

CAST AWAY ILLUSIONS PREPARE TO STRUGGLE

As we all know, it has been the students who have carried the struggle against SRI ever since the nature of the Slaughter Research Institute became known. Students have been agitating on this issue all this school year, and students engineered the coalition which is now threatening to bring the Trustees to their knees. Students were the ones who tried every alternative, made every appeal, and used every available method to force a confrontation on this issue, and, finally, the students had the courage to close down AEL and open it up again as a base area for political agitation around the issues of CBW and counter-insurgency research.

Now, suddenly, out of the shrouded silence in which they habitually brood, we find a new element "joining" the struggle--the morally concerned, liberal faculty which is quite anxious to find a way to "meet in principle" the demands of the students through "substantive debates."

The role of the faculty in the AEL sit-in has come close to splitting the movement. For this reason, and because the same sort of thing happens all the time, it is extremely important that we understand the teachers, what influences them, why they act as they do. It is also important that we understand the tendencies within the students to support the faculty, i.e., let the faculty lead them, let the faculty tell them how to go about achieving their demands. Finally, we should gain an understanding of how we should deal with the faculty, how it is necessary to relate to them as a group.

First, let us examine the historical role of the faculty concerning the SRI struggle. In reality, their historical role is notable only for its absence. Their "moral concern" over the CBW and C-I research is an extremely recent development, and only became a catchword, strangely enough, about the time the students occupied the AEL building. Before the advent of the April 3rd Movement, during the three long years in which the work at SRI was well known and publicized, there was no "duress and confusion making substantive discussion next to impossible," as Professor Schiff concernedly complained last Sunday night. Yet the professor claims to share our own moral concern. Perhaps he does, but he and the rest of the Academic Senate certainly do not share our enthusiasm for converting empty morality into some positive coercive action against the butchers in this university. It is obvious that every move the faculty makes is not directed towards achieving the demands, but towards ending the sit-in.

The Stanford faculty, like faculties everywhere, would like the university to be enshrouded by pedantic mists which protect it from the real struggles of real people. The faculty stands in the middle, ambiguously under administrative rule and clearly ruling the students, completely dependent on the system but often outraged by what the system does, and behaves as might be expected--it vacillates in its loyalties but in a crisis tends to line up with the party of order.

Now, why is that? The fact of the matter is that most professors are both objectively and subjectively members of the petit bourgeoisie. As such, they share a very common idea of their class--that class struggle, if it exists at all, involves other people and springs from their irrationality. Hence the liberal idea that conflict comes from people not communicating well enough. As a subclass, professors fervently cling to the belief that they, perhaps alone of all groups, are above that sordid field of confused struggle. This belief justifies their very reason for existence, for they believe that they alone can offer a neutral, objective, classless, more or less truthful view of the other classes, of the history of their struggles, and of the culture which springs from this history and gives it comprehensible form.

Thus their extreme vacillation, utter unreliability, complete confusion and constant position of being held in contempt by both the ruling class and the oppressed classes. This petit bourgeois consciousness has permeated the student ranks to some degree, and a significant number of students are extremely confused, torn between the abstract, above-the-struggle rhetoric of the faculty and the realistic rhetoric of power, the objective understanding of the nature of the struggle and what it will take to emerge on top.

What are we to conclude from all of this? Basically, that while it is important for us students to ally ourselves with sympathetic petit bourgeois faculty, it is even more important, it is crucially important, to recognize that their role is an ambiguous one, and that they are likely to sell out the struggle at any time. It is absolutely essential that the students play the dominant role and not abdicate to the petit bourgeois faculty. We must attempt to bring these faculty over to our position and not be brought over to theirs. In the next day or two, the faculty will increase their efforts to get us as confused as they are. We must resist these efforts and broaden and deepen our own understanding of what is happening. If we do not, we are almost certain to lose.