

It seems to me that the good thing about the student attack on the academic establishment is the demand to be taken seriously and an insistence on being treated as adults.

The other side of that coin is a very great unwillingness to behave in an adult manner. I am afraid that this makes it rather difficult to achieve the purpose of adult treatment, when a sense of fundamental seriousness and sustained concern seems to be lacking. That wasn't entirely true of the early Berkeley situation. The students seem to have been quite serious and to have known what they were about. They were seriously concerned about failures in teaching, failures in concern with education, failures in dealing with students, and this omnipresent sense of phoniness that afflicted the institution—the lack, really, of any embodiment of high enterprise.

I don't know what you do about this. We can talk about how to involve students more in their classrooms, how to involve students more in thinking about faculty members, how to involve students more in thinking about what should be the content of courses. This is of serious value, something well worth doing. But I suspect that, important as these things are, they don't come close to being as important as this pervasive sense of a huge, shambling enterprise that is in some way mindless, that our difficulty is the lack of adequate purposes.

The reason why presidents of universities are attacked is less because they are tyrannical despots than because they are namby-pambies.

The ultimate horror that people have to face is not evil but mediocrity. In fact, I suppose what Hannah Arendt meant when she said that the face of evil in Eichmann was really banality is to some extent what students are concerned about. There isn't a sufficiently meaningful challenge to give people an assurance that life, what they hope to do with their lives, has vital significance.

I suppose this is the real reason for attacking one's leaders, presidents, deans, and college professors—a claim that vital institutions that are concerned with spiritual values have the capacity for spiritual leadership.

I don't know how you can get vision into a university, and I am sure that this is the one thing that students are most concerned about. I don't think any more that the Negroes can wait for the white man to set them free, that students or faculty can wait for some Prince Charming to come in as president of the university and set the university free, or set it on fire, or set it going. I think anybody, anywhere, in any group, if serious, if deeply committed and willing to deal significantly with the problems of their time, will be able to effect leadership, and that this leadership will spread. END

# Report from Oklahoma State

## A look at some unsettled days in the fall

JIM FITE'S VISIT to the OSU campus couldn't have been more timely. Some would say untimely. In fact, some OSU faculty and administrators are saying he is part of a neatly drawn conspiracy which all at once has brought a new pack of worries down upon the troubled administration of Dr. Robert B. Kamm. How else explain a chain-reaction occurrence of calm-shattering events—shattering to the university's "image," too—in the space of less than a week? These happenings clicked off like clockwork:

- Dr. Margaret Brooks resigned as honors program director and botany professor. A central figure in last spring's criticism by a faculty board of allegedly repressive actions by Dr. Kamm, she said administrative pressure led to her decision.

- A new controversy boiled up ov-

er the Student Association Forum's invitation to a controversial speaker, Dr. Timothy Leary, high priest of LSD. The board of regents banned him and issued new rules on campus speakers.

- The United Ministries, informal group of campus ministers, speared the regents with a statement condemning the speaker ban.

- A special edition of *The Drummer*, off-campus newspaper, praised Brooks and blasted the regents' speaker guidelines.

- The Student Senate, for which Dr. Brooks was adviser, called a massive rally of students on the library mall.

- Both the senate and the honors council, which Dr. Brooks also served as adviser, issued resolutions supporting her. As the senate's counsel, she had signed the contract with Leary.

- A provocative panel discussion arranged by the AAUP on "student freedom," with Fite the featured panelist, fell during this period of unrest.

It was a bad week but problems of Dr. Kamm began shortly after his in-

auguration in Oct. 1966, and have seldom let up. A few of the earlier incidents, not necessarily in exact order:

- An invitation to Dr. Thomas J. J. Altizer, "death-of-God" theologian, was withdrawn after the president's office let it be known that Dr. Kamm questioned propriety of having a controversial speaker on campus during his first year as president.

- The American Civil Liberties Union was denied a campus meeting place for a regular session.

- Dr. Richard Larson, a key professor in OSU's nationally recognized sociology department, resigned, charging violation of academic freedoms.

- State FBI Chief Lee Teague suggested forming groups to exercise vigilance against possible subversion on state college campuses.

- Three other key faculty members resigned—two in sociology.

- The dean of the College of Arts and Sciences left OSU. While he left for a considerably better job, he was also known to be unsympathetic to the Kamm viewpoint on academic freedom.

---

*This article was written by an OSU faculty member and appeared originally in the Oklahoma Courier, the newspaper of the Oklahoma City-Tulsa Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church. The Courier chose not to disclose the author's identity because of the "climate" on the Stillwater campus at the time it was published.*

→ Campus and Stillwater police were accused several times of harassing any student who "looked different."

Fite, 20, whose home is in Norman, a college dropout now working in Los Angeles as an organizer for SDS, stepped onto the campus just as OSU students began gathering for the protest rally. He joined the throng, estimated variously at 2,500 to 5,000, and listened as Senate President Bob Swaffar and Student Association President Tom Lucas read statements, including one from Dr. Kamm, about the regents' new rules on speakers. Fite applauded once—when Swaffar quoted John Stuart Mill on the nature of freedom. The students gave their senate leader a standing ovation when he concluded his remarks to the effect that the regents had violated their own approved definition of a university as a place of free inquiry.

Later Fite answered with distinct derision some professors' pleased comments about how orderly and polite the mall crowd had been. Some had feared Dr. Kamm's statement would be met with catcalls. "These old folks professors were all tied up worrying that their students wouldn't be nice," he said to the audience at the forum on freedoms. "They were afraid you students would do something bad."

Doing something "bad" was just what Fite advocated if the students found their petitions for fewer restrictions stymied. Bad by OSU standards at least. "You ought to go over to old Kamm's office and if he won't talk to you, just sit down until he does," he told the students. "It wouldn't take many, maybe 20. And remember, there's more of you than there are of them." Publicity, he said, is the students' best weapon when the administration won't meet their immediate requests. "Publicity is what they fear the most," he said.

Fite, son of Dr. Gilbert Fite, professor of history at OU and president of its Faculty Senate, appeared to be in his element at the forum, which had more students than faculty in the audience of 300, the largest crowd the faculty group's series of panels ever drew. He and Swaffar, who has become a campus hero for most students and many faculty, alike, for his firm stand in the speaker controversy, found themselves in agreement on a number of points. (Swaffar has since

resigned his office, left OSU, and joined the Peace Corps.)

Swaffar, the basketball star from Tulsa whose right arm was severed in a laundry room accident three years ago and then restored in a history-making operation, takes a less militant approach than Fite. Swaffar said he believes in "student power," which has become a new scare phrase for some OSU administrators. But he also spoke for compromise, students and faculty and administration working together, "to make this a better university gradually." Don Stout, Blackwell graduate student and former president of the OSU student body, said he would look only to the elected government to present student views to the administration. And he would rely, he said, on the administration to make the first step toward changes. But even Stout, who accepted without protest a "conservative" label from a questioner in the audience, expressed some agreement with Fite, who acquiesced to a "radical" tag. "When they say that communists will subvert you," Fite told his student listeners, "you can reply that you will be the judge of that and also the judge of anyone else who tries to influence you—including me or Tim Leary." Both Swaffar and Stout joined the audience in resounding applause.

Prior to Fite's visit, his father had told an OSU faculty member that the

youngster "would agitate some people." There's no doubt he did. But he also made a favorable impression with his candor about SDS and its aims, his grasp of facts, and his verbal agility. Fite's arguments spring from a view that young and old, students and administration, the new generation and the establishment are locked in battle. The old folks have made the world a mess and those who are inheriting it must change it, he says. "To properly fight a battle," he said, "one must do several things. The first is to analyze your situation and define who is your enemy. We must positively identify our own values and goals. We must judge our elders and the establishment with our own values and act accordingly. If you think you are mature enough to make your own campus rules, your own curriculum, and listen to whomever you wish, then do it. If the university is not living up to your interpretation of what a university should do, then force it to. The university is now used to train good little boys and girls. If this is what you want, then quiet down. If you want the university to become educational, then you must create it. It is clear that the old folks want it the way it is now. You must impress them that you will not be moved or compromised out of your educational goal."

Fite says he admits to some dis-

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this issue is available at call number LH 1 .06S6 in Bizzell Memorial Library.

trust of anyone over 30. But he doesn't lump all his elders together as totally untrustworthy. "There are a few old folks who will stand with you, and you must stand with them. When a few of your faculty stand with you, they will probably lose their jobs. It is your job to see this doesn't happen."

One attack in the battle for change is to "desanctify" holy structures. "Just because somebody got a political appointment as regent does not necessitate that he knows beans about education. The same goes for university presidents." Fite, a full-time SDS worker for nine months, first got involved in what has become his mission when he organized a chapter at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn. He was a philosophy major, and he dropped out as a sophomore because what he was doing "didn't mean anything."

He was arrested, he says, in a Greensboro, N.C. lunch counter sit-in and did jail time. He recounts experience in civil rights work in Harlem and Chicago, where he worked for a time in the national SDS office. His assignment now, he says, is organizing high-school students in Los Angeles. He claimed 500 joined the recent anti-draft demonstrations. "I don't have to go find them. I sit in my office and they come see me." The high school youths' problem—and

they're more aware of it on the Coast than they are here in the placid Midwest—is the same as that of their college brothers, he says. They're alienated, caught up in a society whose schools "cooperate with business and military interests to the point of training people and not educating them." It's a society, he says, which can send 500,000 men to Vietnam to protect democracy and yet can't get 100 federal registrars to uphold it in Mississippi. "It's a society," he declared, "which perpetrates the cold war myth in order to keep its people in line and the defense budget up, a society where the church preaches love and understanding, yet many times advocates both the physical destruction of communism and the racism of its membership."

Fite sees a parallel in the struggle for student power and black power. "In many ways the students' fight for freedom is similar to the black man's, because the student is treated by the university the same way society treats the Negro." Much of Fite's ire is directed at what he calls a distortion of the concept of "national interest." As now preached by those in power, he says, "It is a concept used to defend what the established forces do. It is most important for people wishing to control their own lives to understand who creates and decides what the national interest is." And

this is why, he contends, the "student freedom" cause is important.

"The university is not the reserve for the intelligensia. It is the training ground for tomorrow's managerial class. It does not teach but serves the interest of the establishment in training people to obey, to recite."

Is Fite a conspirator? Yes, he says. But the question amuses him. So does the notion that OSU's unrest is the product of some group planning incidents and inciting students to provoke the administration. "When those cats in the administration ask that question, tell them, 'Hell, yes, it's a conspiracy,' and that will scare them to death," he advised students and faculty discussing the conspiracy theory floating around the campus. "If you are smart enough and have enough power to plan and pull off something like this," he said, "then they had better be scared."

As Fite's appearing at OSU as part of a "conspiracy," Dr. Alexander Ospovat, AAUP president, explained that the forum on student freedoms was scheduled in August for its November date. Fite was invited six weeks ago to take part, he said, because the AAUP wanted a spokesman with experience as a hard core advocate of "student power."

Lending support to the conspiracy theory for those inclined to give it credence is the recent rechartering of the OSU chapter of SDS, with a total of two members, both coeds, one of whom is Patricia Fowler, home economics senior from Norman. The chapter was saved from extinction when the two students filed the necessary information with the Student Affairs Division minutes before the deadline. Miss Fowler said she knew Fite in high school but hadn't seen him since.

Fite is symbolic of the self-styled radicals at one end of the opinion spectrum in today's campus controversy. Because he does crystallize one viewpoint, he must be given attention. As events continue to occur to stir up the academic freedom question at OSU, there is a possibility that some of today's moderates might be pushed into Fite's camp—or to the other extreme, with its repressions.

The latest rally did not polarize student opinion that sharply. But another one could. Results could make controversy to date seem mild indeed.

IMAGE IS NOT AVAILABLE ONLINE DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS.

A paper copy of this issue is available at call number LH 1 .O6S6 in Bizzell Memorial Library.