

Guest Column

Won't You Open The Doors?

By Marc Weiss

One hundred students gathered at Bowman Alumni House at 12:30 p.m. on January 14 to talk to the Stanford Trustees at their afternoon meeting. This effort at communication was rejected.

With that channel closed, about half the students attempted the "face-to-face" approach at the Faculty Club, and 29 of those students who walked through that forbidden open door are now on suspended suspensions and probation from the University. The probationary sentence is not an act of clemency by Jack Friedenthal or Kenneth Pitzer. Rather, the sentences are statements by these men that the defendant's political beliefs as stated in the motivational hearings are inimicable to the interests of the Trustees and the present centers of financial power at Stanford. Furthermore, political opposition on this campus will only be tolerated by the powers-that-be (in the hollow interests of "academic freedom") so long as these beliefs are not translated into action.

The attempt to protect the status quo University from radical change is illustrated in the Council's official statement: "The Council's imposition of periods of probation takes into consideration the threat by defendants, made at the Council's recommendation, seems to make things nice and legitimate, except for a few simple facts: 1) The policy enforced was one specifically designed to severely limit the legitimate channels for change open to groups politically opposing the status quo University; 2) The policy derives its authority from the Trustees as passed on through their appointed spokesman, the President. 3) The Council will enforce only policies deriving authority from the above source. 4) The Council has no jurisdictional powers whatever over the Trustees, but effectively only over students and Bruce Franklin constitutes prima facie abandonment of neutrality on the part of the Council. 5) The Council only has the power to recommend. The Trustees' appointed spokesman has the power to suspend or expel us at any time, even over the Council's protests. These facts illustrate the position on the Judicial Council SDS has taken all along: the Council's hearings were neither neutral nor legitimate. For example, those students who simply stated in the first hearing that they were at the Faculty Club and no more, were listed in the official report as

having admitted to being guilty as charged.

The hearings held in the Moot Courtroom were indeed moot court; the Council had previously decided that anyone who was there was guilty so all it had to do was to decide upon an "appropriate" punishment. Our decision regarding the sentence was an equally moot question—we knew that it was illegitimate. All that remained was deciding how to attack it.

The Council considered "the offense to be a very serious one that must not be repeated." The community should pay close attention to this matter of "seriousness," which strikes the very heart of each student's perilous existence here at Stanford. What made this offense so serious?

There was no physical violence, no property damage. The whole thing was an attempt to speak to the Trustees, even after we entered the room we asked them to stay and talk. Dean Watkins admitted this at the hearing. Our crime was so serious because it was psychological and political.

We transcended the boundaries of behavior as prescribed to us by the Trustees, and thereby challenged their hierarchical position within the society. The trial was a re-assertion of the power of the Trustees to determine the relationships between themselves and those whom they rule; to be the sole definers of the roles to be fulfilled by all subservient to them in this University and all subservient to their class in this society.

In a sense, every student was on

trial last month—and we were sentenced together to be either obedient recipients of their education or non-recipients of their education.

At the trial Trustee Dean Watkins (of Watkins-Johnson, an electronics firm that does 2/3 of its business with the Defense Department) testified that for students to take initiative on their own and attend the meeting uninvited was intolerable and inappropriate. So much so that the Trustees locked the doors and ignored us. He suggested that writing letters is a more appropriate form of communication with the Board.

Yale Braunstein reported having written a few letters and not receiving any replies. Dean Watkins smiled and said, "I didn't say we'd answer the letters. I just said you should write them."

Later he said that while the Trustees made fundamental decisions for the Stanford community, he didn't feel particularly responsible to that community.

These men and their system subscribe to a basic assumption. They made the decisions and their subordinates (students) are the docile recipients of those decisions. They control the resources, and those who wish to use them may be creative, should be productive, but must be obedient.

SDS and the defendants reject their assumption. So we have arranged an open meeting of the Stanford community (including the Trustees, if you consider them members) for Tuesday, March 11, at 1:00 p.m. in Dinkelspiel

Auditorium. Since Dean Watkins thinks it's inappropriate to come to a meeting uninvited, we sent the Trustees written invitations. This article is SDS's written invitation to you.

Every student who rejects the Trustees' assumptions, who sees the Trustees' position in Southeast Asia, in the Black community, and in the University as being of questionable legitimacy and rationality, who feels that in our present society, Dead Week is 52 weeks a year, should be at that meeting next Tuesday. The Trustees are wondering just how successful their school is at manufacturing submissive, apologetic, and disinterested scholars. The turnout at Dinkelspiel can give them the answer.

One more thing. The Council stated that our "actions are counter-productive in that they tend to eliminate opportunity for legitimate discussion and resolution of vital issues (italics mine)." Make no mistake about it. The nine demands on Southeast Asia can't be resolved at the meeting next week.

The Trustees are not going to be convinced by talking to us or to the Vietnamese that our demands are "just". The only thing that will convince them to meet those demands is enough community support to force them to meet the demands. The community meeting next Tuesday could be a key step toward developing that kind of community power.

(Marc Weiss is a Sophomore in General Studies and a member of SDS.—Ed)

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