Berkeley: Most FSM Demands Are Now University Policy

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With the first semester drawing near its end, the tumultuous student protest movement which rocked the Berkeley campus of the University of California through December appears to have reached a point indicating an at least partial victory for the Free Speech Movement and possibility of further gains.

The Regents in their December 18 meeting declined to meet an Academic Senate request for transfer of responsibility for student discipline to the faculty and reiterated their determination to retain ultimate responsibility in all University matters in their own hands. In an apparent concession, however, a Regent's committee was formed which will consider the question of student political rights on and off campus.

Faculty Re-examination

At the same time, a faculty committee is re-examining the questions involved after tabling Monday their earlier recommendations in the interests of freeing from pressure the new Acting Chancellor of the University, Dr. Martin Meyerson.

Dr. Meyerson replaced former chancellor Edward W. Strong, 63, who resigned January 2, with health stated as the cause. Strong had come under fire from some students and faculty for what was assertedly his rigid interpretation of rules governing student on-campus political activity and advocacy.

The free speech movement, an amalgam of nineteen student organizations ranging from the Young Republicans to the leftist DuBois Club, has pushed since September for a set of goals which, as finally stated, involved little less than a masive protest against the whole complex of elements which make up the "multiversity" of which the University of California is the premier example.

Simple Beginnings

The affair began simply enough: in early September, prompted by the ultra-conservative Oakland Tribune but acting under long-established statutory requirements, the University decided to crack down on the active political activities which had for years been carried on in the "Hyde Park" area of the campus in front of the student center. With this move, all on-campus political activity was effectively forbidden.

The FSM formed quickly under the leadership of 22-year-old philosophy major Mario Savio, an outstanding academically and an exceptionally gifted insurgent leader.

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In an early demonstration, a police car was trapped by a huge push of students who held the vehicle in their midst for three days, giving it up only following a truce negotiated by the university and the FSM.

Pressed Charges

But following the October demonstrations, the University pressed disciplinary charges on four student leaders, and the movement resumed its direct action tactics.

The University, which had in September closed down the "Hyde Park" area, by October beat a hasty retreat and in effect returned affairs to their pre-September status. But by that time the FSM demands had increased and broadened beyond the original specific issues: students demanded the right to exercise what they termed their rights as private citizens to engage in partisan political activities when and where they chose.

Double Jeopardy

Additionally, they demanded that the university drop what was attacked as a double-jeopardy policy which upheld university penalties on students for non-legal off-campus activities such as civil rights demonstrations in the South.

The FSM received solid support from the extensive body of graduate students at the University, as well as a ringing expression of support from the faculty through their Academic Senate following the massive "occupation" of Sproul Hall, the central administration building, by some eight hundred students.

The students, of whom some 788 were arrested and bodily dragged from the building following the December 3 successful seizure of Sproul, were charged in state court and now await trial.

Peace Rejected

The action by the Academic Senate December 8 followed an attempted peace ploy by University President Clark Kerr which had been rejected by the FSM.

Dr. Kerr's presentation had been rather jarringly marred by FSM leader Savio, who attempted to reach the podium after Dr. Kerr's speech; in a widely-publicized tactical blunder, the student leader was seized by police officers and dragged bodily from the stage in the University's huge open-air Greek Theatre. When he was allowed to take the podium several minutes later, the damage was already done, and the FSM leader reaped the rewards.

Savio, who was forced by his activities to withdraw from school, is now on a speaking tour in the East describing the issues of free speech as they were debated at Berkeley and as they are and have been in many areas of the country for many years.

Larger Issues Remain

Though Berkeley appears headed for an amicable settlement of the dispute with a substantial student victory a probability, the larger issues will remain unsettled certainly for years to come: the sheer size of the "multiversity" with its reduction of the teaching-and-learning function of a University to an impersonal mass production operation; the increasing involvement of the multiversity in industry, government and research with academic sacrifices of undetermined but surely great proportion; and the function of the nonacademic administrative personnel whose prominence in the "multiversity" seems to many a threat to the scholarly community whose books they keep and whose checks they sign.