

Minister Praises Black Conduct

I am writing this article in order to give some of my impressions and to share some of my observations regarding my dealings with black students during what I consider to be a rather tense time on our campus (the two weeks before and including the Texas game). Rumors have surrounded and confused many important issues. I believe such rumors to be both dangerous and childish. I hope my comments will clear some of the confusion.

On Friday, November 21, some representatives of B.A.D. (Black Americans for Democracy) met with members of the Religious Workers Association (campus ministers). At this time the blacks described how they had attempted to get support from various white people and groups in their efforts to encourage what they considered to be responsible changes needed at this university. They expressed frustration in that although many whites were interested and concerned, the common answer was that black demands would have to wait. The B.A.D. representatives came to the R.W.A. meeting seeking support and help in finding ways to eliminate injustice on our campus. (See list of demands published by B.A.D.)

The R.W.A. and B.A.D. agreed to meet the following week to discuss specific proposals. Both organizations were asked to do some homework and be ready to present concrete suggestions at the December 5 meeting.

As the Texas game approached and as the "Dixie" issue came to the front, tension heightened on the campus, and when the combined group met on Friday, December 5, we found ourselves in the midst of a near emergency. We put aside our long range plans and tried to face the situation of the rising tension on campus and the coming pep rally and game. It was obvious to me that the black students were frightened. They explained that since we last met they had been harassed with abusive language, and that some blacks had been stopped in their

cars by whites and told to "blow their horn and shout for Dixie". Tension had reached a point so that these black students feared violence and bodily harm.

We asked the blacks what they wanted us to do. They asked us to help them get protection. They said they did not plan to attend the pep rally because they felt it would be too dangerous. However, they wanted to attend the Texas game safely as students of was asked that the national guard be called in to maintain order and to protect black students. It was asked that everyone do whatever possible to calm people down and keep things under control. It was suggested that our football coach and perhaps a player could make a statement at the pep rally in order to calm people down and that Billy Graham be asked to make such a statement at the game. All of these requests and suggestions were followed up on, but not all were carried out.

The R.W.A. met with B.A.D. once again Friday evening December 5. This meeting was to evaluate what we had accomplished. The meeting ended early because some of the black students did not want to walk home in the dark.

On Friday night I was worried, but I heard that the pep rally went fairly well, and it seemed that things were quieting down. Later that evening I was informed of the shooting of Darrell Brown. I, other members of R.W.A., members of the division of student affairs, and some other faculty persons and administrators spent most of the rest of the night with black students trying to evaluate where we were and what should be done next. It was decided that the president of the school should make a statement denouncing the shooting and that black students should receive "massive protection" at the game on Saturday.

I was at the game on Saturday and was very concerned that violence might erupt. Thankfully, it did not. As of the writing of this

article I know of no other black or white person who has been recently injured as a result of the racial tension on this campus.

In evaluating all of this I want to say several things. First, most of us in the white community did not realize how serious the situation was and is. Quite frankly we have yet to begin to do enough to help solve the problem. Secondly, in my dealings with the black students, I have found them to be utterly responsible. They have tried to work toward orderly solutions going through "the system." At some points "the system" (of which I am a part) has let them down. Third, the problem of racial tension has not been solved and will require much hard effort from both blacks and whites. Finally, the kind of situation we now find ourselves in stems partly from immaturity. All of us need to "grow up" a bit. Cavemen settled their arguments with violence and weapons. I would hope we are beyond that. I am sorry and angry about what happened Friday night, December 5, but that is not enough. We all need to work toward the day when such events will not take place on this campus or anywhere in our world.

Campus Minister

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