STUDENTS VERSUS SOCIETY
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west germany: albrecht briedenhahn
japan: j.a.a. stockwin
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Conservative opinion in Japan attributes student radicalism to the spiritual ‘vacuum’ of the post-war scene and advocates more and better ethics courses in schools and other measures to inculcate ‘responsibility’. The absence of clear national goals is probably part of the story, as is the extremely acute ‘generation gap’, but there are more important factors involved than these. For many students in Japan, university is an interlude between a home environment that is a good deal more sheltered than would be the case in Australia, and employment by a firm or other organisation which acts for its employees as a welfare state in miniature, while demanding a degree of loyalty that few Australians would be prepared to accept. This in-between period is one of reorientation to a much frer environment, which, however, except for the student movement, provides a singular lack of psychological supports from group membership such as the student has been used to at home. Moreover natural rebels face the frustrating prospect that after a few years of freedom they will have to return to a kind of group-centered life that will involve a considerable sacrifice of individuality. The two types complement each other as the leadable and the leaders respectively. (Hence also the post-graduate conservativism of the bulk of Zengakuren members.)

Another point is that students have to overcome incredibly fierce competition to enter the better universities. The ‘examination hell’ has become so ‘hellish’ that a majority of entrants to some prestigious institutions have had to endure (and their parents to pay for) one or two years at cram school after finishing high school. Once the university entrance examination is passed, however, the pressure relaxes and a good career is virtually assured by the rigid Japanese system of career ‘streaming’. Students therefore recognize themselves as an elite, and indeed their Marxism sometimes has strong elitist overtones.

If one adds the multiversity phenomenon, which is at least as acute in Japan as elsewhere, together with bad teaching, financial stringency of students from poorer families and genuine political apprehensions about the distinctly uninspiring character of Japanese government, the Zengakuren is not difficult to understand. It faces, however, the basic revolutionary dilemma of whether it is good tactics to follow, or to shock, public opinion. To shock may have limited success in particular campaigns, but Japanese society in 1968 seems too conservative and too fragmented to respond with the kind of chain reaction that has occurred in France.

The Japanese student movement has been looked to as an inspiring example by some student radicals in Australia and elsewhere. It may indeed be able to teach such practical things as the use of snake dances and of crash helmets. But its results in terms of practical politics have so far (except, perhaps, for 1960) been comparatively meagre.

4. Sydney University
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Many of the current explanations of student unrest operate at a level of generality far above the institutions moulding Australia’s 100,000 students. Thus we have the view of a Sydney professor that alienated youths are produced by the ‘false values of modern technological society’. There is also the evergreen ‘generation-gap’, and the sinister force of foreign ideologies (would you believe Anarchism?) to shelter beneath. Coming a little closer to campus, and leaving the pop analysis sphere, there are echoes of the line of America’s corporate liberals that student unrest is ‘organised deviance’, manipulated by outside agitators who capitalize on the social dislocation experienced by some ‘socially marginal’ students.

This article does not offer an explanation of student protest. We have not seen enough evidence to attempt that; and the present stage in this field involves clarifying the variables and limits of the problem, as well as collecting data. These, then, are our two concerns. Readers may find a third area of interest: as participants in radical politics at Sydney University we do not claim ‘objectivity’.

Whether the reason for student protest is lack of participation in university decision-making, or opposition to the Vietnam war, the activity is founded on a substratum of frustrations and accumulated discontents related to the present character of the university. The expansion of the main universities is by now a well-worn field of discussion, and we list here only the most important consequences creating student alienation.

First, the university has become bureaucratised in several ways. The function of administration is associated not only with the formal administration, but also with administrative assistants attached to faculties and departments, and an increasing part of the activities of the academics. Bureaucratic norms are contagious, and in response to growing student numbers, some teachers now ‘administer’ knowledge to their students in mind-sized chunks, via program-

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med-learning techniques and minutely specific reading lists. The values of the university are becoming those of the bureaucrat, as its capital equipment grows concurrently with the spread of the view that the university exists to produce ‘human capital’. Secondly, there has occurred a decline of teaching standards, marked by the increasing amount of teaching carried out by new or junior staff. Many staff, especially the more established, have in self-defense retreated from the older notion that teaching involves two-way relationships between teacher and student, discipline and society. This may be seen as yet another consequence of bureaucratisation — the university has become functionally differentiated according to a number of set roles. Individuals impersonally act out their roles as teachers, administrators or students.

Thirdly, the increasing age and ability of students have revealed the latent tension between the biological and emotional maturity of students, and the tendency for the institution to continue to treat them as adolescents. In recent years, quotas were imposed on entry to Sydney University, followed by the completion of the Wyndham scheme which raised the age and possibly the quality of entrants, and a determined effort by the university to increase the numbers of its honours and post-graduate students. Clearly these developments have implications for teaching standards as well as for the regulations limiting the powers of student organisations, and the personal behaviour of students. Indeed the most resented form of ‘adolescent’ treatment of student adults may become the forced-feeding with pre-digested knowledge in which many of their teachers indulge.

These are some of the indirect stimuli internal to the university situation. There are also indirect external stimuli, but they are less important. The sayings of Chairman Mao, the analysis of Rudi Dutschke and the tactics of the S.D.S. at Columbia, may have crystallised a new stage in the evolution of the Australian student movement, but they were not initial causes. Their main role is to reinforce existing trends and analyses, and to enrich the style of student protest.

The character of student unrest and protest will be determined not only by these internal and external stimuli, but also by the direct and specific reactions of the university administration and the academics, the opinion formulators in the surrounding community, and the radical leadership groups. We will examine this aspect of the problem later, in relation to recent events at Sydney University.

The logic of our analysis, so far, suggests that all student protests are, in some manner, about the condition of the university. The desire and facility to organise protest activity reflects the importance of the experiences of students in their institutionalised roles. The action itself will almost certainly expose the points of deterioration in the university community. Academics will lament the supposed decline in academic performance of their students. For their part, the students will insist that meaning and direction are given to their studies precisely by their engagement in a confrontation with authorities whom they no longer respect, but whose legitimacy is implicitly underlined by much of the content of their courses. Even in professional courses, teachers can confuse the authority of science with their own power as its exponents, and create amongst some students a generalised anti-authoritarianism which will later be localised in a political demonstration. Many academics will respond like the administrators they sometimes are, and side with the formal administration in its policies of hiding the university dissent from downtown publicity, of restricting the character of political activities on campus, and of penalising some students if they break regulations, show ‘contempt of (university) authority’, or otherwise harm the image of the university, as defined by the university establishment.

Three Choices

Sooner, or later, then, student protest movements are going to focus on the university, and eventually a movement for university reform will emerge. It has, in some Australian universities, already emerged, although its demands are either not specifically clarified, or not articulated in a systematic way. ‘Student power’ is not a passing fashion, for the oldies to endure, like long hair and protest buttons.

A university has three courses open to it when confronted with this expression of deep-seated alienation: it may resist, tolerate or welcome it.

If ‘student power’ is resisted it is probable that the movement associated with it will grow in size and in intellectual sophistication. The administration will be forced into a confrontation, and, hopefully, a genuine restructuring of university government, teaching and course content would gradually take place. This is not utopian. The ‘student revolution’ on hundreds of campuses in the United States and elsewhere has demonstrated that organised students can exercise a great deal of power. Even ten per cent of the student body can completely disrupt a campus through illegal occupancy of university buildings,¹ and there is no return to the status quo ante, as the various experimental colleges, seminars on university reform, and new decision-making devices, in American universities indicate. Hence to resist the demand for ‘student power’ will be fruitless; it would be better to welcome it from the start.

To tolerate the ‘student power’ movement would be the very worst response. The growing awareness of the inadequacies of the university cannot be placated in this way. Passive tolerance still imply the

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ultimate acceptance of the demand which involves a rejection of bureaucratic procedures, of teachers and students impersonally fulfilling their accepted roles.

There is no evidence that tolerating the movement will reduce the likelihood of physical disruption of the campus. Repressive tolerance, as Marcuse calls it, means that the administration encompasses the movement by making nominal changes (e.g. increasing student participation on Senate (a Council) and faculties'), defuses it by mild sanctions against the radical leaders, and gilds it with superior patronage. Toleration is pointless because it merely adds to campus frustrations. How can you talk to a person about new channels of power for new purposes, if he offers you only another seat on the Senate? The real danger, however, is that initially repressive tolerance might appear to work, from the viewpoint of a conservative administration. Given the relatively low level of sophistication of the emerging student power movement here, this policy might confuse the movement and cut away its mass following. The radicals might be made to look silly. But the isolation of the radicals will be neither complete nor demoralizing. On the contrary, in their eyes their analysis will be confirmed, their zeal heightened, and while the grievances remain, their number will be slowly augmented. In these conditions militance rather than mass support will become the criterion of correct policy, and the way will be open to an adventurist disruption of the campus, from which few benefits will flow because the existing attitudes of administrative repression and student confusion will be hardened.

The student power movement is only the latest wave of a social turbulence that began in Melbourne in the early 1960's as 'student action'. There was action on an ad hoc basis around a number of causes: aborigines, immigration reform, racial policy in South Africa and the southern United States, greater federal assistance to education, and against capital punishment. Today, despite the claims of some 'New Leftists', the student power movement is about as issue oriented and unideological as 'student action' was. In the early 1960's, there was some justification for this; the 'student action' movement claimed to live in the era of 'the end of ideology'.

Sydney student response to this claim is worth remembering. In those days, to be 'left' meant to be ideologically committed; ipso facto, a non-ideological movement must be right-wing inclined. So Sydney students hesitated to ride a wave that might dump them in the arms of the right. Actually, both sides of the argument were fashionably correct, but sociologically wrong. 'Student action' was student action, neither more nor less ideological than any other movement. Its rare leaders and publicists may have voiced a variety of doctrines or sub-doctrines; the bulk of the protesters hardly knew where ideology began and family traditions, psychological needs and group pressure left off. In this way they were no
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different from rank and file revolutionaries anywhere, anytime.

One sign of the growing maturity of the Australian student radical movement is the fact that there is an attempt to construct a more relevant ideology. The social landscape engages the attention of a small number of radical students and scholars. As the public and private corporations grow, embracing more of the population in new systems of stratification, and as power is drained from a public sea into a system of institutional canals, we do not see the mass society of which the prophets of the 1950’s warned. Cultural homogeneity, under the influence of the mass media, may have put its bland skin on us, but political and social styles seem stubbornly parochial.

In Sydney, the student left is still a curious mixture of strong doctrinal commitment and pragmatism bordering on opportunism. The administrative and academic hierarchies at Sydney University are, in the main, only distantly concerned with the need for university reform. Other Sydney peculiarities include a conservative professor who is a strong supporter of a kind of student power, and a series of articles, written by another right-wing academic, which attack student power, but which radicals regard as a handbook of revolt. There is also a new Vice Chancellor, who is often surprised at the complacency of his senior colleagues.

The Humphreys Affair

The Chancellor of Sydney University, Sir Charles McDonald, recently gave his views on students: they are more 'responsible' than ten years ago; their criticisms are sometimes justified (his examples were France and Indonesia); because they are young they make 'outrageous suggestions', but only to stir people up. To get along with young people it is only necessary not to be censorious. 'Once you allow yourself to be censorious you're sunk.' The moral for his administrators was clear: be tolerant and conciliatory in words (Paris is far) and you can masculinate student protest. Just as the Chancellor was speaking to his Rotary audience, five hundred Sydney students were meeting on the front lawn to demand an administration statement on the amendments to the National Service Act. Previously, senior administrators at the other major universities had declared their attitude on this question. In succeeding weeks, they had confronted their students at department, faculty, and university levels in order to exchange views on university reform. At Sydney, virtually nothing in this line had occurred up to the beginning of July.

Indeed, the only change in the university's handling of student protests and suggestions for university reform since the 'Humphreys Affair', has been a shift from indifference and repression to paternal tolerance. This affair may be taken as a paradigm of the 'student power' question. In Orientation Week 1967, Max Humphreys, 23, a post-graduate student in psychology, organised Student Action for the Rights of Students (SARS) to investigate the influence of student opinion in the university and to assist action on any issue which involved the rights of students. In early 1967 Library fines were raised without consultation with the students and without possible alternatives being considered. SARS acted on this issue, and after exhausting the normal means (by petition, meetings) of influencing the authorities, who refused at this stage to discuss the reasons for increasing fines in this way, SARS organised the first of a series of Library sit-ins on the night of April 6th.

By this time, the issues at stake included the fining system, consultation with students and student participation in university decision-making. After Humphreys was forcibly arrested by a university policeman on the morning after the sit-in, the issues multiplied. Humphreys had been distributing leaflets calling for another mass meeting to consider further sit-ins. These were confiscated, and Humphreys was charged with 'showing gross contempt of authority and inciting others to do the same'. By April 13 Humphreys had been found guilty as charged, by a Proctorial Board containing no student representative and which severely limited his rights of legal defence. He was suspended from his studies for a year.

By now the issues also included free speech, the severe victimisation of Humphreys, and the disciplinary processes of the university. The increasing size and regularity of the sit-ins paralleled the expansion of issues. There was a concurrent growth in the sections of the university community involved in the dispute. Where the campus radicals had led, the SRC and Staff Association now had to follow. The university was threatened with legal action over irregularities in the Proctorial Board's hearing, and with the time-consuming business of calling a meeting of Convocation (all living graduates of the university). On Friday 14th, 1,000 students marched on the Vice-Chancellor's office. On 20th April, the Proctorial Board met again and reversed its decision by re-admitting Humphreys.

Since the Humphreys Affair the changes in the style of the administration reflect the influence of the new Vice-Chancellor, Professor B. R. Williams. Although not a public figure on campus, he is approachable, and is regarded as 'a liberal'. He favours better communications with the student body, but it is rumoured that he is often cold-shouldered by the conservative deans and top administrators. He believes that the university must efficiently meet society's needs, but the government of the day is not sacrosanct. Hence his private intervention to modify the recent bill amending the National Service Act. He has said publicly that Sydney University is a very conservative institution, but the reforms that have occurred since the Humphreys Affair reflect a pragmatic spirit. The goal of better communications
with students has meant mainly putting new life into a committee to liaise with the Students Representative Council bureaucracy. Advancing student rights has meant proposing to the SRC to study a so-called ‘Student Bill of Rights’ from America drawn up by the fairly conservative national organisations of the staff and students. The reform of the Proctorial Boards still places restrictions on student participation.

Predictably, the student power movement is confused by the new administration line. The academics have done nothing to offset this — indeed some conservative academics have reinforced the administration’s policy by proposing that students representing faculties on the SRC should also represent them on Faculties. This is aimed at strengthening the SRC, and on undercutting the power of the radicals, who are supposedly being manipulated by off-campus radicals. The indifference of the remainder of the staff is monumental. Only 70 attended the well advertised Staff Association meeting against the National Service Act amendments; only about 20 academics participate in the Free University and the Staff-Student seminar run by the SRC.

The main foci of radicalism on campus are the Labour Club and Students for a Democratic Society. With headquarters off-campus, the Free University and Resistance are also concerned with ‘student power’ demands. Most of the student members of Resistance are in the Labour Club, which is controlled by them, but the Free University is significant because it operates as a study centre for about thirty radical students who are not affiliated with the campus radical organisations at all, or who prefer the weak affiliation links of SDS. The Labour Club has a paid-up membership of 90, including about 15 activists. It shows the preoccupations of the left-wing socialists and left communists with the third world, the relevance of force in some conditions, and the analyses of Trotsky and Che Guevara. It is often correctly accused by other radicals of not being very concerned with university conditions.

In the recent agitation against the National Service Act amendments, the leaders of the SDS have come to the front. As the organisation is virtually structureless (it operates by ‘consensus rather than vote’, and there is no joining fee) and as there is no distinctive SDS analysis of society, the energy and leadership ability of Mike Jones and Percy Allen are responsible for its activism. However in many respects the SDS by its opportunism has divided and confused the student protest movement. It has labelled its natural allies as Trotskyite and pro-communist, made exaggerated claims about its achievements and membership, and made demoralizing estimates of student political attitudes and tactics. Claiming to work by Sun Tzu’s maxim, ‘Know yourself, know your enemy’, it defines (with no qualification) liberalism as the main enemy. Ignoring the traditions of student protest at Sydney, it characterizes its tactics according to Mao’s three phases of guerilla warfare (mobilisation, general offensive, and destruction of the enemy). When SDS leaders defer at university meetings to staff as staff, the superficiality of this rhetoric is apparent; their analysis has not yet reached the stage of rejecting for the student the role into which his particular corporate liberal institution, the university, casts him.

If these trends in the administration, the staff and the student left continue, the university may be disrupted, or it may go into a slow decline. The educational processes and intellectual life of the university cannot be revitalized by playing with committees and electronic toys. Democratization of the university cannot be achieved by guerilla tactics if the campus countryside is indifferent. There is no room for satisfaction or complacency when the number of militants is increasing faster than the number of students conscious of the need for reform, when more students are advocating violence, and when there is no thoroughgoing discussion and analysis of the university in the present situation.

5. Monash University

Jeff Doubé

‘They’ll be appointing staff next. I’m packing my bags and leaving!’ This remark attributed to one of Monash’s well-known professors, typifies the more precipitate of reactions to recent events here. A few weeks ago, I was visited by members of the State Special Squad, CID, who were interested in the ‘Draft Resistance’ supplement published in ‘Lot’s Wife’. In the course of their investigation, they offered the comment that ‘... you’ve got a lot of militant students out here.’ Have these people been beguiled by newspaper sensationalism, or is there a significant movement emerging at Monash? What is it that actually moves the students, anyway?

Certainly, there are aspects of recent student activity at Monash that are unprecedented. What actually makes analysis difficult is the fact that these events have proceeded against a background of normal campus activity, and are closely bound up with these. The traditional political clubs that function in every Australian university are still present, in a highly vital form. Despite the well-publicised ‘dissolution’ of

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