

Off Center

Sol Plafkin

1968

Are we in the midst of a revolution now? Or, are we on the verge of one? Can the revolution be comparatively bloodless, basically non-violent?

These are interesting questions we ask ourselves as summer approaches and its oppressive heat threatens to ignite this nation in the greatest internal turmoil since the Civil War.

America's leadership is schizophrenic. It apparently is moving in two directions at once in a desperate effort to stem the predicted violence. While, on the one hand it is better training and preparing the forces and techniques of physical suppression, it is also putting on an interesting show of concern and accelerated amelioration of the ills and dissatisfactions that is already disrupting their society at pivotal centers of learning and urban life.

One of the more interesting student revolts was at Northwestern University, a private institution in Evanston, Ill., just north of Chicago. When the Black students took over the administration building recently and made demands of this overwhelmingly white university, the university administrators made no attempt to oust them, but immediately signed a pact with the students—submitting essentially to most of their requests.

Many university alumni and trustees cried over this “surrender”, but, apparently, the on-campus university administration leaders plan to stick honestly to the agreement.

One university leader, Dean B.J. Chandler, of the School of Education, commended the administration for not using physical force to oust the students (a la Columbia).

“I do not approve of the tactics of the students but force or violence on the part of the university would not have solved any problems, even temporarily,” he said, “except that of physical possession of a building. The price for this superficial achievement doubtless would have been too high for rational men.”

Is this new, late 20th century “rational man” going to cast aside the old stereotypes of the holiness of “property” and the necessity for adherence to old rules and regulations and, as Dean Chandler suggests, “demonstrate educational leadership of a high order, resulting in the resolution of issues in the future through discussion and joint efforts to achieve common goals?”

A key administration man in Northwestern University's attempt to solve matters “peaceably” is the 36-year-old vice-president for student affairs, Roland J. Hinz. He has threatened to resign if the university's trustees nullify the pact he engineered with the Black students. (“I call them Black because that is what they prefer,” he says.)

There are already rumors that Columbia University will snap him up as dean of students if he leaves Northwestern. (Columbia obviously needs a lot of help in reestablishing communication with its students).

The future events at this Illinois campus should prove very informative. It will indicate if there are any possibilities at all for significant and peaceful change in our society.

We'll have to see if men like Vice-President Hinz-are merely- trying- to placate the forces of rebellion or are sincerely interested in joining them.

One of the demands of the Black Northwestern students was for separate all-Black housing. While this proposal is being considered by the University, even the not-so-radical *Chicago Daily News* found this to be quite a reasonable

request—as an expression of “self-determination and a base from which the Black students could more effectively function within the structure of the predominantly white educational institution.

A similar “Black women’s cooperative” is being planned at Cornell University in New York State. But guess who is challenging it—the Cornell student chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union.

They claim that an all-Black housing unit would be “reverse discrimination”. The associate director of the New York Civil Liberties Union said that if the cooperative was formed “on behalf of the pressure of a Black student group, it could be done tomorrow on the pressure of the K.K.K. or German-speaking groups or anyone else, and it would be no more unjustified.”

This is a typical “white liberal” trick for frustrating Blacks. While the liberals really do very little to really eliminate discrimination, they deeply resent any efforts for independent Black activity which they cannot paternalistically control.

fifth Estate

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<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/55-june-4-18-1968/off-center>
Fifth Estate #55, June 4-18, 1968

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