

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

Evidence 6: The End of the Williams Hall Occupation, May 13, 1970



Introduction

The following three photographs present contradictory images of the end of the Williams Hall occupation, a protest that marked VPI activists' heightened frustration with the war in Vietnam, with the apparent war by police and military troops on antiwar student protesters (as evidenced by the killings at Kent State University that May), and with VPI's unwillingness to support a "hard" student strike. The first two photographs show State Police forcibly removing students from Williams Hall in the early morning of May 13. The final photograph presents a different image of what student activists were like, since it captures students leaving Williams Hall peacefully at the end of the occupation.

Questions to Consider

- Although much of the general public opposed the war in Vietnam by 1970, many also opposed militant and seemingly anarchic forms of political protest. How do you think the adult residents of the community surrounding VPI would have responded to such images? How do you think the student activists involved in the protest would have responded?
- Do you think such police actions would confirm or undermine the students' commitment to a "hard" and total student strike?
- In the aftermath of the occupation, the VPI campus found itself consumed by a debate over what actually happened in Williams Hall and whether the student occupiers were potentially violent and destructive or inherently peaceful. What does the third photograph below suggest about the nature of student protesters at VPI?

Documents





Source:
Virginia Tech University Archive,
<http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/unrest/intro.htm>.