Village, no student residential area. Students retreat to homes, dorms, libraries, and such socio-cultural meccas as Baskin-Robbins for ice cream, the Round Table for pizza, the Oasis for hamburgers, the Poppycock for fish and chips, and Tressider Union for no reason in particular. Stanford University is a stone drag.

There were attempts to establish community centers, none totally successful, but each provided impetus for future action.

Two years ago the Experiment was such an attempt. Located in the building now occupied by the University Placement Service, the Experiment was a place where students got together to talk, study, eat, drink, or loiter. Like the Free University, it sponsored courses and seminars and hosted dances, films, speeches, readings, folk music, and similar happenings.

The administration needed that particular building in order to satisfy the need of students for a job-placement service (read: desire of business for competitive labor markets), so the Experiment lost its territory, and the people dispersed to insular retreats.

Since then dispossessed students have been struggling for a coffee house and the freedom to make of it what they will. But as promises and concessions were squeezed from a bloated and cumbersome administrative bureaucracy, the vision receded and blurred, leaving us with hardly a trace of what the Experiment once projected. Once again the administration instituted their conception of our conception, and effectively countered the threat of parallel institutions.

Last Spring, several hundred students set up a very groovy community, but it lasted only three days. They chose the Old Union--once the student union, then a girls' dorm, currently occupied by the administrative community--as their turf. The students' spirit was raised by turning the tables in the game of land expropriation. Their unifying activity was a confrontation with the administration over judicial reform. Someone eventually won or lost, but the memory of the commune remained for the veterans. Short-lived as it was, it suggested an alternative mode of existence.

Off-campus, the Mid-Peninsula Free University is developing a community, drawing in young people from the entire Palo Alto area as well as from Stanford. A combination coffee house and community center is central to the Free U's plans. The Free U. obtained substantial financial support for such a project and took steps to lease a building. Somewhere along the line local landowner Warren Thoits backed out and refused to rent to the Free U., apparently in distaste for the life-styles of many in the Free U. community. The Free U. responded by staging a sit-in: two-hundred participants occupied part of the Palo Alto Office Building, and then took over the original community center building. As we go to press, the Free U. is staging week-end free dances in Lytton plaza, but is still blocked in its attempt to create a center for community.

Student Body

Perhaps the clearest indication of Stanford's social function is the make-up of the student body. Stanford has close to twelve thousand students, half graduates and half undergraduates.

Many Stanford undergraduates are very rich. Very few come from poor families. Graduate students tend to be in a worse financial position, but some have wealthy families. Most Stanford students are middle class, but many are on their way up, aided by the prestige of a Stanford diploma.

Because they lack money and the necessary preparatory training, blacks and Mexican-Americans rarely get into Stanford. Stanford, like other educational institutions, has not been willing to use its resources to educate minority groups. Thus, at Stanford, most students continue their lifelong isolation from the poor and oppressed. The new Black Student Union has forced Stanford to finally come to grips with part of the problem. But it will take more than scholarships for a middle- and upper-middle-class university to change enough to meet the needs of black people and other minority groups.

Since Stanford's major function is training students to assume "socially productive" roles, it has developed strong schools of engineering, medicine, business, and law, as well as strong departments in the sciences. American society makes it difficult for women to perform in these areas of work. Thus, Stanford does not admit many women. The ratio of men to women is about three to one. As a consequence, there are a large number of horny men and a smaller number of confused women roaming the campus.

Student Government

Some two months after the Berkeley sit-ins of December, 1964, Stanford's tranquility was ruffled by the Dean Allen Affair. The "Affair" marked, in its own stylized way, the beginning of progress toward social and political awareness at Stanford. The focus of events was the then Dean of Women, Lucille Allen, who asked members of the women's Judicial Council to take notes on lectures by English Professors who allegedly used erotic materials in their courses with the intent of seducing freshmen girls. Its historical importance lies in the LASSU resolution stating that "the ASSU shall have sole jurisdiction over student affairs and conduct" which was passed in the scandal's turbulent wake. This resolution was pivotal in the students' on-going struggle against overt and covert administration encroachments on the students' power to make fundamental decisions affecting their education and their lives. Instrumental in the passage of this resolution was the newly formed Graduate Co-ordinating Committee. GCC actions made possible an influx of radical graduate students into the legislature, signalling the advent of autonomous student organizations at Stanford, and prefigured their importance in future political activities.

If Stanford students benefitted from Berkeley because it inspired the GCC,

Stanford's administration learned that the best way to guard their interests, and those of the people they represented, was to initiate a pattern of superficial accommodation with the purpose of "involving students more in the affairs of the university and opening up the channels of communication". As was to be expected, the administration decided to respond to the challenge of student activism by setting into motion the time-proven principle of divide-and-rule and by opening up the channels of co-optation.

The following school year, 1965-66, was animated by two general types of issues: actions taken by the administration without prior consultation of students, and abolition of archaic rules and regulations about matters like liquor and open-house hours. Two major issues of the first type involved conflicts between centers of student activists, namely the Wilbur sponsors and the Old Union women, and the Committee of Undergraduate Education, led by the now departed Dean Robert Wert. The sponsors were, in the end, successful in defending their previously held prerogative of selecting their successors against the maneuvers of Dean Wert and his "colonial administrator" in Wilbur, Dr. Eric Hutchinson, who were apprehensive that the sponsors might shed too many scales from freshman eyes. But in the process, a year was wasted and much precious work was trdden underfoot, due largely to the administration's unrelenting bad faith. The Old Union was at the time perhaps the only hall on campus with any sense of being a coherent community dedicated to intellectual pursuits. However, the residents were removed to Hoskins, even though they had great support in trying to stay, and were replaced with the administration's bureaucrats. The loss of the Old Union symbolized the priority of mechanistic procedures against creative intellectual activity, and underscored the students' impotence in the face of arbitrary administrative decisions.

LIQUOR AND SEX

In the issues of liquor and sex, the university went through contortions in order to reconcile the formal legal system with substantive reality, the end result being the liberalization of drinking rules in May and motions towards undertaking a study of Women's Social Regulations. At the year's end, LASSU passed a resolution liberalizing Open House Rules and thus created a conflict of law between the ASSU and the administration.

While the administration showed signs of recognizing the need to overhaul the network of demeaning social regs, little was done to transform Stanford into a university in which students could acquire and develop the maturity and insightfulness necessary to live a fully responsible life. Indeed, the university seemed destined to continue Xeroxing professionals, long on systematically learned facts and the orthodox theories of academe, but drastically lacking in the ability to make critical, self-conscious judgements. This issue was raised by David Harris, the iconoclast who surprised everyone, himself included, by winning the ASSU student body elections in 1966. To use his words, "Stanford sees the student as recipient rather than actor, as someone to be directed, to be filled, and to be manipulated."

The following year brought piecemeal changes: primarily the initiation of a largely insignificant pass-fail system; the revamping of Women's Social Regs to bring ASSU and administration laws back into harmony; and the rise of student participation on committees. But, all told, it was a frustrating year, due largely to the failure of liberal and radical students to carry through the commitment that they had made the previous spring in electing David Harris. He articulated the important issues and asked that the community respond. But what in the spring of 1966 had seemed the rosy dawn of a new era in academe, by the winter of 1967 was hopelessly lost in the impenetrable fogs of administrative obscurantism arising from the innumerable channels in the swamp of a labyrinthine bureaucracy. The administration found occasion to give the emerging elite glimpses of the wheels of power spinning, and launched what they saw to be a new period of enlightened management at the Knowledge Factory. Radical students had rudimentary visions of what the university

should be, but little foresight of the obstacles they were to face, and had no incisive analysis as to why those obstacles were there. Their frustrations were capped by Harris' resignation in February, after he had done what he could to bring about the realization of his ideals. Stanford was not ready to accept and understand his visions, nor were his supporters prepared to do battle with the all too well-entrenched university-foundation-government-corporation Goliath, although they had fought a few successful skirmishes with Goliath's advance guard, Campus Apathy and Professionalistic Objectivism, smiting several mighty rents in their protective armor of false consciousness.

RELUCTANT CANDIDATE

In the spring of 1967, Peter Lyman, a Poli-Sci grad student, and somewhat reluctant candidate of campus liberals and radicals, was easily elected to the ASSU presidency. The next fall, after three disappointing months in office, he resigned, calling the ASSU "a hollow bureaucratic process that is incapable of representing or contributing to an intellectual community". The existing apparatus of student government had once again proven ineffective in implementing far-ranging reforms or in doing much of anything. In his parting statement, Lyman predicted that conflict would be the only way to get anything done to change the structures of the university or its relation to society.

His remarks were prophetic. Following the murder of Martin Luther King in April, the Black Student Union invoked the threat of conflict and the administration made provisions for admitting more blacks and Mexican-Americans. Then there came the massive Old Union sit-in in May. Over the past three years, a crisis had been simmering in the judicial structure at Stanford which had been operating under a temporary arrangement of an ASSU sanctioned student judicial council and a faculty appellate board, appointed by President Sterling and packed with conservative Law School faculty. An SDS sponsored demonstration against a CIA recruiter in early November precipitated the crisis. After 40 hours of testimony, the Judicial Council ruled that the demonstration was not a violation of the Fundamental Stanford Standard and that as a student body it would not take responsibility for enforcing any university regulations, especially such an unenforceable one. After much haggling with the Council, Dean Joel Smith took the case to the axmen on the Interim Judicial Board who meted out suspensions to seven of the offenders, after only two hours of deliberation. The ASSU had passed a specific resolution some time before that it did not recognize the IJB because it was in violation of the original agreement which set it up two years earlier. The students, having learned from long years of frustration and humiliation in dealing with those who hide behind closed doors, took to direct action after a weekend of deliberations and seized the Old Union, historic symbol of administrative intransigence. On the third day of the sit-in, the Academic Senate rebuked the administration's stand by voting amnesty for all involved and for adoption of a new judicial system which, having been tied up for months in the tripartite Committee of Fifteen, was hastily put into final form.

These crises over, it was clear to all that the ASSU can do little more than provide a rubber stamp for decisions that are made elsewhere. For instance, the position of Financial Manager was an exclusive fief under the control of the Dean of Students. Every quarter, clockwork fashion, three dollars per student came in and went out to support such activities as football pep rallies and parties for the Cardinals Board (the self-perpetuating group which organizes rallies); the Debating Society, the functions of which are totally irrelevant to all except its members; the Institute of International Relations, a holdover from those bygone days of liberalism when it was "left" to take a condescending, benevolent attitude towards those nations less fortunate than we; and the Daily, Stanford's self-censoring liberal rag which operates under the dictum, "Add up all the opposing views and you get objectivity". The Legislature itself is a conglomeration of living group representatives, at all times subject to fluctuation in attendance. It rarely got above the level of acrimonious name-calling and whenever it did get to the point of actually taking care of some

serious business, there were inevitably accusations of "undemocratic tactics". To put matters briefly, the ASSU was a sleepy, conservative, primarily undergraduate institution. In the last four years, the contents have changed greatly, and the archaic structure, unable to adapt itself, is progressively disintegrating.

Those who still consider student government a viable agency for change will probably consider the adoption of a new ASSU charter and the question of the selection of the President to be important. The issue of student participation in the Presidential selection has been effectively finessed before it could be brought into the open. The selection of Dr. Kenneth S. Pitzer to replace Dr. Sterling confirms the growing knowledge that, in matters that relate to the university's position in the political economy, students will run into a stone wall. Students, as far as the trustees are concerned can drink all night and sleep all day, but they cannot be allowed any say in determining what interests should be served by the university president.

The movement which will culminate this fall in the final report of the Study of Education at Stanford began with a shaggy-headed bespectacled rebel named David Harris who expostulated utopian visions of a community of scholars. His visions cannot be realized because of the inherent limitations in the viewpoints of those conducting the study (i.e. Vice-Provost Packer). The study is merely searching for piecemeal alterations in a structure that needs a total overhaul. SES cannot succeed because it is designed to perpetuate the very type of mentality which a community of critical scholars must eradicate. It is not a study of the relation of the university, and the people who comprise it, to the society in which they exist. Nor could SES, in all probability, have been the appropriate place for such a study. It recommends a few changes in detail while it neglects to consider structures and purposes in more than superficial platitudes. It will leave us with the same old problem which is at the root of so many of our discontents: that is, instead of honestly searching out the union of critical thought and critical practice, the would-be community of scholars merely looks to ways of reinforcing its own intellectual pride. That body must of necessity betray its responsibility to itself and to the society in which it exists.

Housing

The 1600 Stanford undergraduates and 5200 grad students who live off-campus face a housing shortage of crisis proportions. The crunch is so widespread that many people wind up in overpriced motels or state parks when they arrive here. Housing is more scarce than ever this fall--the area vacancy rate is presently 0.4%, or one rental in 250--and there are no signs that it will improve soon. Those lucky enough to have found a house have also discovered that the low vacancy rate has caused rent increases of up to 10% since last spring.

Yet this is not an isolated student problem. The housing market is just as tight for the poor and the lower-middle class workers brought to the Peninsula to work in the electronics, aerospace, and other war-based industries. Encouraged by both Stanford and the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce, companies profiting from the war have increased their building programs in the area, but low-cost housing for workers hasn't drummed up the same interest. The home-building mortgage market has tightened and interest rates have sky-rocketed with the escalation of the war, and this serves as an added inducement for Stanford to build only expensive homes on its land and for the Palo Alto City Council to freeze out minority groups and low-cost housing.

At first glance it might seem that Stanford has not slumlorded as Columbia