

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

Evidence 14: Roger L. Croesen, "Protesters called a minority on campus," May 1970

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Introduction

While previous documents allude to the lack of student activism and support for both militant and moderate protest, the letter to the editor below provides a clear explanation for why most students acted the way they did.

Questions to Consider

- How does the letter characterize most of the students at VPI in the spring of 1970?
- What were their goals and priorities?
- Why, according to the writer, did so few students turn out for rallies and public fasts in support of suspended students?

Document

Editor, Collegiate Times:

Not often am I prompted to write letters to the editor of this newspaper, but recent events here on campus definitely warrant some comments. I feel it is time that the small liberal group on campus, i.e. those who participate in anti-war demonstrations and the like, realize that they do NOT represent a majority of students at this university. In fact it is quite the contrary. The majority of students at VPI came here to get an education- not to act like babies and raise Hell when they don't get everything they want. Why were the assemblies held on the drillfield in the past couple of weeks so small? Why didn't students turn out for a meeting that was in fact called by the SGA [Student Government Association]? Well, I'll tell you why! The decent, conscientious students on this campus were attending classes- the same place every student should have been. Those students who attended classes were speaking much more loudly than those gathered on the drillfield- blowing their horns, listening to a rock band, and in general just

making a bunch of noise!! The students in class were clearly stating their position on the issues. They did NOT want any kind of a strike, but rather they wanted to attend classes and obtain a decent education from this university. I commend these latter students for their extremely strong fortitude and true realization of their purpose for being here.

In view of the above statements, I commend and wholeheartedly support Dr. Hahn for his decisions and acts of superior leadership during the recent weeks, I think he tolerated as much student dissension and acts of violence as he should have. When such individuals as call themselves "students" take over university buildings, they depriving themselves and many of the real students on campus from attending classes, then it is certainly time to act. I also commend the State Police who did a magnificent job in removing individuals from Williams Hall and who have restored good order to the campus. My hat is off to all of them!!

In conclusion, I would like to re-emphasize the fact that most students are indeed here to get an education. Most of them feel as I do about national and international affairs-- Be aware of what is happening and express yourself through the PROPER channels. Don't go off "half-cocked" and act in accordance with high-strung emotionalism. Get the facts and evaluate them. Then consider your position and ascertain your reasons for being here. Are you a professional demonstrator or a conscientious student? I wish to consider myself as a student and will, therefore, act accordingly by attending classes and trying to learn all I can while at this university. Don't get me wrong. Just because you don't see me with long hair, hippie beads, and lying in the grass doesn't mean I'm not involved. It just means I have a little more respect for myself and for the high level of sophistication and presumed decency of our society that I am not going to act or dress like an undomesticated animal. Contrarily, I shall work within the structure of our democratic society to express myself. Isn't it time that others on the VPI a campus do the same and cease their gross display of ignorance and lack of refinement???

Roger L. Crosen
Class of 1970

Source: Roger L. Crosen, "Protesters called a minority on campus," *The Collegiate Times*, (22 May 1970), 2.