Berkeley President Kerr And Chancellor Meyerson Resign

BY PHIL GARON
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Dr. Clark Kerr, president of the University of California, announced his resignation from that position late Tuesday. Acting Chancellor Martin Meyerson also announced that he was quitting his post.

Early wire service releases indicated that Kerr’s resignation was the result of a conflict with his faculty and board of regents over the handling of Berkeley students who had been participants in a “filthy speech movement” on campus.

No Comments

Neither Kerr nor Meyerson would comment on their resignations, nor would they directly attribute their resignations to the Free Speech Movement last semester created a controversy of national dimensions.

Terry Ferrer of the New York Herald Tribune Wednesday wrote:

“The twenty-four regents pressed Dr. Kerr to expel Berkeley students who had been participating in a ‘filthy speech movement’ involving display of an obscene four-letter word sign and use of the word on a campus loudspeaker, and threatened to hold a special meeting and take over the Berkeley campus themselves if he did not comply.”

Seventy-three students of Berkeley and three non-students were placed under arrest in the obscenity demonstrations of last week.

Filthy Movement

These demonstrations were highlighted by posters and speeches making frequent usage of various “four-letter words,” along with a dramatic rendition of selected passages from the novel “Lady Chatterley’s Lover” by one Berkeley grad student.

The students were brought before two faculty committees to answer the charges.

The two committees were the Faculty Committee on Student Conduct (popularly termed by the student body “The Beer, Sex, and Cheating Committee”) and the Faculty Judicial Committee, appointed by Dr. Meyerson in February.

The meetings apparently broke down as each committee accused the other of responsibility for the student rights controversy. Kerr was openly critical of what he believed to be “non-action” by the committees, as well as their coercion of him to act towards the expulsion of the students.

Kerr Cites Justice

Ferrer quoted Kerr as saying: “Offenders must be disciplined, but due process must have its due place, and faculty committees should not seek to avoid their responsibilities for assisting in discipline because of minor questions of internal jurisdiction.”

Kerr added, “Responsibility is the other side of the coin on which freedom is written. It cannot be enforced by regents and administrators alone but

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'Filthy Speech Movement'

(Continued from Page 1) by the total University community.”

The reaction of educators and statesmen around the country was one of general support to the resigning president of California’s university system. Governor Edmund G. Brown commented, “I intend to do everything within my power to see that he (Dr. Kerr) rescinds his action of resigning as president of the university.”

Brown Denounces Filthies

“I think it’s a terrible shame that a few thoughtless students led by a handful of troublemakers can hurt the reputation of the greatest university in the world and cause its brilliant president and a hard-working chancellor to resign,” the Democrat governor contended.

Also speaking in Kerr’s defense was Dr. Buell G. Gallagher, the president of City College in New York City.

Gallagher had served a seven-month term as First Chancellor of California State Colleges in 1961-1962, but had resigned under heavy fire from right-wing groups who accused him of harboring Communist sympathies. The occasion for his speech was a meeting of the Association for Higher Education, an affiliate of the National Education Association, in Chicago.

Dr. Gallagher was quoted by Ferrer as saying that Dr. Kerr was the victim of an attack of the “irresponsible far-out left.” Colleges and universities have defended academic freedom against McCarthyism, the Ku Klux Klan, the John Birch Society and other groups... Just as surely we must be on guard against the ‘take-over’ mentality of student groups.”

Gallagher added, “In California, as in New York, as in Alabama, indeed, wherever men of conscience and good will are confronted by the organized effort of contentious and angry partisanship, the search for truth is in grave danger.

“Within the groves of Academe this means that no man is safe or secure. It means the end of academic freedom and the beginning of the reign of unreason,” Gallagher concluded.

Pitzer Awaits Facts

Rice president Kenneth S. Pitzer, who was the Dean of the school of chemistry at Berkeley before accepting the Rice presidency, told the Thresher yesterday that he is “very much surprised” at the resignation of Berkeley Chancellor and President.

“My only comment,” said Pitzer, “is that I do not have enough information yet to judge what is going on.”

Dr. Pitzer declined to speculate late concerning the cause of the resignations., but added that he would possibly have some further comments when he had learned more of the facts concerning Kerr’s resignation.

Noticeable among those absent in this newest Berkeley controversy was Mario Savio, firebrand leader of the Free Speech Movement among the University students.

Having recently completed a series of speaking engagements in the East, Savio was in Selma, Alabama, participating in the planned civil-rights march on Montgomery.

Savio did comment that there would be future campus mass demonstrations if the resignations of Dr. Kerr and Dr. Meyerson lead to suppression of student political activities.

Savio is not enrolled in Berkeley this semester because of the great demands on his time, but plans to re-enroll next semester.

The so-called “filthy speech movement” is an outgrowth of Savio’s own Free Speech Movement, although some estimates held that it had been active for only ten days and that less than two dozen students, were involved, a rather low guess in view of the 76 arrested last week.

Meyerson Rakes Filthies

Dr. Meyerson also released a statement commenting on the actions of the “filthy speech movement.” He said, “The four-letter word signs and utterances had a significance beyond the shock impact.”

He called them “the last straw of contempt...I share the indignation of those that wish that our campus be rid of contentious and intolerant behavior.”

The most recent developments at Berkeley have brought to the foreground still another comparatively unexplained aspect of the pressure faced by the university president. Early speculation had it that Kerr’s resignation was a result of his inability to compromise the actions of the student right groups with his own ideas for the basic university plan.

It was then shown that this was not the conflict at all; instead, there was the deeper problem of the friction between the university president and the administrative-faculty body.

It was to this faction, and not to Savio’s “angry young men,” that Kerr was forced to yield.

But the strife-torn Berkeley faculty had already shown signs of support for Dr. Kerr and Dr. Meyerson. Late Tuesday night the Emergency Executive Committee, elected by the 1,500 faculty members of the Berkeley Academic Senate, was urging the two men to reconsider and remain in office.