

WHY ENCINA ?

The April Third Movement's occupation of Encina Hall left the Movement and the community seriously split. While such a split was aggravated by the form and tone of the decisions at the evening meeting, the conflict was--and continues to be--essentially political. The political analysis that motivated those who decided to enter Encina was never clearly presented either within the Movement or to the community in general. This pamphlet is an attempt to argue that case and to place the Encina action in the context of a developing political strategy.

Last Fall SDS raised objection to Stanford and SRI's involvement in Southeast Asia. While a committee was formed to take up the SRI question, campus concern was not extensive. The issues emerged most clearly before the community on January 14 when a small group of students engaged in a symbolic confrontation with the Board of Trustees--the remote and silent group of men and women with the power to meet the SDS demands. SDS got no response from the trustees, and a very negative response from most of the community.

But in the SJC hearings which followed the confrontation, the defendants used a strong collective defense which developed greater support for the original demands. In the context of new support and interest SDS demanded an open meeting of the Trustees in March. The University Advisory Committee stepped in at that point to propose a forum for March 11. That meeting proved disastrous for the Trustees, and was the impetus for the formation of the April 3 Movement.

Campus and community groups called the April 3 meeting to formulate a set of demands to the Trustees; those present voted to retain SRI and to end CBW, counter-insurgency, SE Asian War-related and classified research at both Stanford and SRI. They also demanded an open decision-making meeting in May. The Trustee response to these demands on April 8--a moratorium on new CBW contracts at SRI and a hearing of some sort on the SRI question--was clearly inadequate. On April 9 several hundred people voted to occupy the Applied Electronics Laboratory.

Much of the appeal of the AEL sit-in lay in the fact that it was non-violent direct action: the A3M people began to implement at least one part of the demand by stopping objectionable research in electronic warfare. At the same time the building served as an effective base for the Movement, as space for a growing community. In addition, the printing presses allowed us to publish the SRI pamphlet, "The Goods on AEL", "Declassified" and thousands of leaflets which kept the issues before the community. The result of this "disruption" was fairly massive support for the original demands. With the revelation of information about the Baxter Committee's work obtained from AEL files, the Academic Senate began to move toward abolishing secret research on campus. When President Pitzer ordered the building closed and people felt the sit-in had achieved most of what it could, we left.

In the period after leaving AEL, people had very different expectations of the faculty and Trustees. Some felt they knew what both would do, others wished to wait for their suspicions to be confirmed. The Movement continued its educational campaign, but lacked an adequate base, printing facilities and the sense of community to sustain a high level of work. Two meetings of the Academic Senate on the SRI question were inconclusive, and were interpreted by many as an indication of faculty unwillingness to support the goals of the Movement.

The Trustees were even less responsive. Ignoring the A3M demand for an open forum with all the trustees, they structured a hearing for April 30 which guaranteed their continuing silence. When the participating Trustees refused once again to express their personal positions on research at SRI--despite the fact that the issues had been before them since last October--A3M members left the hearing.

A meeting began outside Memorial Auditorium. It adjourned for dinner and reconvened in the Tresidder large lounge. The tone of the evening meeting was tense, and perhaps reflected the division between those who believed that the faculty and the Trustees would do nothing and those who wished to wait at least for faculty action. A cramped room, heckling, a move to close debate and the ensuing scuffle, and disputes about voting made the necessary extensive debate impossible. The political arguments and the implications of another sit-in were not clearly laid out; objections and uncertainties were not resolved in the confusion of the meeting. The vote was in favor of a sit-in, and the meeting moved to Dinkelspiel to choose a building. Again, debate was not extensive, but there was disagreement between those who felt we should take a building which--like AEL--was involved in objectionable research, and those who felt that the time had come to apply greater pressure on the trustees by threatening to disrupt "business as usual."

Those who argued in favor of occupying Encina felt that another "educational" sit-in was not enough; the community had expressed itself, but that had not made the trustees respond. If we wished to win the demands, then we had to act before the trustees made their decision. Otherwise we would merely be reacting to a fait accompli. To many who felt that the faculty or trustees would still respond favorably and accept our demands, the move seemed pre-mature. In the end, disagreement grew out of people's analysis of how serious a conflict existed between our demands and the interests of the Trustees--who after all would make the final decisions.

To many in the Movement, what has happened at Stanford this spring seems like an analogy to the struggle against the war in Vietnam, but it is more than that. We are engaged in a conflict with the kind of men--and some of the very men--whose interests got us into Vietnam, and whose disenchantment with the rising costs of that conflict will eventually get us out. As the War goes on, their university moves closer and closer toward becoming one of those costs; their control is threatened. The struggle at Stanford, then, is a microcosm; the trustees' intransigence will not give way to moral persuasion or majority votes any more than our outcries have ended the war. If this view is correct, then the trustees will respond only to rising costs.

The occupation of Encina Hall raised the ante. It was an attempt to speak to the trustees in a language that they could understand--the language of cost and control. The use of police and the capricious court injunction were not because of a few broken doors or a typewriter. The clearly perceived threat centered around the disruption of "business as usual" and an inquiry into files most of us have never seen. The recent history of Stanford's administration has never been marked by unnecessary force; the lesson of Encina was that serious threat is met with serious reprisals.

Why is Encina so important? Any further disruption would have had and will have certain costs. A university depending for support on conservative alumni and research agencies which prefer stability cannot tolerate continuing disturbances. Faculty are not likely to come to or to remain at a university whose future is questionable. High school seniors and their parents prefer the calm promised in university handbooks, not the tension of a university ruled by men who guarantee continuing conflict. The men who run Stanford understand this better than we do.

Beyond the general problem, they know that certain buildings are more important to control than others. As the complaint filed by the trustees' law firm states, and it comes as a surprise to many of us, Encina Hall is "commonly known as the nerve center of the University..." (emphasis added)

In Encina Hall, we did more than threaten the payroll and the office functions of that nerve center. As President Pitzer explained in the Daily, he was forced to call in the police because of "the willfull entry into files of great importance to the University". Provost Lyman refers to "the fact that Encina contains not one, but a wide variety of sensitive and important repositories of information." Clearly, our willingness to look at such files was the final threat that brought in the police. In AEL some people proved willing to look at unclassified files; their contents surprised the community in general and the faculty in particular. What was so important about the Encina files?

We can only speculate. Perhaps the personnel files would give us a better idea of our faculty's interests and the persons and agencies for whom they consult. Perhaps underpaid graduate students and staff would discover how wealth is distributed. In the planning office, we might find the long-range plans for land development: clearly, many people would not be impressed with plans for new industrial parks, more luxury housing, and conference centers and hotels, and the lack of plans for low-income housing. Plans for academic expansion which suggested more and more extravagant buildings and less emphasis on improving the quality of education might be hard to defend. Finally, a university which claims that it seeks mostly unspecified funds from unnamed donors and agencies might not wish to have its fund-raising files perused.

Perhaps there is nothing to hide. We cannot know. All we can do is speculate on the basis of the university's statements and actions. Clearly, the combined threats mentioned above led to extreme action. Our decisions to leave Encina saved the University from the bloody busts that have plagued other campuses. But the subsequent reprisals of suspension, injunction, and perhaps expulsion, are serious indeed. They begin to suggest how far the University will go before acceding to just demands when its interests--that is, the interests of the people who run it--are seriously threatened.

We have learned a lot from Encina about the strengths and weaknesses of the University and our Movement. The risks we have taken, the price we have paid, have not raised the costs to the trustees enough for them to meet our demands--we do not yet know how high those costs must be in order for us to win.