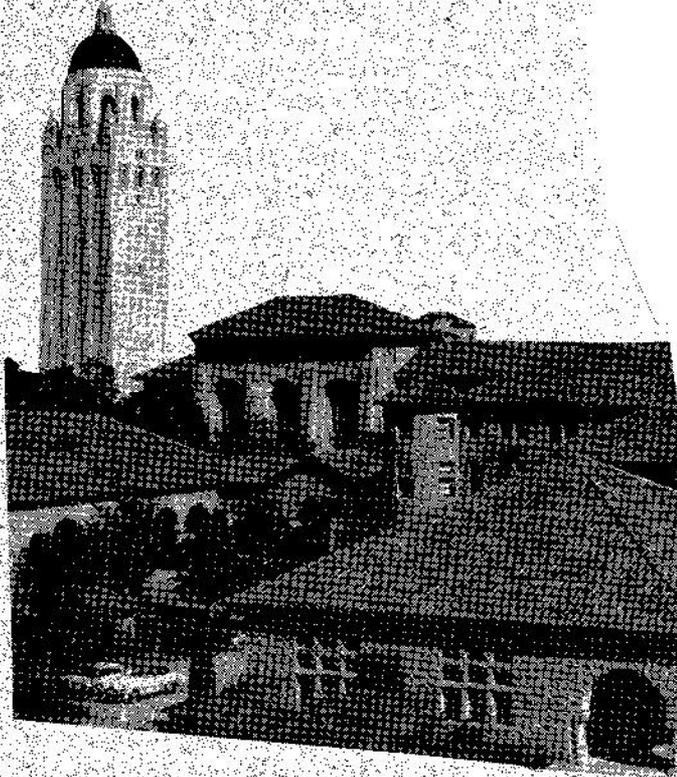


Left vs. Stanford



You guys were fantastic

By Paul Rupert

The day after I sat on the panel when Stanford SDS held its meeting with five of the university's trustees, a student hasher in a dormitory stopped me. "You guys were fantastic," he said. I thanked him. He continued: "You know, I'm no radical or anything--I mean I don't belong to SDS or the Resistance. In fact, I'm on the football team. I went to that meeting and I tried to do it with an open mind, but you guys were so right. Those trustees shouldn't be running this place."

In a sense, that sums up the March 11 meeting. Five powerful and legitimate trustees came before the people they ruled, most of whom were trying to keep an "open mind" or were still angry at SDS for breaking into the last trustees' meeting. But by the meeting's end, the rulers had lost control of their audience, and the people were demanding an open meeting.

The successful meeting was a decisive point in the long struggle against the trustees and their political and military involvements. It grew out of the research of the early Vietnam war years, a time that saw the campus plastered with posters accusing the trustees of war crimes. The meeting was also possible because of dorm discussions and newspaper articles, numerous demands, and the SDS "opening" of January 14 (when 29 students invaded a trustee luncheon demanding that Stanford get out of Southeast Asia in many specific ways).

All those earlier acts were aimed at the legitimacy, and thus the power, of our wealthy, businessman board. Our early work was important, because when the trustees lost their legitimacy it was transferred to us--we had been aware of and publicizing

(cont. on p. 12, col. 2)

Fantastic...

(cont. fr. p. 9, col. 1)

their intolerable commitments all along. As Dean of Students Joel Smith is rumored to have said: "SDS is back in business."

The trustees' power has relied on several things: most students saw their own interests as identical to the trustees' interests; the trustees have seemed honest and earnest in their work, and our side has lacked credibility, coherence, and support. At the meeting, a combination of the SDS members' good statements and probing questions and the trustees' blunders and deceptions pointed up the disparity between their interests and ours as well as their lack of honesty with us.

NOT MY KIND OF GUY

One of the most significant incidents occurred when Nick Selby, a junior who is not active in SDS, asked trustee William Hewlett (Asst. Secretary of State David Packard's partner in Hewlett-Packard Co.) if FMC, a corporation which he helps direct, produced nerve gas. Selby went on to say that if Hewlett did that, then he wasn't the kind of guy he wanted running his university.

Hewlett denied the charge, saying "We do not manufacture nerve gas." I interrupted and quoted sources that contradicted him, and asked how he explained this conflict of information. He chided us for having such bad sources, and then went on to say (in his inimitably elitist way) that his source was the president of the company, with whom he spoke only recently. At that point someone in the audience asked if they had ever produced nerve gas. Hewlett admitted that they had just sold the plant to the government six months ago.

Trustee W. P. Fuller III was caught in a similar deception. When he said students were consulted about the selection of the university president, Mike Weinstein, a student panelist, said that Steve Smith, one of the students at the selection meeting, told him the meeting was spent in discussion of sexual promiscuity in Grove House, a co-ed dormitory. Fuller denied that, but a student in the audience who had been at the meeting rose to challenge Fuller and corroborate Smith's account.

Subsequently, SDS member Fred Cohen caught trustees Hewlett and Charles Ducommun on the question of neutrality in the university, when they admitted their unwillingness to offer their facilities to

the North Vietnamese and the NLF.

The trustees were frequently defensive, evasive, and far from candid. They were reluctant to comment on anything of significance, and refused to say how they felt about chemical and biological warfare "until they read the committee report"--the report of the faculty-student committee studying the work of Stanford Research Institute.

In contrast, we made ourselves very clear. We described a vision of a democratic university, where certain standards would control research and the institution would serve its people--by which we meant the world's people. We had done our homework; we knew who they were, what they did, and where they were vulnerable. We were honest and deadly serious in our questions, and the audience responded to that.

The meeting saw a steady erosion of their position, a transfer of the crowd's identification from them to us. It may have been the beginning of the transfer of some power as well. When we started the meeting, we were at their mercy--no more than a quarter of the audience was really with us. But by the time we ended, we were able to demand that they meet on campus publicly to discuss the SRI report. When Ducommun tried to be clever, asking me "Whose demand is this?", almost the entire audience roared back "Ours!"

Clearly we "won." But we are now left with the problem of mobilizing the campus, of consolidating our power, of maintaining and building our legitimacy. And as usual, as long as they have the power to maneuver and call most of the shots, it will not be easy. We have the task of continuing the educational work, finding actions that will build support, and delineating our alternative.

Most likely the trustees will put off their consideration of the SRI committee report until the summer. They will probably meet in April, before the SRI report is out. At their May meeting they will form a committee to "take the matter under advisement," thus avoiding the chance of any confrontation. Again, our interests clash. If we, as a community, feel that this matter is so important that it deserves prompt, open consideration with our participation, then we shall have to move quickly and together. The task of translating the possibility of power into the reality of power is ours. This encounter with the trustees felt good. The next one might just change things a bit.