

23F

The War Research Controversy

1965-March 11, 1969

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History 3S.
Mr. Mellini
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"In Vietnam, better living through chemistry."

--Steve Weissman

Introduction

On April 9, 1969, a few hundred student liberals and radicals calling themselves the April 3rd Coalition occupied the Applied Electronics Laboratory (A.E.L.) of Stanford University, remaining there for nine days in an effort to stop the war research done at the University and at the Stanford Research Institute (S.R.I.). The sit-in followed the Stanford Board of Trustees' rejection of a set of demands¹ issued by approximately 800 people at a meeting on April 3rd. When the sit-in finally ended, ASSU President Denis Hayes called a meeting of the student body, at which over 3000 students voted in a poll on the issues of the sit-in. The results were as follows:

- 1) 2332 to 475 against chemical-biological warfare (CBW) research on campus and at S.R.I.
- 2) 2395 to 772 against counter-insurgency research
- 3) 2414 to 684 against war-related research
- 4) 2120 to 1045 against classified research
- 5) 1633 to 1468 willing to participate in a future "sit-in" or similar action of₂ protest" if the trustees did not take appropriate action by May 14.

5671 students and 671 faculty participated in a similar poll taken by the University administration. The results were as follows:

- 75% voted to restrict chemical warfare research
- 77% voted to restrict biological warfare research
- 57% voted to restrict counter-insurgency research

56% voted to restrict ~~to restrict~~ research related to the war in Southeast Asia

51% voted to restrict classified research

*Source? #1
factories are
confused*

A poll taken by The Daily in October, 1968, asked students if they supported demands issued by Students for a Democratic Society (S.D.S.) that Stanford and S.R.I. cease all classified research and that Stanford faculty and trustees publicize their corporate and government connections. *3 in a leaflet?*

70
9
According to this poll, 25% of the students supported the demands, and only 4% planned to participate in a legal demonstration at S.R.I. in Menlo Park in support of the demands.

This change in student opinion, *reflected in the difference between the October and April polls,* was a result of two factors: (1) leaflets, demonstrations, lectures, and discussion groups designed by radicals to inform the Stanford community of the University's and S.R.I.'s involvement in the war; and (2) the frustration felt by liberals who tried to work within the system but failed because of the political views held by the ruling bodies of the University, the trustees and the administration.

There is
posture #5.
The A.E.I. sit-in was not a radical sit-in, but mainly a liberal one⁴, led by a small group of radicals. The radical contingent was somewhat larger in April than in October, but not significantly so, and did not account for the vast numbers of people supporting the demands of the April 3rd Movement. The sit-in did not have the militant atmosphere of the sit-ins at Columbia and other universities, and there was virtually no violence on the part of either the demonstrators or the administration.

Certainly a
significant
change
The opinion of the Stanford student body toward S.D.S. had changed little since the beginning of the year, but the attitude toward the trustees, primarily because of the March 11th open forum, had radically altered. At that forum, many students saw the trustees for the first time, and for the first time began to realize that the trustees should not have the power they possess. The students

saw that the trustees did not hold themselves responsible to student opinion, and that the trustees' political and moral views were vastly different from those of the student body.

from "most" of the student body - not all!

Paul Rupert, a leader of the Resistance and a representative on the panel at the March 11th forum, ^{wrote} ~~writes~~ in a subsequent article in the Peninsula Observer:

Five powerful and legitimate trustees came before the people they ruled... by the meeting's end, the rulers had lost control of their audience and the people were demanding an open meeting...

The trustees were frequently defensive, evasive, and far from candid. They were reluctant to commit themselves on anything of significance, and refused to say how they felt about chemical and biological warfare "until they read the committee report."⁶

This forum was the turning point in the controversy over war research at Stanford. The A.E.L. sit-in does not represent a radicalization of the student body over political issues as much as it does a liberal student power struggle over "humanitarian" issues, namely the CBW research and the war in Vietnam.

Background (1965 - 1968)

The war research controversy at Stanford started in 1965, when members of the Stanford Committee for Peace in Vietnam (S.C.P.V.) discovered that S.R.I. had two CBW contracts. This information was reported in a newsletter from the Graduate Coördinating Committee (organized in 1964), referred to in the S.R.I. Committee Minority Report as "the grandfather of the Stanford left."⁷

In the spring of 1966, the question of classified research came up during a sit-in in the President's office over draft tests. The research issue, however, was considered only secondary to the issue of the draft tests by the steering committee of S.C.P.V.⁸ As a result of the sit-in the Baxter Committee was set up to review classified research, but the committee only eliminated a small part of the controversial research. *(and its process of review has been shown to be questionable!)*

During the spring of 1967, as a part of the nationwide Mobilization for Peace, ^{the} Experiment, (the on-campus forerunner of the Mid-Peninsula Free University), published two issues of a newspaper called Resistance, containing information on S.R.I., the Stanford industrial park (the location of many defense industries), and the Stanford Electronics Laboratories. The Experiment also printed posters with the words "We Accuse," with the pictures and names of President Sterling, and Trustees Hewlett, Packard, Ducommun, and Lewis, along with pictures of war horrors. These posters received extremely adverse public reaction on campus. An article in The Daily by Clay L. Miller called the protesters a "pestilential freak pack of witless political weirdos."⁹ The posters were followed by the first march to S.R.I. in Menlo Park (April 14, 1967), in which 150 students (half of them ^{allegedly were} from local high schools)¹⁰ protested the war research at the Institute. ^N

After this march, the issue apparently lost ^{its point} interest, even though David Ransom (formerly a member of the Experiment) published information about S.R.I.'s role in economic imperialism and CBW research in the Mid-Peninsula Observer

issue is don't lose interest they lose the interest of someone

through 1967 and 1968.¹² Finally, at a meeting of S.D.S. in the spring of 1968, Leonard Siegel, who had been involved with the Experiment and the Anti-Draft Union, proposed a demonstration at A.E.L. The proposal was discussed in S.D.S., but not adopted.

During the summer of 1968, Steve Weissman, a graduate student and a leader of the radical movement at Stanford, led a group (organized as a class of the Mid-Peninsula Free University) in researching information on war contracts at S.R.I. and Stanford. In a series of meetings during the summer, S.D.S. decided that the focus of the coming school year would be on an anti-imperialist program against the involvement of S.R.I. and Stanford in the war in Southeast Asia.

and, I think, not enough faculty involvement.
6.
Autumn, 1968

September started off with a student power issue. Despite requests from students, the Board of Trustees had selected the new President of the University with virtually no student involvement. Trustee John Gardner promised that a student advisory committee would be involved next time. He also said that increased communication between the trustees and students was essential, but added, "If you get beyond communication, you're in considerable danger of eroding the President and getting the trustees involved in day-to-day decision-making."¹³

S.D.S. came out with a different analysis in a booklet entitled "Through the Looking Glass," which contained much of the information found by Weisman's research group. S.D.S. implicitly denied the value of increased communication, ^(see this, 21) stressing the conflict of interests that existed between the trustees who owned defense industries and oil and mining interests in Southeast Asia, and the students who opposed the war. A review in The Daily (Sept. 24) by Dan Snell called S.D.S.'s view of society "naïve" but did agree that America wearing her "jewels of industrial expansion...has to a very large extent forgotten her people."¹⁴

The radical analysis was given some impetus from three speakers who came to Stanford in late September and early October: David Harris, a founder of the Resistance, Art Melville, an ex-Catholic priest who became a revolutionary in Guatemala to fight U.S. imperialism, and Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panthers, all of whom sharply criticized U.S. policy, foreign and domestic, and advocated various illegal methods of fighting it.

On October 1st, the first meeting of S.D.S. was held. Three hundred students attended, many just to find out what S.D.S. was about. Four speakers, including Weisman, spoke on Stanford's involvement in Southeast Asia and U.S. imperialism, and easily convinced the students that S.D.S.'s focus should be on ending war-related research at Stanford and S.R.I. The only public acknowledgment coming from the administration at this time was Acting President Robert J.

of what? exactly -

Glaser's interim policy on disruption, which made it a violation of University regulations to prevent or obstruct any University ~~and~~ activity.¹⁵

On October 8th, S.D.S. held a meeting and issued a set of demands to the University and S.R.I. The demands read as follows:

- This would be more effectively presented in the College*
- 1) The war in Vietnam and economic programs in conjunction with it are oppressive to Southeast Asia.
 - 2) The University is aiding this oppression.
 - 3) We have the obligation to act against this oppression.
 - 4) We have the power and the right to act.

We the members of S.D.S. demand that the University, its wholly owned subsidiary the Stanford Research Institute, and all members of the Stanford community cease forthwith all operations and programs concerned with Southeast Asia.

No # ← In addition to the demands, a dorm education program was decided upon, to enable S.D.S. members to discuss the demands with other students.¹⁶

On Thursday, October 10th, S.D.S. announced some additional demands:

All contracts, both classified and unclassified be made public, complete with information on the values of the contracts and the individuals performing the work; Stanford and S.R.I. trustees make public all their corporate and governmental connections; and the Stanford faculty make public all their governmental and corporate contracts and connections.

← A rally was announced for the following Monday, the deadline set for the demands. S.D.S. announced that if the demands were not met, they would march to S.R.I. to protest the war research.¹⁷

On October 11th, acting President Glaser announced that he was calling for a "student-faculty investigation of the Stanford Research Institute (S.R.I.) and its connection with the University," with a six month limit set on the investigation.¹⁸

Glaser's announcement met with a mixed response. S.R.I. Board Chairman Earnest Arbuckle (also a Stanford trustee and a director of Utah Mining and Construction, which builds B-52 bases in Thailand) and Kenneth Pitzer, the incoming

and ex-Dean of the Div. School

president of Stanford agreed with Glaser on the investigation,¹⁹ but the radicals believed that the investigation was merely a stalling tactic of the administration. They argued that if these men really wanted an investigation, they could have the material ready in a day, and that six months was ridiculous. They also argued that the committee was merely examining the ties between S.R.I. and Stanford, and would probably propose severance, instead of attacking the main issue, the war research done there. The majority of the student body, however, seemed to think the investigation was reasonable.

At the same time, The Daily began publishing facts about S.R.I. An article on October 14th stated that 75% of S.R.I.'s work was for the government (and that 75% of this was for the Department of Defense), and that 5% of S.R.I.'s work was for international industry and foreign governments.²⁰ A later article revealed that "Research efforts in such things as village security programs, combat problems, logistics and intelligence work are not uncommon..."²¹

On Monday, October 14th, the S.D.S. demands had not been met, so the students held a demonstration at the main branch of S.R.I. on Ravenswood Avenue in Menlo Park. The Daily featured a somewhat biased and factually incorrect article the next day, which stated that "...members of S.D.S., gathered at the main entrance of S.R.I. in an unsuccessful attempt to provoke a public confrontation," and "an S.D.S.-S.R.I. confrontation fizzled out yesterday, but was replaced by a two hour dialogue..."²² The "confrontation" actually came as S.D.S. had planned-- they had wanted to talk to the researchers at S.R.I., not provoke police action. As a result of the demonstration, S.R.I. public relations man Homer Meaders invited Stanford students to come to S.R.I. in small groups during the next week, to discuss the problems with S.R.I. personnel.

Although the negative attitude of Stanford students toward S.D.S. changed little, more people began to agree with their goals. On October 17th, Denis

Hayes recommended to the Board of Trustees that S.R.I. accept no new research contracts for CBW or counterinsurgency during the investigation,²³ but the recommendation was not accepted. A Daily editorial on October 21st made a recommendation similar to the S.D.S. demands, asking S.R.I. to stop accepting classified government contracts. The editorial also opposed severance, saying that "...severance of ties might make S.R.I. an arm of the Pentagon, if it is not already one."²⁴ The next day's Daily ran an article stating that one half of S.R.I.'s research was funded by the D.O.D., and that half of this was "basic research" while one half was "highly mission-oriented." Even some of the "basic research"²⁵ in radio-defence however, was considered easily applicable to ballistic missile radio systems.²⁶

identified - the author of...

On October 17th, the radicals gained more liberal support when Seymour Hersh spoke at Stanford on CBW. He said that five hundred million dollars was being spent by the U.S. government on CBW, and also said that 6,400 sheep were killed in Utah as a result of the malfunction of a nozzle that released a cloud of nerve gas. Hersh said he believed that the nozzle may have been designed at S.R.I.²⁷

was not?

On October 30th, the first whisperings of the conservative reaction were heard. In a column in The Daily, Harvey H. Hukari, Jr. a leader of the Young Americans For Freedom (Y.A.F.), called the white liberals and radicals "masochistic". He wrote:

"Every week some speaker from the outside world will come to Dinkelspiel or Cubberly and share with them the vicarious thrill of being an exploited grape worker in Delano, a downtrodden peasant in Guatemala, or a black person living in poverty and despair in East Oakland."

Understandably, the average great white hope for the future of America becomes concerned. He puts a Cranston sticker on the back of his Pontiac, and decides not to eat grapes for a week. Commitment."²⁸

S.D.S. actions in November began with a "sit-out" at A.E.L. on the 5th, to protest the

*Sadly - Harvey
won't for
how the
much there!*

war research there (electronic warfare).²⁹ The "sit-out" consisted of blocking one door and leaving the other open. Approximately 100 demonstrators "exorcized" A.E.L. with a chant and then talked to researchers. David Pugh, a leader of S.D.S. described the kind of work being done at A.E.L. and informed the others ~~there~~ that the Systems Techniques Laboratory there received about one million dollars from the D.O.D., and that 40% of its projects were classified. "The stuff they're doing now," he continued, "will be used to prosecute colonial wars of the future. We're going to act as proxies for the people of the Third World."³⁰

Professor Stephen Kline of Mechanical Engineering objected to the protest saying that, "Basic research is always neutral," but Steve Weissman replied that only the U.S. and Russia can "take basic research and use it. You know in advance who'll use it."³¹

← One researcher complained that by asking him to make moral judgements in regard to his work, the students were expecting him to be a scientist and a philosopher at the same time, something that he thought was impossible.

The research issue lost public interest after November 5th, due to the "Eletoral Wake" arrests and charges of political intimidation by the police, arrests. The situation was reflected in a Daily article by Philip Taubman on November 26th, in which he wrote, "Several members of S.D.S. call the experience [of the war research demands] 'a total bust.' The evident reason for failure, they say, were the overly general and off-campus nature of the demands."³¹

in 1945 (The A Bomb worked!)
It's been said that at Alamogordo, the Physicists lost their
"sovereignty" - but ^{too} few seem to realize it!

I know what you mean, other readers will not.
needs some more explanation!