

Module 09: The 1960s: Who Won? Student Protest and the Politics of Campus Dissent

Evidence 2: "Free the University!!!"

A

Introduction

The following excerpt from a flier circulated by activists on campus to publicize and explain the April 14, 1970, anti-corps protest on the Drillfield provides even more insight into the demands and attitudes of activist leaders. With fliers like the one below, they hoped to convince large numbers of VPI students to join them in continuing protests against the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets.

Questions to Consider

- Why were these students so opposed to the corps' presence on their campus? What else did they stand in opposition to?
- What did they think their fellow students should be doing with their time?
- Note the spelling of "America" in the second paragraph. Militant activists often inserted the letter "k" to imply links between the nation and fascistic tendencies. What does this suggest about the political orientation of the activists and of their belief (or disbelief) in the utility of working within existing political and bureaucratic structures? How does this help explain their call for ongoing protests?

Document

If this were William and Mary or UVa. [University of Virginia] you would be well on your way to achieving those rights which are yours. But this is VPI. The old established ways of implementing change do not work because they were created in Burruss Hall [the university administration building] with the express purpose of preventing change. Dr. Hahn himself that there will be no change from a Corps of Cadets to civilian ROTC. PEOPLE, THE CORPS MUST GO!

We are starting with the Corps because it is a convenient example of everything that is wrong with VPI. It is little more than a symbol of the

system itself, and it is the system which is the real enemy. It is this system which denies us (Toby Cole included) our right to individual expression. It is this system which makes a mockery of education by turning the colleges and universities of Amerika into employment bureaus turning out well-ordered machines. And finally it is this system which turns a students' school into an administration-controlled fascism which constantly denies the students the right to self-rule, which tells professors they cannot cancel classes, and which tells women that they are not mature enough to decide for themselves what hours they will keep. It is the presence of these and many other abuses that has dictated that we "Bring the war home to VPI", tomorrow, April 15th. We will be down on the drillfield from noon to four. We challenge you to be there, also.

We challenge:

1. The members of the Block and Bridle Club and their supporters to explain why they had the right to hold Toby Cole against his will.
2. All red, white, and blue, apple eating Americans to explain why the American flag should not be worn on the seat of your pants.
3. The SGA president and his cronies to explain why they have acted as salary-collecting agencies, rather than mobilizers of student demands for change - real change!
4. We challenge Dr. Hahn to explain why the University Council has to meet in private to discuss policies which will affect the student body for years to come.
5. We challenge the University Council to explain why three weeks ago they voted against real student representation in the council.
6. We challenge the Highty-Tighties to explain why Dixie and the Confederate flag still exist at VPI when they are an affront to our black brothers.
7. We challenge Don Norris to explain why demonstrations won't work at VPI when they have worked at William and Mary and UVa.
8. We challenge the administration to stop feeding us the garbage they have been and to open the university to student control of student life.
9. We challenge the Corps of Cadets to justify their existence on this campus.

HOW MANY TIMES ARE WE GOING TO SIT BACK AND RATIONALIZE

EVERYTHING? STAND UP AND SAY, "NO MORE!"

BE THERE ON THE DRILLFIELD TOMORROW FROM NOON TO FOUR.

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Source:

Virginia Tech University Archive, T. Marshall Hahn Collection, Box 46, Folder 1695.