

Three Student Risings

TOM FAWTHROP, TOM NAIRN, AND
DAVID TRIESMAN

The July–August 1968 issue of New Left Review, the best radical journal being published in English, opens with a lengthy, brilliant survey of England's national culture by editor Perry Anderson. Its opening words: "A coherent and militant student movement has not yet emerged in England. But it may now be only a matter of time before it does. Britain is the last major industrialized country which has not produced one." It is from the same issue of NLR that the following student reports are reprinted.

HULL

Tom Fawthrop

ON SATURDAY, JUNE 8, after a ten-day campaign unique in the history of the University of Hull, the overwhelming majority of students voted at a union general meeting to occupy the administration buildings. For once, union policy was promptly implemented; by Saturday night the power-center of the university had been taken over; a sign on the entrance, "Under New Management," announced this new fact of life.

Yet only a few weeks before the event, few students at Hull would have imagined student power being demonstrated in Humberside. At that time Hull students seemed to reflect the passive and inert nature of most other students in the country, and the actions of Paris seemed far away.

But suddenly that scene changed dramatically, and more than a thousand students were involved during the campaign. This, of course, was profoundly disturbing for the bureaucrats on all sides, i.e., university administrators and the students' union. Naturally, bureaucrats fear nothing more than spontaneity—people acting for themselves.

The initial sit-in (May 30) only lasted a few hours, and

after a tactical withdrawal the next stage of the campaign began by setting up commissions responsible to *general meetings of the union*. These commissions, in effect, posed an alternative model of organization to the traditional students' union bureaucracy (of council and executive). During the next ten days "the campus" at Hull became the center of continuous debate, discussion, and argument—the political character of the student body had been transformed. What was once a corpse, was now a vigorous body. In spite of exams, numbers at general meetings of the union exceeded eight hundred and they continually reiterated their support for the eight demands. But although the demands were reformist in many respects, they soon came to assume some "revolutionary" implications. The demand for representation became the demand for equal representation—and this in turn became our central demand, and remains union policy even after the sit-in. The main governing board of Hull University is the senate (composed of forty-seven members of the academic hierarchy); so we decided to elect forty-seven student senators who would take their place on senate within one week (after May 31—General Meeting of Union)—or else we would take direct action.

After ten days of procrastination by the senate, and compromise by the students, we finally reoccupied the administration center on Saturday, June 8. The sit-in lasted five and a half days.

The Eight Student Demands

1. Basic reform of the examination system now, in consultation with students and members of staff in accordance with union policy.
2. The immediate formulation of staff-student committees on a departmental basis to consider questions of syllabus, assessment, and the possibilities of extending teaching techniques.
3. No increase in residence fees, meal, or buttry prices except by prior agreement.
4. Stop *in loco parentis*, in line with the Latey Report, i.e., treat students as adults.
5. Democratic student control of the Lawns Centre Block—no removal of cooking facilities from the Lawn Halls.
6. Direct student representation on council, senate, and all administrative bodies of the university. The students to have equal executive power.
7. End secret diplomacy throughout the whole system and open all accounts and minutes of the university.
8. That the Vice-Chancellor and all members of staff should

in no circumstances, other than academic, inform or instruct LEA's to withhold student grants, so that there can be no penalization of the individual demonstrating political views.

Clearways Campaign Step by Step

Thursday, May 30th. The Socialist Society expresses solidarity with the French students. Hull students also air grievances and dissatisfaction with this university. A march to administration block and subsequent sit-in takes place, students holding open discussion with the Vice-Chancellor. A first outline of the eight points to be delivered to senate is drawn up. The name May 30th Committee is given to this movement of Hull students for spontaneous and independent organization. In the evening commissions are proposed to clarify the situation and to make information available to students throughout the university.

Friday, May 31st. An unofficial meeting of over seven hundred students discusses the eight points outlined the previous day and subjects them to formal ratification at the next union meeting. Commissions are set up to investigate and report on the various demands. The meeting demands that senate meet by the following Wednesday to discuss seating our union senators at a further meeting on Friday, and sixty union senators are elected.

The Long Weekend. The commissions meet and discuss practical purposes. The Departmental Commission suggests "immediate formulation of staff-student committees with executive power on a departmental basis, working through student meetings, departmental committees, and more personal contact with tutors and supervisors." The Exam Commission suggests various alternatives to the present examination system including over-all assessment, verbal exams, and dissertations. The Lawns Commission outlines several long-term proposals including reformation of the Lawns Management Committee to include more student representatives. The Coordinating Commissions visit halls of residence to explain events and to dispel certain rumors such as "violence and damage to property."

Tuesday, June 4th. A general meeting of the union decides to postpone any militant action until Friday's union meeting as senate is unable to meet before Thursday afternoon. Thirteen of the union senators withdraw since at the present time there are only forty-seven members of the university senate. A Press Commission is set up to avoid misuse of information and misquoting. The "Clearway" sign is adopted, implying the slogan: "No stopping until equal representation!"

Thursday, June 6th. The senate meets and discusses our eight points and the possibility of seating our representatives at its next meeting. In the evening union senators discuss senate's proposals as soon as they are made known.

Friday, June 7th. An open staff-student meeting in the university lecture theater is initiated by sympathetic staff to discuss the student case. So far twenty-three staff sponsors from ten departments have lent their support to this meeting.

2:15. A general union meeting is held to discuss the statement from the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of senate and to consider any further action. Friday's vote goes against a sit-in.

Saturday, June 8th. The proposals of the members of senate are rejected. The sit-in recommences. The real occupation of the administration building takes place.

Thursday, June 13th. Sit-in ends after narrow defeat in union meeting.

Lessons of Our Struggle

Strategy. Other student confrontations (e.g., LSE, Essex), have largely been based on a defensive strategy arising from the victimization of particular students. At Hull the issues were taken to the authorities rather than the other way round, and Clearways Campaign has been based throughout on an *offensive* strategy. This has important implications for developments elsewhere: students do not have to wait for the authorities to provoke the student body.

Politics of the Campaign. Although the Socialist Society played some part in initiating the campaign, after the first day every effort was made to enlist the support of all students within a truly broad-based movement. A clear choice confronted us at Hull: either an ineffective campaign by a minority, or an effective campaign by a majority. The militants opted for the latter, and revolutionary socialists fell in behind the banner of democracy. We chose the real politics of revolutionary democracy as opposed to the sham politics of revolutionary semantics. Every real struggle, every engagement with the power structure is worth a hundred revolutionary slogans.

Role of the Student Union Bureaucracy. In a student union the president is generally the most influential figure—certainly at Hull his role was important (cf. the role of the president at Leicester). Whilst supporting all the eight demands and accepting the *de facto* control of union by Clearways Campaign (union facilities, duplicating material, etc.), the president played an ambiguous role during the actual course of the cam-

campaign for a sit-in, by long and private conversations with the Vice-Chancellor (contrary to the spirit of the Movement—"end secret diplomacy"). In some sense the Movement up to the main sit-in succeeded in "capturing the bureaucracy" by rendering it relatively impotent. However, once the general meeting of the union knew that senate had not met our demands, and the call to implement our promise of direct action was made, the old union structure reasserted itself by attempting to divide the Movement. The very clear lesson is that the mass of students should always be wary of this elite, who will nearly always in the end compromise with the university oligarchy,¹ rather than back up union policy with student power.

But the impact of the sit-in would probably have been much less if the union bureaucracy had not been carried that vital distance to the edge of their own personal abyss, i.e., the demise of their own bureaucratic status and their absorption into the common ranks of all those actually sitting-in. *The issue of secret diplomacy between the students and the university should be viewed as the crucial factor in any similar confrontation.*

The Demands. The two vital aspects of our demands were:

1. The synthesis which related all the demands together under the banner of a "Democratic University,"
2. The fact that each individual demand was felt as a very real grievance by large numbers of students.

The first factor is, of course, the essential basis for an offensive strategy, if the student body is to hold the initiative. In this way, the Hull campaign was never a single-issue campaign, and the demand for student power (equal executive representation on all decision-making bodies) was always related to the other seven demands. In practice this meant that student power was not reduced to an abstract slogan, but became the description of a concrete program for the democratization of the university. It should also be stressed that the democratic university meant to Hull students not just democracy for the students, but for the lecturing staff as well. Indeed, why have professorships at all? The staff hierarchy is nothing less than a structure of academic status and snobbery.

One of the explicit demands concerned the wages of porters in the union, but we affirmed support for representation of maintenance staff, catering staff, cleaners, and all other work-

¹Several members of the union executive supported the sit-in; every movement should encourage and cater for defections from the Establishment.

ers at the university on those committees that affected their working conditions.

These demands were treated as necessary reforms by the majority of students, although the number of students whose perspective encompassed a thorough-going transformation of our institutions, fluctuated considerably during the course of grand debates between five hundred to a thousand.²

Role of the Lecturing Staff. The number of lecturers that signed our sit-in visitors book totaled forty-nine.³ Most of these could be described as sympathizers, with about a dozen providing active support. This group of solid supporters suffered incredible abuse at staff meetings, and were generally referred to as the "traitors," supporting "the other side." Their support proved invaluable, and our experience suggests that the ultimate success of such campaigns may often be assisted by splits and divisions among the staff, as the latter are confronted with the contradiction between the real aims of teaching and education, and their complicity in the prostitution of learning for the purpose of perpetuating the academic hierarchy, and the goals of a technological capitalist society.

The Performance of the Vice-Chancellor. The way in which the mass of students views the Principal or Vice-Chancellor is of great importance. Certain students will often tend to regard him in terms of a "father-figure," a person there to help, explain, and advise. This paternalistic role was played with great dexterity by Brynmor Jones at Hull, and it was largely his intervention during the final meeting that succeeded in swaying the students against the sit-in.⁴

When it came to the "crunch" rather more students blindly trusted the V.C. and had faith in his assurances than the rest—and next day the sit-in came to an end.

Containment of Student Unrest. The main tactic adopted by the authorities throughout was that of procrastination. This is their trump card. They are unable to grasp the nature of a mass movement, and expect and wait for the enthusiasm to fade, and the spontaneity to be suffocated by their own machinery of negotiations.

This is a very real danger only if the mass of students becomes showered with technicalities, and the Movement loses

² Total number of students is 3,550.

³ Total number of staff 450.

⁴ Wednesday, June 12 (fourth day of the sit-in), General Meeting of Union took place with 1,600 students present. By a majority of about 180 votes, the amendment to continue the sit-in was lost.

touch with its original ends. Certainly at Hull, the senate has made an ingenious attempt to do just this—to sidetrack us from our original intent. Instead of meeting our demands, they have come out with proposals for parallel structures throughout the university, on which students would have equal representation. However, these would only be “dummy committees,” from which a certain number of students would be allowed to sit on the real committees, for the duration of the minutes of the parallel committee (this proposal applies to all levels—departmental, faculty, and senate).

This proposal may well be regarded as a prototype for the containment of student unrest. It is ingenious in that it presents the illusion of power, without giving away any of its reality.

The proposals are nothing but a sophisticated exercise in the practice of deceit. They represent a systematic attempt to undermine the movement for real power, to emasculate our demands, and to isolate the militants from the mass of students. Our task is to communicate that beneath the complexities of these apparently generous proposals, lies a cynical fraud. Our opponents are too clever to say no to our demands. They offer neither rejection nor acceptance but instead offer to discuss alternative proposals—and to discuss at length. The pedagogic gerontocracy is adept at playing for time—students must be aware of this.

We Are Impertinent. This became our slogan for challenging authority. In spite of all the sell-outs, the compromises, the betrayals, and the Vice-Chancellor, “at the end of the day” (the fourth day of the sit-in) 635 students still voted to continue the sit-in. It was not enough to win the motion, but it was enough to produce a distinctly uncomfortable feeling deep down inside those irresponsible individuals who form together in the university an *unrepresentative minority* called senate (government not by election but by appointment).

In this sense the sit-in can be regarded as a triumph, in that the university will never be the same again. Our commissions continue to operate, and departmental activity is springing up everywhere. The concept of the “Free University” has been born in Hull, and five hundred people who participated in the sit-in have been through a fantastic experience that we will never forget, and that senate will never understand—the experience of spontaneous activity, impromptu speeches, and living in close cooperation with nearly four hundred other people at one

time. For the first time we sensed that we belonged to a real community—and our triumph was to succeed in creating it.⁵ Now the campaign continues in the same spirit, as this time we work toward creating not just a partial community, but a total free university as the intellectual bridgehead to a different type of society.

HORNSEY

Tom Nairn

Hornsey Art College in North London has been the scene of the most successful student-power movement yet in Britain. The terms of this success are well known, thanks to the great publicity the takeover attracted. At the time of the writing, the students had occupied the college for six weeks—and the occupation was both complete (i.e., involved every aspect of the institution, not only the teaching areas) and continuous (i.e., twenty-four hours a day, with a permanently open canteen and a considerable number of students sleeping-in). The Movement is running an important exhibition-cum-teach-in at the gallery of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, and has called a National Conference of Art Colleges to extend the revolution and change the whole system of art education from below.

Potentialities of Student Power

The achievements of the Hornsey *coup* are remarkable, by any standards. Seen from inside, the changes brought about—in people and attitudes, rather than simply in administration—were astonishing. It is only yesterday that art students were paragons of self-satisfied apathy, further removed (even) than most other British students from any sort of political consciousness.

Yet, the Hornsey movement has been very widely criticized, within the student political Left. Militants have tended to dismiss it as “unpolitical,” or “corporative,” concerned only with the problems of art education and indifferent to wider issues. The Hornsey students confined themselves to stirring up other art colleges, and trying to establish a permanent control of power inside their own institution, instead of provoking a general crisis of British capitalism (or, at least, of the British Higher Education system). Why such narrow-mindedness?

⁵ The Hull struggle has not gone unnoticed in other parts of the globe—on Wednesday, June 12, we received some flattering comments on Peking Radio.

Does this not show indeed (in the words of R. Kuper)¹ how ". . . Student struggles *more than* any other form of struggle are less able to bring meaningful advances, unless we really believe in the nonsensical view of islands of libertarian communities in a sea of corporate organizations."

There is a very important point at issue here, which is bound to affect one's view of the correct strategy for student revolutionary movements in Britain. Hornsey is indeed an archetype of "corporate" development, in this sense. Again and again, the students there showed themselves hostile to "politicization," in the terms offered by the existing left-wing groups. They consciously tried to confine the revolution to their own sector, to win significant and permanent victories within it rather than orient the Movement toward the formation of a general revolutionary situation. But just how much importance do such limited movements have? How much weight will student power have politically, if it sticks to apparently "trade union" forms like this?

In confronting this problem of revolutionary strategy, the first important point to note is the precise significance of a "corporate" consciousness among students in Britain. It is rather absurd to dismiss a "mere trade-unionist" awareness, when the overwhelming majority of students don't possess even this, and are still in a completely fragmented "proletarian" condition whose only relief is the rag-day or the union hop. Traditional student "union" activity of course did nothing to change this condition, it was a part of it. In Britain, a student takeover represents a very radical break with the past—however "limited" it is. Therefore, a revolutionary strategy must wholeheartedly encourage such movements—in the same way as in the nineteenth century it was necessary to back trade unions—as a basis for future developments.

But—pursuing the analogy with the trade unions—it may be objected that the same thing could happen here. Could not student-power movements be isolated, in the same corporative way, as harmless "islands" inside capitalist society—all the more easily, because of the middle-class background of most students?

The second point which ought to determine real revolutionary strategy is, surely, the recognition of the extreme unlikelihood of this happening, even in Britain. True, such a hope clearly

¹ "Crisis in Higher Education: the Roots of Revolt," in *Teach Yourself Student Power*, ed. D. Adelstein (RSA Publications, 1958).

animates the attitude of Authority toward the Hornsey revolt—because it has occurred among art students, seen as a marginal sector of Higher Education touched by bohemianism and so unlikely to contaminate those philistine bastions of intellect, the universities. But the point is, that in the long run—whatever happens at Hornsey—such hope is illusory. There is no real possibility of a successful student corporativism becoming isolated, or a conservative barrier to further development.

There are two reasons for this. All movements of this type, however “limited,” are movements toward *power*, toward control of the process of mental production in which students are involved. This is just where the analogy with the unions—valid up to a point—disappears. Secondly, the process itself is a vital one for the entire functioning of society. As David Adelstein points out: “The prime function of higher education used to be the recruiting and cultural buttressing of the social elite. Nowadays it has an added dimension—the fundamental role it plays in the economy. For skilled manpower is the scarcest resource of industrial society. It is in this fact that collective student action gains its significance.”² To this, one should add that in “industrial society” the intellectuals produced by higher education also have an increasingly important general *social* role as creators of the consensus required by the machinery of repression. This is outside the “economy,” traditionally conceived—though it can also be seen as meaning that today’s “economy” is universal, and coextensive with “society.”

Capitalist society could foster forms of corporative existence in the instrumental class which it created to work its apparatus of material production; autonomy within its “brain” is another matter altogether. Traditionally, exploitation in the sphere of material production was maintained (especially under conditions like those in Britain) by a parallel machinery of mental production (ideology, etc.). Under the circumstances of late capitalism—as the events of May showed—a crisis in the latter sphere can be literally catastrophic. The British ruling class, confident in its successful past strategy of containment, naturally does not realize the dimensions of the new threat. Here, as in so many other respects, it is living out past routines.

But it is wrong for would-be revolutionaries to do the same. Student-power movements are potentially revolutionary in character—whether they have yet acquired a full consciousness of this fact and its implications, or not. It is obvious that, in

²*Ibid.*

British conditions, they are likely to evolve such a consciousness fairly slowly. How could it be otherwise? One college—or even a fairly widespread sectoral movement, as this has become—cannot overcome the entrenched defects of an entire political culture. To criticize students for such a “failure” is a serious tactical blunder, whose effect (as at Hornsey) is simply to delay the awakening of the awareness in question.

An increasingly explosive situation is developing in the advanced capitalist countries today. The fact is, however, that the “revolutionaries” available to exploit this situation are—barring nobody—all products of the stagnant, nonrevolutionary situation of many decades past. During this long ice-age, inevitably, revolutionaries were forced to identify the revolution with *themselves*. In other words, “sectarianism” was a necessary, defensive reflex protecting the spirit of revolution throughout this era. But in the thaw, this reflex is becoming truly disastrous. The problem has become, urgently, that of educating the educators—and no movement which fails to recognize the problem will have any grip whatever upon coming events. Except, naturally, the negative, obstructive one which was fortunately fairly slight at Hornsey (and this was an important constituent in the Movement’s success).

Still deeply convinced that they were the revolution, some outside speakers went to Hornsey to guide the Movement into their orbit with the appropriate slogans and abstract ideas. They did not take the trouble to inquire into the actual conditions of what was happening, the existing state of mind of the majority, the real possibilities offered by the situation as it was (which are always “limited”!). It did not occur to them that their job, as revolutionaries, was to be educated by what was happening—by the revolution before their eyes—as well as to educate. Is it surprising that they encountered a hostile reaction? Having no living sense of relationship to what was happening—without which it is not possible to *be* a revolutionary, in such a situation—they were incapable of elaborating any tactic of generosity that could at once encourage the Movement and push it just the distance further that was possible, then and there, toward an ultimate political consciousness.

There will be more Hornseys, under British conditions. It is clear that, under these conditions, the correct strategy for revolutionaries is to encourage the student-power trend to the utmost, however “corporative” it may be, and to participate in it wholeheartedly with the aim of ensuring that its revolutionary potential is realized and that reformist pitfalls are avoided. For

the time will come, if revolutionary students play the role that they can and should, when such movements develop a more adequate awareness of their meaning, in a wider revolutionary situation. Student power will transcend itself, as an idea and as a fact. It can't be *made* to do so immediately, by the brandishing of ice-age adages. To amend a well-known adage from before the ice-age: the emancipation of the students must be the work of the students themselves.

Context and Lessons of the Hornsey Occupation

Britain has no CRS, and her policemen go unarmed. Authority has worked traditionally through the consent of its victims, in other words. Getting their minds early on, it rarely needs to cudgel their skulls later. The slave who believes in gentlemanly fair-play is the safest bet of all: he will always feel that revolt is not quite the decent thing to do. And anyway, if the mystification breaks down at any point, the cudgel is always there.

The Hornsey occupation has demonstrated certain aspects of this British situation in rich comic relief. Probably as student revolt grows the cudgel will come to be used more, and more rapidly. But for the present, the Hornsey experience is full of valuable lessons for sitters-in.

It began as rebellion against the educational Authority in the college. The May 28th teach-in made itself permanent, and became a kind of living illustration of Marshall McLuhan's theses on modern education:

We now experience simultaneously the drop-out and the teach-in. The two forms are correlative. They belong together. The teach-in represents an attempt to shift education from instruction to discovery, away from brain-washing instructors. It is a big, dramatic reversal . . . The teach-in represents a creative effort, switching the educational process from package to discovery . . .

The majority of the teaching staff reacted well to the reversal. They enjoy the creative effort and atmosphere, once they get used to it. But the higher echelons—from Heads of Departments upward via the Vice-Principal and Principal to the Board of Governors—are a different story.

Of course, their immediate and lasting reflex is simple: to stop it. But the whole point about the British situation is that one can't stop it *at any cost*. To use too much force too crudely, or too publicly, disqualifies the normal mechanisms of servility. It permanently damages the mystification. If they had rushed

the fuzz up Crouch End Hill instantly to battle in front of the TV cameras and pressmen, nobody would ever have "consented" to anything again, in that sense. As for the watching world . . . how soon would LSE have struck in sympathy, how many other art colleges would have been affected?

Here is the first lesson: if the revolt is big enough, and has good public relations, it can make Authority retreat, and wait. Obviously this is easier in London, closer to the centers of the media. Further away, or where a smaller percentage of student opinion is mobilized—as at Guildford Art College—it may crack down at once.

However, crossing this first threshold of violence is a deceptive victory. At Hornsey, Authority did not retreat so much as vanish away into thin air. The Principal at the time of writing had not been seen for three weeks. Governors, and representatives of the Haringey Borough Council (directly responsible for the college) occasionally appear with fixed, slightly uneasy smiles, and say it is all very interesting. The deposed court (known simply as "Versailles") meets now and then at a safe distance from the revolution, to launch measures of harassment, all ridiculous. They distributed the classical McCarthyite loyalty oath among the staff, only to withdraw it under a hail of abuse. They sent the health inspectors to get the heart of the revolt, the student-run canteen, closed down. It turned out to be more hygienic than before. But all this farce must not be allowed to lull one into complacency: behind it, there is the real, waiting strategy of power.

This is the second lesson: Authority may retreat, but it assumes that it can afford to, because time is on its side. And so it is. Sooner or later, a vacation will come along; the impetus of the revolution will slacken, people will become tired, and have the feeling of getting nowhere; then "the Rule of Law will be restored," quietly and easily, in the words of Alderman Cathles, Chairman of Haringey's Education Committee. A reliable observer states that the smile with which Cathles uttered these words hasn't left his face once in the last fifteen years. Then, the troublemakers can be dealt with, the agitators will have their contracts ended, or their grants stopped . . . the children will have had their fun, and things will go back to "normal." In Britain, Authority may agree to lose a battle now and then; precisely because it is so profoundly sure of winning the war.

This is the situation which must determine a revolutionary strategy. Revolutions usually develop in constant combat with

their enemy: they sustain their drive and define their aims in the heat of tooth-and-claw battle. Where power feels smug enough to retreat, the revolt is thrown much more on to its own resources. Somehow, it has to feed off itself, maintain its subjective tension, its cohesion, its aims, through its self-activity. In many ways, this is the severest test.

The trouble is, the resources aren't enough. How could they be? Revolutions make new men, but not from one day to the next. It takes a long time. Inevitably, the culture one is thrown back upon—even at eighteen—is basically that of the old regime. The enemy is within.

Third lesson: recognize the enemy within, and concentrate on him when Authority outside plays the waiting game. British revolutions are serious, orderly, moral affairs, admirable in their fairness and tenacity. What they tend to lack is a similar confidence in *imagination*. Big ideas remain unreal: Jerusalem can't be built yet, because we haven't worked out the drainage system. Shall we appoint a committee to work out some practical, concrete proposals about it? British practice-fetish, British distrust of the philosophical idea and the moving vision—scourges of every left-wing group we have—don't just evaporate in a revolutionary situation. They have to be fought, with a program of intensive cultural activity. Even in an art college, the typically British revolutionary problem isn't restraining the mad intellectuals: it consists in finding them, and encouraging them to speak up. How can one defeat a Haringey Borough Council (or a House of Commons), if one carries it around inside oneself? And what would be the point?

Postscript

Early in the morning of July 4 Haringey Borough Council sent security police with guard dogs to surround and close the art college. At the time only two dozen students were in the building. After reoccupying his office the Principal offered a string of "concessions" to the students, including a commission on the future of the college. A meeting of the students eventually accepted this situation, with the more militant among them going to join the occupation of Guildford Art College.

ESSEX

David Triesman

On May 7, two hundred students and staff demonstrated against a talk to be given by Dr. Inch of Porton Down, the government germ-warfare establishment on Salisbury Plain. On the 10th,

despite the fact that the demonstration was eventless, the Vice-Chancellor suspended three of us. A mass meeting convened within minutes of the suspension and, aside from a break for the weekend, carried on continuously until the 20th. On Friday the 17th, students jubilantly acclaimed a victory because, by a technical device, Pete Archard, Rafi Halberstadt, and I were reinstated. But what in fact had we won, and what had we lost?

A number of conflicts were highlighted by these expulsions. First, there was a conflict which greets every demonstration here. We are on a remote campus near a remote town in which political activity is nonexistent. Not, lamentably, having created political situations in town, we have engaged in demonstrations against particular political objectives on campus. The result is that we are always acting within the bounds of control of the university. Secondly, there is a critical difference between the cultural attitudes of the senate members and ourselves. They are from a generation which is paranoid about both communism and fascism on the grounds that they inhibit "free speech"—a mystified absolute. We are a post-CND generation, taught our final lessons in Grosvenor Square. Against Inch we knew the value of demonstrations, and would repeat the demonstration tomorrow.

The issue around which the mass meetings coalesced was the fact that three people were victimized without even being told what they were supposed to have done. Essentially this is a liberal issue if it is not seen that the university is engaged in manufacturing degrees, and the investors in the factory will not tolerate dissent. (Here they won't even tolerate a company union.) In an effort to keep the entire body of students and staff together in a group for the whole week, the Left allowed themselves to be conned into a game of consensus politics. The cost is plain enough. When the issue died and senate waved exams at us, the students went back to the library without maintaining their challenge to senate, which they had literally robbed of any legitimacy by Thursday, the 16th. They had had the senate reduced to incompetent incoherence, but they let the chance to take over the university slip away. Although there were some gains—more politicized cadres, more radicals with less respect for authority within the institution—there was a defeat, and the fault lies with the Left. We must take the blame, and learn the lessons.

The lessons are these. We must not be afraid of polarization. If there is a moderately large minority committed to action, as there was, they must begin as soon as is possible to hold sanc-

tions over the university. We had a chance to do this on Monday, the 13th, taking part of the building and confiscating the property of the administration, but we mistimed the attempt. Secondly, the staff must not be encouraged to come in too soon. They cannot help being a moderating influence since they can scarcely incite us to seize the university. What we should do, if the situation were to arise again, would be to behave as provocatively as necessary and to effectively sanction the university to the extent that they *need* to use force, probably the police. Complete occupation of offices rather than corridors will achieve this. It is at this stage that the administrations commit their ultimate folly, and it is at this stage that the staff and less political students will feel encouraged to enter a situation already politically structured.

The crucial point is this. Universities are linked to a set of productivity norms which, in order to be met, need a system as authoritarian as any other factory. Expose that, by linking it with outside repressive forces, police, demands for action from the University Grants Committee and so on, and the first cracks will appear in the façade. When the outside insists on coming inside, we will know two things. One, we will lose; but the loss of "socialism on one campus" is inevitable and should stimulate support in all the others during the really hard struggle. Two, we will have won, because we will force the Administrations to openly show their relation to the capitalist machine, and the institutions' implicit aim of producing a new generation of managers to rule the working class. Maybe, at that point, the students who will go from a position of militancy into the outside world—who will be expected to fit in, to teach children to leave school at sixteen to work the rest of their lives on a shop floor, to socially engineer the decaying capitalist structure to keep the whole nauseating apparatus from collapsing—will ask exactly what the point of their education was, and what use it could be toward making a socialist society. And maybe the workers will begin to ask why they are bearing the brunt of the cost to finance the production of their future governors.