

TO THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY:

The violence that has struck Stanford once again this spring poses critical questions for the entire University. What are the appropriate limits of protest on this campus? What are the appropriate responses of the University to conduct that exceeds those limits? What are the responsibilities of individual faculty, students, and staff at times of disruptive conduct?

If the University is to function as an academic community should, we must seek answers to these questions. We must apply our resources of intelligence, of reflection and of freedom to the search for answers that can command broad agreement and respect on the campus. We must do more than react to crisis. We must pursue the answers on a broader and more solid basis, in a forum that will ensure full and open inquiry.

I propose, therefore, establishment of a Commission to examine these questions and to report its views to the Stanford community. The role of this Commission will be critical. In some ways it will be as important as the SES, because education at Stanford is in jeopardy until these problems are resolved.

Some aspects of the Commission's task are clear. It should gain from the experience of other campuses, but it should focus on the Stanford campus. It should learn from the past, but not sit in judgment on past actions. It should consider the appropriate limits of campus protest and the appropriate responses to actions that exceed those limits, but it should not impinge on the rule-making authority of bodies such as the Student Conduct Legislative Council. It should strive to reflect the conscience of Stanford, but it should not have operational responsibilities.

In its concern to define the proper boundaries of protest, the Commission should try to understand the roots and causes of protest at Stanford in recent months and years. It should consider protest in the context of the University's institutions for decision-making, and it should be free to inquire whether those institutions allow adequate opportunity for the expression and consideration of student views, whether the opportunities have been adequately used, and whether they can be improved.

Other matters concerning the Commission are less clear. What should be its precise mandate? How should it proceed? What is the best way to ensure broadly-based Commission membership? Should it include members from outside Stanford? Is it possible to avoid the factionalism that has plagued some University committees in the past?

The entire Stanford community, perhaps an even broader group, should be involved in answering these initial and most important questions. There must be maximum participation from the very start.

On this basis, I have asked the University Ombudsman, Dr. Herant Katchadourian, to make an interim study to draw on the ideas and interests of the entire University--and perhaps beyond. Dr. Katchadourian has asked Professor Anthony G. Amsterdam, Professor Wolfgang Panofsky, Mr. Craig Schindler and Mr. John Grube to assist him in the interim study. The task will be to report on the mandate and composition of the Commission. They will hold hearings and seek opinions over the next few weeks. I have asked for the report by June 1. I expect that the Commission members will then be appointed to proceed with their task as soon as possible.

K. S. Pitzer

At its meeting on Tuesday, April 28, 1970, the Committee of Fifteen of Stanford University unanimously endorsed the following statement:

The Committee of Fifteen strongly endorses those parts of the statement of the President of the University, on April 27, 1970, which ask for a reconsideration of the advisory mechanisms currently employed by the President in time of crisis.

We deplore violence and provocations to violence in the University, and we dedicate our Committee to seeking ways to increase communication and to discovering better means of conflict resolution within the University.

Mrs. Alberta E. Siegel
Secretary of the Committee of Fifteen