

From The People

The 'Dixie' Decision

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to the charges leveled at Mr. Eldon Janzen, director of the University of Arkansas Razorback Band, by Col. R.E. Masters (Ret.) concerning Mr. Janzen's decision not to use "Dixie" as a pep song at football games, pep rallies, and other University functions.

As a senior at the University last year and as a former member of the Razorback Band, I voted for the discontinuation of "Dixie" as a pep song representative of the University. I and friends and acquaintances of mine who voted to discontinue "Dixie" are not, as Col. Masters suggests, "Black Militants" or "Caucasian Fellow-Travelers." We voted to discontinue the song because we felt, as Mr. Janzen seems to, that keeping it as a part of University policy could result in the kind of violent and disruptive actions that have plagued college campuses throughout America. This is not a cop-out. It is a common-sense response to a problem which, left unremedied, could have had tragic repercussions on our campus and in our city.

Nor was our vote against "Dixie" an "appeasement" to black militant groups. I, myself, am not personally offended by the song. But then, I am not black. I can, however, attempt to look at the issue from the black's point of view (as more

white citizens must do, if our racial problems are ever to be solved). I sincerely believe that blacks ARE genuinely offended by "Dixie"; that today for many of them the song serves as a painful recollection of a time when their ancestors were held by chains of subservience and debasement. Is this harkening-back to a period of indefensible injustice the sort of "tradition" we want to represent our University?

I believe Mr. Janzen acted on the issue fairly and wisely. He placed the safety of the students under his supervision, and I might add, the safety and well-being of the University as a whole, above the continuance of a so-called "tradition" which itself represents to a substantial number of individuals a period of America's social evolution of which we have little to be proud. Mr. Janzen, as band director for the University, has every academic justification for determining the content of courses (including choices of music) for which he is instructor. It was according to every rule of academic procedure, HIS decision, and not that of a student body referendum. He made the decision — one which took courage and a little insight into the problems and possibilities which are faced by the citizens of an increasingly polarized and violent society.

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