

S.R.I., Stanford, and S.D.S.

A position paper on the proposed student-faculty investigation of the relationship of S.R.I. and the university.

The war in Vietnam has reached the back pages. It is now a condition of life. The Stanford community was one of the first in the nation to express its concern, to use a mild word, with the war and its causes. That concern intensified when we realized that the war and the growing war in Thailand are here on campus, in the industrial park, and at Stanford Research Institute. That knowledge has created tension on campus. One, and only one, manifestation of that tension is the expected crisis over S.R.I. Recently, Stanford S.D.S. issued a series of demands, among them that those in the Stanford community, including faculty and trustees, cease all military and economic activity in Southeast Asia. There was a less important demand that S.R.I. make its contracts public by October 14.

Acting president Robert Glaser responded in a most unsurprising way by calling for the formation of a student-faculty investigating committee merely to look into the relationship between S.R.I. and the university. The Daily and some faculty members said that this would take the wind out of S.D.S.'s sails. To quote Bob Emery, "Not hardly," and T.S. Eliot, "That is not it at all."

For S.D.S. the real issue is America's foreign policy and ~~the~~ Stanford's relationship to it, ~~Stanford's~~, not intramural questions of nomenclature and organization within the university. Consequently, S.D.S. actions will be about the effects of U.S. foreign policy, and those who profit from those policies.

In making its demands S.D.S. stated four assumptions, which are stated here again, in the hope that someone will take us on our own word. One faculty committee is circulating information about us from such sources as Fortune, which we read but don't write for. Here's us by us.

1. U.S. military and economic policy in Southeast Asia oppresses and exploits the peoples of that area.
2. American universities, Stanford in particular, are integral and necessary to these policies by providing manpower and executing research.
3. We have the obligation and the right to be concerned as human beings, not by our mere definition as Stanford students, faculty, and staff.
4. We have the power, at least at the university, to stop these policies.

As for S.R.I., we said we wanted more information that we already have made public one week after the demands were promulgated. The week, until October 14, seemed like a reasonable time for these reasons: First, the Stanford trustees who are also S.R.I. directors have access to information about S.R.I. and can therefore release it. Second, no new data can be created by any investigation of S.R.I. Third, S.R.I. must have some central registry, like an accounting department, to keep track of all its contracts and projects. This information could have been collated and distributed in one week or less by people with access to it.

Not surprisingly, in spite of statements that the investigating committee had nothing to do with S.D.S. demands, many people think the committee is a tactic to create a cooling-off period, or more cynically, a ploy to divert attention from the fundamental issues of what the university is doing in Southeast Asia. Others see the investigation as a further indication that the academician's knee-jerk response to crisis is committee formation, followed by lamentations on failures to communicate, tapering off into concern with greater participation within the existing framework, followed by more committee formation. Meanwhile Stanford will continue to help the U.S. government run its war in Southeast Asia, and S.D.S. will act on its assumptions.

S.D.S. would like to make these suggestions to the investigating committee:

1. That the committee operate under assumptions really relevant to the concerns of the community.
2. That it make its information on S.R.I. public as soon as it receives it, especially
 - a. The funding and staff for all projects, especially the sources of the funds.
 - b. The nature, if the details, of all classified projects.
 - c. Information about the "Handfull," in the word of S.R.I.'s Weldon Gibson, of projects S.R.I. won't officially admit it has.
3. That the committee hold open meetings.
4. That it publish all its proceedings.
5. That the academic background and other affiliations of committee members be made public.
6. That the criteria by which committee members are selected be made public.

For its part, S.D.S. will continue to publish all it has on Stanford participation in U.S. foreign policy, and hopes the committee will use it. We wish to remind the community that S.R.I. is a wholly owned subsidiary of Stanford University and that its creation by the then trustees was not a gratuitous act. We are sure the student-faculty investigation of S.R.I. will confirm S.D.S.'s second assumption, that universities like Stanford participate in U.S. foreign policy. We hope the investigation proceeds beyond that assumption to realize both the nature of that foreign policy and our responsibility to change it and the university for the better.

by, among others, Lenny Saagal, Harry Cleaver,
and Art Eisenon.