

Is Chemical Warfare Alive at Columbia?

Ben Habeebe

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The National Coordinating Committee against the war has revealed that some major American universities have entered into another phase of noneducation.

The committee says that university involvement in chemical and biological warfare (CBWL) has recently become a major issue on some important campuses.

Last spring interest in CBW was sparked at the University of Pennsylvania when it was learned that the University's Institute for Cooperative Research was engaged in CBW research under a contract from the Defense Department. The emphasis in this cooperative research was on the possible use of such weapons in the Vietnamese war.

When the Penn faculty learned of the goings on in the University's secret laboratories, it became incensed. The Faculty Senate voted overwhelmingly against secret research at the University. It demanded a thorough investigation of the ICR's activities.

But the voice of the faculty is small when compared to government money. Penn's president Gaylord Harnwell allowed the CBW projects to be renewed last spring.

The *Washington Post* revealed in September that no less than 38 universities or university connected institutions are involved in CBW.

New York landlords New York University and Columbia University have become involved in the controversy. The N.Y.U. School of Engineering has been involved in CBW research for the U.S. Army Chemical Research Development Laboratory. The *Washington Square Journal*, NYU's student publication, revealed that the University has also done work on psychological weapons for the Air Force Weapons Division.

Columbia President Grayson Kirk has admitted that his school is involved in some secret research for the Defense Department. Kirk refused to specify what the nature of the secret research was. One Columbia professor charged that the Columbia Medical Center has a history of performing nerve gas research.

Who knows what evil lurks beneath the innocent university field house?

Assuming academic institutions are not involved in CBW because they love the human misery that results from chemical and biological warfare, one suspects that the university's motive is more plainly linked to the government money that accrues from CBW research.

It is not unique for colleges and universities to enter into enterprises that are totally unrelated to the learning process because of the financial rewards to be reaped from such projects.

Extra-educational projects have become big business for academic institutions. They've gone into the publishing business, the real estate business, the conference center business. They have reaped huge profits from the sweat of red-blooded young athletes, the best of whom receive many fringe benefits for their heroics. And it has even been known for one American University to have worked intimately with the CIA in training police to bolster the late President Diem's regime in Vietnam.

When this was disclosed, Lyman Kirkpatrick former director of the CIA, said, "I don't see anything sinister in the use of the aid mission as a front" (for training secret police).

He added, "I don't see anything that is contrary to the academic interests of an American University."

Since there is nothing against the academic interests of American University for the school to develop a drug resistance virus for germ warfare, since there is nothing against the academic interests of institutions to train soldiers, since there is nothing against the academic interests of institutions to turn student records over to the Selective Service System, etc., etc.

In all, this can be interpreted as a cause for something that is happening in colleges and universities throughout the nation.

Students are demanding that these institutions review academic policy. They are saying that academic policy doesn't speak to their needs, but speaks to the needs of forces alien to the educational process.

And they are demanding a review of academic policy, and they want to be in on the process. Most notable in recent weeks are incidents at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and at that old seat of student ferment, Berkeley.

At both schools students and some faculty members are protesting heavy handed administrative decisions concerning the vehicles used by students to protest university policies.

At U. of M. students have been protesting an administrative ban on sit-ins and the practice of turning over male class rankings to the Selective Service System. But student leaders say the real issue is student participation in making university policy decisions affecting the students, including academic decisions.

At Berkeley students and faculty members had been striking against the administration's arbitrary granting of permission to a Navy recruiter to appear on campus, while banning other nonuniversity people such as Mario Savio, the leader of the Free Speech Movement there. But at Berkeley too, the underlying issue is one of student demands for participation in policies concerning 'them.

U. of M. students have received an accommodating response to their demands from University President Harland Hatcher But at Berkeley no such accommodations have been forthcoming from the administration.

Of the two university administrations, Berkeley is the one that will bring about more of the kinds of change that students are demanding.

Students, like other members of our society, are basically conservative. When granted the slightest concession they hopefully seize upon it as an answer to their grievances.

Hatcher has offered the students a combined student, faculty and administrative committee to look into expanding student participation in University affairs. The committee will talk for a long time, split hairs and come back with a watered-down compromise in the distant future.

In the interim students will have had at least one break for them. They will have become involved in other things. They will have forgotten their anger of the fall.

But at Berkeley it's different. There the administration is heavy-handed and blundering. They return student demands with toughness, and the students remain angry.

If students are ever to have their voices heard in academic policy planning rather than the voices of the government agencies such as the Defense Department, they will do it as a result of administrators like Berkeley's Roger Heyns rather than Michigan's Hatcher.

Lincoln Steffens, who devoted his life to a study of social change, once said that only leaders, and not revolutionaries, can make revolution happen.



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