

STANFORD SPRING:

The Move Against Academic Warfare



Applied Electronics Laboratory courtyard.

By PAUL RUPERT

Stanford University is the West Coast's ruling class school. Normally it operates in relative tranquility. Its wholly-owned subsidiary, the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), has served business and the government quietly for twenty years.

But this year Stanford's "elite" student body struck hard at the research that produces strategy and hardware for a growing American empire. Two sit-ins at the university and a street action at SRI hurt both the university and SRI and spawned a larger and healthier radical movement at Stanford.

Considerable legitimacy and some power were transferred from munition-making and empire-building trustees to an anti-militarist and anti-capitalist student movement. The process involved should be of interest and value to other movement people.

Since World War II, Stanford has taken on two major functions. It surveys the world on behalf of a corporate state which is bent on increasing control of world resources, and it helps to produce knowledgeable young people to operate the empire.

With the war in Vietnam, these young people began to see what their country and its institutions are doing in the world. First the State's foreign policy, then the State itself, and finally the universities and corporations which propel the State were all called into question.

At Stanford, several years of organizing and educating around Stanford and SRI's involvement in the war finally grew into an awareness that Stanford was an integral part of the machinery of empire. Run by twenty-three international businessmen trustees, the university has come to serve their many needs and to neglect the needs of less powerful people like the Vietnamese and its own students.

Last fall, SDS focused community attention on war-related activity and imperialist economic development research at Stanford and SRI by demanding that both institutions "get out of Southeast Asia."

In January fifty SDS'ers entered a

closed Board of Trustees meeting, demanding the resignations of five warrior trustees and the immediate acceptance of earlier demands.

During the subsequent trials, the students used "motivational" hearings to good advantage. Spectators and those who read about the trials found that they, too, had questions about who was running the university and for whom.

Feeling stronger, SDS demanded an open forum with the Trustees. They got a public

timacy for the movement in the community and to force acceptance of the demands.

As the struggle unfolded, the university and the movement operated under similar constraints: neither could use the necessary force to achieve its ends without clear and strong support, so each moved rapidly whenever the other showed weakness. The University's strength lay in the fact that it was an established social institution with full legal power. It could punish dissidents by expelling them. It could

At a March 11 forum at Stanford, this exchange took place between Paul Rupert of the Resistance and Stanford Trustee Charles Ducommun:
Rupert: Essentially I am asking that you transform your lives and your businesses; that you share your power. I am saying that such faith and such willingness are prerequisites for participation in an educational community. If you cannot show that faith, if you do not lay down your weapons, then I can only predict a steady erosion of the hope of non-violent change.

Mr. Ducommun, as a trustee and a director of Lockheed, will you lay down your weapons?

Ducommun: I have to answer that categorically NO. (Applause.) Lockheed not only builds articles for the defense of our country, but also, of course, is one of the largest builders of commercial aircraft in the world. You are asking me to do something that I think is completely unreasonable if you want this country properly protected, to protect your freedom that you're trying to fight for today.
 (Laughter.) . . .

hearing with five members of the board, and managed to deal a very serious blow to the authority of the men who would ultimately make the decisions about SRI. (See excerpts from the meeting in this supplement.)

A coalition of at least a thousand students formed around radical demands. Stanford was asked to keep SRI, control its research, and eliminate CBW, counter-insurgency, classified and war related research. Trustees were to make their decisions in an open meeting.

While no one had doubts about who really had power, the struggle began to win legi-

call on the organized violence of the State. Our strength lay in our ability to mobilize people around issues that concerned them. We also capitalized on the University's much heralded commitment to "rational dialogue" and democratic procedures.

The coalition lacked a coherent political analysis. The demands--especially the counterinsurgency demand--were ambiguous. Vietnam-related research was the clearest example of counterinsurgency research--thus a conscientious liberal could see our demands as primarily anti-war. Pacifists, or

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persons upset by the country's growing militarization could support this direct attack on military work. Marxists and Maoists who saw counter-insurgency research as critical to the maintenance and extension of U.S. imperialism also endorsed the demands.

Because of the many assessments of the demands and their relationship to the interests of the Trustees and faculty, tactical proposals were varied. Some wanted an educational campaign aimed at the whole community (with the expectation of their cooperation). Others argued for a series of militant student actions designed to force an unwilling community to cut its academic and industrial ties with the war and imperialism.

Among radical students, few thought the demands would be won easily, if at all. The general understanding of our strategy might be called "revolutionary reformism." The demands seemed reasonable, and it was conceivable that they be implemented, but we believed that they clashed with the real interests of the Trustees and faculty.

We had concluded that the Board of Trustees is involved in American expansion. We suspected that they would not put significant restrictions on the institute which serves imperialism very well. We also believed that the sciences and engineering departments were so strong and so dependent on government research funds that the elimination of vaguely defined "counter-insurgency" research would be unacceptable to the faculty.

If this were true, the students who supported the demands but were naive about the nature of faculty and Trustee interests would learn quickly the serious implications of our struggle. When normal channels did not work, students would have to decide what personal risk they would take and how much threat to the university they would make to win the demands. These decisions would depend on the degree to which



Young insurgents picket SRI counterinsurgency headquarters.

our critical analysis of the university and SRI was understood and accepted.

There was confusion on at least two levels. First, we did not have clear and common expectations. It was not decided at any point whether we were providing the community with a radicalizing experience, or whether we were going to push for a victory at any cost to the movement. Because of this uncertainty, inexperience, and the difficulty of "winning," we had no clear sense of whether we could really gain the demands. The Trustees were inaccessible. For all we knew, they would let the university perish rather than change.

After the Trustees rejected the April 3rd demands at their meeting on April 8, 700 students voted to occupy the Applied Electronics Laboratory, which was largely devoted to classified electronics warfare research. The appeal of this tactic was that it stopped research, and began implementing the demands. Furthermore, the building with its printshop, office space,

and courtyard for general meetings provided us with an excellent base for education. In a sense we established a "liberated zone" within the research bowels of the university.

Non-violent guidelines for the actions were accepted without significant opposition.

Support was strong and immediate. Hundreds of people were involved in the small working committees (newspaper, research, dorm organizing, etc.). About a thousand people attended the general meetings, which were also broadcast by the student radio station. Political positions evolved in small group discussions. Participants developed their understanding of the action by defending it to hostile faculty and students.

The sit-in lasted nine days. By the second day there were internal doubts about our right to be there. Even though growing support and impending faculty action to abolish classified research helped justify the action, many people wanted to stop before our action started to look "coercive."

The idea that we were acting for the victims of research gave way to apprehension about alienating the faculty or the Trustees. Fear of disciplinary action and rumors that federal marshalls would take the building to protect government files took their toll. There was much bitterness when some of our researchers opened unclassified files. (They discovered systematic mis-naming of offensive contracts).

Small group discussions (which were used effectively later in the movement) might have helped get fears out in the open and provided a setting for serious political discussions. But the large meetings, often dominated by the radicals, increased distrust. Although the University was unable to use force against us initially, we became more vulnerable as time went on. Our decision to leave on Friday--after the President had closed the building with emergency powers granted by the faculty and the student body president called a meeting to discuss our tactics--was tactically wise. It was also necessary because of growing disaffection.

We left successful, but weaker than we

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Stanford trustee William Hewlett, president of the Hewlett-Packard Company and a director of the FMC Corporation and the Chrysler Corporation was forced to get honest at a meeting with 1400 Stanford students to discuss Stanford's involvement in Southeast Asia.

Floor: I want to see if there is some sort of credibility gap in this university. SDS has said that your FMC (FMC Corp., a conglomerate of which Hewlett is director--ed.) is producing lethal nerve gas. Do you deny that categorically? And if you don't, then I really question your humanity. If you are the sort of person who can direct a company which can make a lethal nerve gas, then you're the sort of person I don't want running my university. (Applause.)

Hewlett: FMC does not make nerve gas.

Rupert: Seymour Hersh, in what I understand is a definitive study called Chemical and Biological Warfare, attributes the Newport, Indiana chemical plant, which produces Sarin, a version of nerve gas, to your corporation; and further checking on that by David Ransom of the Peninsula Observer got a clarification and an affirmation from one of the public relations men in your office in San Jose. So either the book and your P.R. man are wrong, or in fact it's true.

Hewlett: I'm amazed by the accuracy and reliability of your sources, but I happened to check with the president of FMC, whom I consider superior to your sources, and he says that they are not making nerve gas at the present time.

Floor: Have they ever made nerve gas?

Hewlett: The answer is YES. They were asked by the government to build a plant, which they built and operated at the request of the government; and they turned that plant over to the government about six months ago. (Loud laughter and applause.)

**"some thought
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(William Hewlett, a Stanford trustee, is also president of Hewlett-Packard Company and a director of the FMC and Chrysler corporations. He recently gave this description of Stanford's political "neutrality" to 1400 Stanford students.)

Floor: That's right. It was stated before by Hewlett and Ducommun, less than two minutes ago, in fact, that they would not make these resources available to either the North Vietnamese or the National Liberation Front, and you stated yourself that the university shouldn't take a political stand. Now, would these people up here on the stage suggest that the resources of the university--meaning its faculty, meaning its laboratories, meaning its students--not be made available to the Department of Defense or for any actions taking place in Southeast Asia?

Hewlett: Stanford University is an organization in the United States... (applause)... supported by the laws of the United States and financed primarily through United States funds. In a sense this is an American organization. It is not a North Vietnamese organization. It is not a South Vietnamese organization. It is not a Chinese organization. It's an organization of the United States, and these services are performed for the United States of America. I hardly call that a political declaration. (Roar from the audience) Now if the university chooses to teach in its courses what the issues are between North Vietnam, South Vietnam, the United States, I think this is a most appropriate function to be doing because this is an educational function. But, one must not forget that this university is an institution of the United States.

Floor: So, the policy that you would take for the university, if it's an institution of the United States, is the policy which is chosen by the United States government? Am I correct?

Hewlett: As far as I'm concerned, it is.

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should have been, as we soon discovered.

In the days that followed, the faculty abolished secret research and the SRI study committee recommended the sale of SRI. A heavy student vote to keep the Institute and restrict research were all that stood in the way of a Trustee decision to sell. Most radicals were convinced that action was necessary before the May 13 Trustee meeting.

Unfortunately, we had not done our work well enough. A significant number of people apparently wanted to see what the Academic Senate would do--although we predicted their inaction correctly. Some thought the Trustees should be given another chance.

After an inconclusive, televised trustee hearing on March 30, a bitterly divided meeting voted to occupy the main administrative building, Encina Hall. Political discussion which might have provided a rationale for the second sit-in did not take place. Some feared that the University would be closed. Many did not understand how this move could help win the demands. Tempers grew thin, right-wingers came to heckle, and there was a scuffle. The dis-

cordant tone of the meeting drove supporters away. When the "non-violent" guidelines were dropped, many people decided not to join the sit-in.

At Encina Hall, scuffling with the campus conservatives and the breaking of doors and windows to get in turned off most people. A superficial understanding of non-violence and the impatience of the movement left us with less than three hundred supporters in the building.

With numbers dwindling, our morale low, and our researchers starting to go through valuable files, the university chose to hit us. The police were called. The 100 or so who were left in the building decided to leave as the police arrived at 3:00 a.m.

The six hour sit-in was over, and we had no base from which to generate the necessary support. The university began judicial proceedings against us, and obtained an injunction barring us from further actions. We had moved too far, too fast--perhaps farther than Stanford students were willing to go.

The injunction was read at our next general meeting. We broke into small discussion groups. These "affinity groups" became the major vehicle for re-entrench-

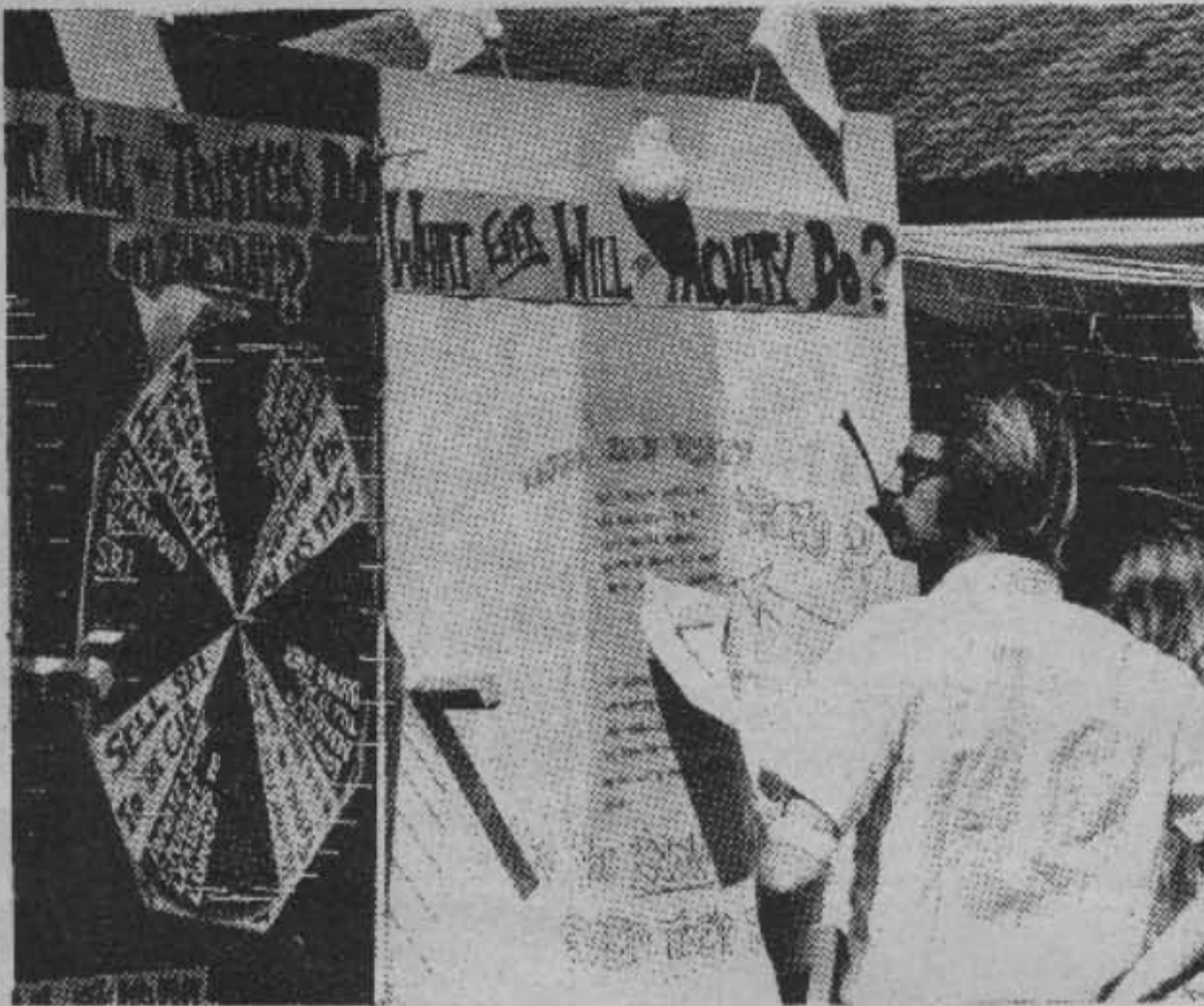
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To many in the Movement, what has happened at Stanford this spring seems like an analogy to the struggle against the war in Vietnam, but it is more than that. We are engaged in a conflict with the kind of men--some of the very men--whose interests got us into Vietnam, and whose disenchantment with the rising costs of that conflict will eventually get us out. As the War goes on, their university moves closer and closer toward becoming one of those costs: their control is threatened. The struggle at Stanford, then, is a microcosm: the trustees' intransigence will not give way to moral persuasion or majority votes any more than our outcries have ended the war. If this view is correct, then the trustees will respond only to rising costs.

--from "Why Encina," a leaflet published to explain the Encina Hall Sit-in.



Small "affinity groups" helped resolve political differences and plan common action.



"a political carnival featuring anti-imperialist games and guerilla theatre showed the creative and educational face of the movement..."

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ment, recruiting, and subsequent action. We put out a leaflet explaining "Why Encina," and re-built our support. We established a colorful presence on campus in a geodesic dome and parachute "tents." Groups met daily and openly to encourage participation.

We called a class boycott for the day before the Trustees meeting to show the support for our demands, and it was very successful. A political carnival featuring anti-imperialist games and guerilla theatre showed the creative and educational face of the movement that attracted so many people to it in the first place.

When the Trustees voted to sell SRI (without even waiting six months as recommended by the faculty and President), we were strong enough to move again.

This time we returned to direct action against SRI itself. The theory was that we would make it "an unstable investment" and discourage potential buyers by threatening protracted disruption and harassment. We were able to mobilize 500 people to block access to the Industrial Park and the SRI counter-insurgency office on Friday May 16. We created a massive traffic jam. After several hours, police dispersed our small groups with tear gas and clubs. Another try on Monday was stopped early by mobile police, and the campaign against SRI ended temporarily with the end of school.

The effect of the quarter's actions on the strength and quality of the Stanford movement may be clear next year. We succeeded in ending CBW at SRI and classified research at Stanford. However, the classified projects are now moving to SRI.

While we did not win our demands, we learned a good deal about the frailty of legitimacy and the elusive nature of power in a serious struggle. Perhaps out of this experience will grow well-planned struggles elsewhere against imperial universities.

In Encina Hall, we did more than threaten the payroll and the office functions of that nerve center. As President Pitzer explained in the Daily, he was forced to call in the police because of "the willful entry into files of great importance to the University..."

We can only speculate about what was in those files. Perhaps the personnel files would give us a better idea of our faculty's interests and the persons and agencies for whom they consult. Perhaps underpaid graduate students and staff would discover how wealth is distributed. In the planning office, we might find the long-range plans for land development: clearly many people would not be impressed with plans for new industrial parks, more luxury housing, and conference centers and hotels, and the lack of plans for low-income housing. Plans for academic expansion which suggested more and more extravagant buildings and less emphasis on improving the quality of education might be hard to defend. Finally, a university which claims that it seeks mostly unspecified funds from unnamed donors and agencies might not wish to have its fund-raising files perused.

--from "Why Encina"

A university depending for support on conservative alumni and research agencies which prefer stability cannot tolerate continuing disturbances. Faculty are not likely to come to or to remain at a university whose future is questionable. High school seniors and their parents prefer the calm promised in university handbooks, not the tension of a university ruled by men who guarantee continuing conflict. The men who run Stanford understand this better than we do.

--from "Why Encina"

