

Who Governs Stanford?

Stanford University, or rather the Stanford Corporation, is not a democratic institution. It is not governed by the students, the employees, or even the faculty. It is not governed by residents on its property, nor is it under the charge of local or state taxpayers.

It is run by a largely self-perpetuating board of trustees. This is not to say that the trustees are all powerful, or that they make decisions about every detail of university life. Rather, they are the owners and residual authority of the university. They make the final decisions on the University's investment portfolio, hiring and firing of faculty, construction of new buildings, budget priorities, and acceptance of government contracts, and they select or approve top administrators.

FROM STOCK FARM TO STOCKS

The Leland Stanford Junior University was founded by Leland Stanford, Sr. and his wife Jane in 1886 as a memorial to their only son. Stanford was governor of California in the 1860's. He was one of the four men who built the Central Pacific, and its successor the Southern Pacific Railroad, into the dominant economic force in the state. Leland Stanford's fortune bought land for a stock farm at Rancho San Francisquito and later turned it into the Stanford campus.

Since the Board of Trustees that the Stanfords created to run the university after they died derives its basic authority from that fortune, it is important to consider how Stanford accumulated his fortune. Leland Stanford was an archetype of the Robber Baron. His railroads received huge land grants from the Federal Government in the drive to create the transcontinental railroad. He imported cheap Chinese laborers, thousands of whom died in taking the railroad over the Sierra Nevada. As fictionalized in Frank Norris' *Octopus*, the Southern Pacific used its transportation monopoly to hold California farmers in virtual vassalage. Finally, employing bribery and other shenanigans that make Watergate look like child's play, Stanford and Southern Pacific controlled the State Government for more than thirty years, including two years during which he served as both governor and President of Central Pacific.

Stanford's successors, the successive Boards of Trustees, have, in general, not been so corrupt. (There have been important exceptions, such as Northrop Corporation president Thomas Jones, who brown-bagged \$75,000 for the Watergate defendants.) However, the chief criterion that the Board uses in selecting new members is financial: can the prospective trustee manage investments or attract private gifts, which make up roughly one-fifth of Stanford's income. Trustees selected in this manner are usually wealthy men, executives or lawyers for large corporations, who serve as directors of many other major corpora-

We must make the distinctions about democracy and university government. The university is not a democratically organized institution, and cannot become one without destroying itself as a university. That simple proposition—which would have seemed all but self-evident to most previous generations—strikes many people nowadays as arrogantly reactionary.

Richard W. Lyman, March 1970



tions. Presently, 16 of the 23 appointed trustees are business executives or directors, and so are 2 of the 8 elected by the alumni. In addition, the board includes Sharon Percy Rockefeller and John Gardner, who travel in big business circles as well.

THE CHALLENGE

Beginning around 1966, Stanford students opposed to the Vietnam War began to challenge the rule of the trustees. Under trustee guidance, the university had become a training center, research laboratory, and landlord for the aerospace industry. In 1968 the university and its wholly-owned research institute, SRI, did \$45 million in military contracts; corporations on Stanford land had nearly \$70 more. And other military contractors which either grew out of Stanford or came to the Peninsula to take advantage of Stanford's resources did a whopping \$1¼ billion in military contracts!

Anti-war Stanford students opposed the participation of their university in the war in Indochina, so they began to ask why. They discovered that the Board of Trustees, the legal descendants of the Stanfords, were in many cases the very same men who ran the war corporations. Trustee Jones headed Northrop. Roger Lewis headed General Dynamics. Charles Ducommun sat on the board of Lockheed. And as many as six trustees at one time sat on the board of Hewlett-Packard, one of several electronics firms spun off from Stanford and headquartered on Stanford land.

After publishing at least two series of pamphlets on trustee and Stanford connections to the war, anti-war students from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and other groups plastered the campus in 1967 with posters reading "We Accuse," showing Vietnam War scenes alongside photographs of Stanford trustees from war corporations. Most students on campus, including many opposed to the war, did not like the posters because they considered them to be personal attacks. The activists, however, used the controversy the posters generated to raise the issue that people had ignored when merely presented with information.

In the fall of 1968, when SDS demanded that "Stanford get out of Southeast Asia," it directed its demands to the trustees. SDS pressured the trustees to have an open meeting with students, so on March 11, 1969, five trustees answered the

questions of students before a crowd of more than a thousand in Memorial Auditorium. The trustees convinced most present that SDS had been right about the board. Lockheed director Ducommun defended military business and trustee Bill Hewlett stated that he felt it was non-political for an American institution such as Stanford to participate in the war effort. Hewlett also denied, and then admitted, that FMC Corporation (of which he was a director) had made nerve gas.

The groundswell of anti-trustee sentiment led to a nine-day sit-in at the Applied Electronics Laboratory building on campus, an abortive one night sit-in at Encina Hall, and a large, disruptive street demonstration at SRI facilities in the Stanford Industrial Park. It also led to demands for changes in the governance of the University.

The trustees made some token changes in July, 1970. They established procedures to have alumni elect eight additional members of the trustees. Because the elected members make up a minority of the 32-member board, and because many of the alumni who elect them have similar outlooks to the old board, the impact has been small.

The trustees have also changed informally. Recognizing that students did not respond favorably to war profiteers serving on the board, some resigned and the remaining trustees replaced them with business leaders from other fields, such as energy. Now the Stanford board includes top executives of Stanford Oil of California, PG&E, and Southern California Edison.

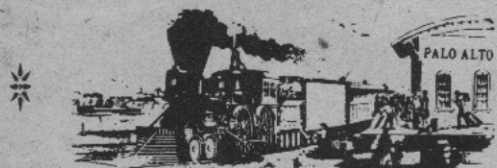
Though the mainstream of the board continues to be business leaders who can raise large sums of money, they have learned better how to deal with student protesters. They meet with students, profess sympathy, and allow the university administration to treat demonstrators with kid gloves.

In substance, however, the trustees have not changed. They consider Stanford a training ground, socializing influence, and research laboratory for a social order of which they approve and which makes them wealthy. They believe in foreign investment, and it benefits them. They may listen to moral arguments and some may actually sympathize. But they too may be trapped in the system. Should they begin to advocate policies which cost their corporations money (over the long run, at least) they would lose their positions, influence, and perhaps much of their wealth.

PALO ALTO!

THE BUSINESS AND RESIDENCE TOWN

LELAND STANFORD, JR., UNIVERSITY



1,000 BEAUTIFUL LOTS,

AT AUCTION, ON THE GROUNDS,

THURSDAY, MAY 3rd, 1888,

AT 12 O'CLOCK M.