

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

### Evidence 9: "From Cambodia to Williams Hall," May 1970

# A

#### Introduction

The *Collegiate Times* editorial below, published several days after the debate over the student strike ([see Evidence No. 8](#)) and immediately following the student occupation of Williams Hall, suggests the limits of what many students considered to be acceptable forms of protest, even at the height of the sixties.

#### Questions to Consider

- What did this writer think about the utility and impact of the Williams Hall occupation?
- What does the editorial reveal about what many students believed were acceptable and unacceptable actions?
- What were the limits beyond which students no longer supported protest?

#### Document

##### From Cambodia to Williams Hall

Occurrences of the past few days have demonstrated the unfortunate consequences that result when people lose perspective of their own purposes. The occupation of Williams Hall by a group of students whose objective several days ago was to protest the war in Southeast Asia is a debasement of their original cause and an act that we admonish.

This newspaper has condemned the invasion of Cambodia and the entire involvement in Southeast Asia. We urged the students to support the one day strike last week. We backed a hard strike by the entire university. But the takeover of an academic building, which prevents students from attending classes and forces a strike on others, is something that we cannot condone.

The direct cause of the occupation was the disagreement between the students and the administration on academic provisions for those wanting to strike. When the university refused to grant the group's demands, the takeover took place.

We feel that the provisions outlined by the administration were accommodating to the purpose of the strike and that students who wanted to spend extra energies in working for peace could have done so with little sacrifice on their part. By exercising the rights put forth on the university's statement, a striker could remain a full time student while going to only one class the rest of the quarter. By taking deferred grades in all courses but one and then not attending any classes in the one except for the final exam, a student would lose no credit for their work this quarter and still have time off to strike.

The trouble was, the group did not want to make even a small sacrifice for their purpose. They became more interested in fighting the university than in working for the worthwhile cause of peace. If these students were sincere in their claims, they would have taken deferred grades and one exam or dedicatedly skipped the exam and failed the course. Instead they decided to disrupt the campus in hopes of gaining sympathy.

We do not see how anyone can sympathize with them and support their reinstatement on the basis that they are fellow students. We feel no common bonds with those who would deprive others of an education, which is the reason most students are here. The eviction and arrests that took place Wednesday morning were necessary steps taken by the university to uphold the rights of the student body to attend classes. The administration was acting in support of the majority of students by preserving these rights and we therefore support the administration in their actions to clear the occupied Williams Hall.

There are those who contend that the administration could have gone about the removal in a better way. Many think that more talk and negotiations should have been used. This method was used Tuesday when Cowgill Hall was occupied and the result was canceled classes until noon and another takeover that night.

The forcible eviction by police was not uncalled for. And while some contend that the police were rough, the removal of 106 people amidst a screaming

crowd with the only injuries being scratches and bruises can hardly be classified as brutal.

We hope that all students involved in the incident will receive due process in determining disciplinary action against them. We again feel, however, that we must take the side of the administration that acted in the best interest of ALL students by suspending those involved summarily. At Kent State, students arrested for rioting were admitted back into the university upon posting bail. Continued campus disruptions involving the readmitted students resulted in the killing of four innocent students.

In taking this stand, we have supported the actions that we feel were taken in the best interests of ALL students. We plead for fairness and urge all students to think before the act, and not just REact. Things cannot be settled when a disruptive atmosphere prevails.

Remember what the goal of everyone is. . .PEACE.

Source:

"From Cambodia to Williams Hall," *The Collegiate Times* (15 May 1970), 2.