

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

Evidence 15: Kevin Hunt, "Drill practice stopped by protesting students," April 1970

A

Introduction

This front page article from *The Collegiate Times* describes the Drillfield protest against the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets (VTCC), as well as the response of those who supported the cadets and opposed the protesters.

Questions to Consider

- What do the counter-protester's actions suggest about the unanimity of antiwar sentiment among college students at the time?

Document

Drill practice stopped by protesting students



At 3 p.m. Tuesday, April 14, approximately 200 civilian students gathered

around the War Memorial for an anti-corps demonstration.

As the corps approached the field for drill practice, the students formed a line to block their entrance. The first unit, A Company, was diverted while the second company marched onto the drill field. The cadets of I Company were completely surrounded and had to force their way through the crowd.

More units were able to enter the field as the demonstrators broke up into small groups. The protesters harassed the cadets and marched along with them, causing several units to break rank. Some of the demonstrators carried American flags and toy guns; one student had a large pink plastic pig.

An unidentified student grabbed a flag flying upside down and broke the pole in half. He then returned the torn flag and pieces of pole to the protester. After the incident the student commented that the demonstration was "very silly" and the "the flag should be flown right-side-up."

Several civilians, including Sandy Hawthorne, candidate for SGA president, tried to call off the demonstration but were unsuccessful. They instead organized a group of marshals, consisting of six civilians and six cadets, to try to prevent any form of violence.

As the individual companies tried to leave after the drill, the last unit was detained by the demonstrators. The marshals eventually intervened by encircling the cadets and escorting them from the field.

After the corps had withdrawn to the Upper Quad, the demonstrators marched to Lane Hall, where they discussed the basic issues of the demonstration with Dr. James Dean [Vice-President for Student Affairs]. Students objected to the noise of the Highty-Tighties [Virginia Tech's military band] and to the corps' use of the drill field.

Following the discussion, the protesters marched around the cadet dorms shouting, "Left, left, left." The demonstration then broke up. . . .

Article Source:

Kevin Hunt, "Drill practice stopped by protesting students," *The Collegiate Times* (17 Apr 1970), 1. Photograph: Virginia Tech University Archive, <http://spec.lib.vt.edu/archives/unrest/rotcdis2.htm>.