

Editorial

Co-ed Conflict Goes Deeper

Last week a series of incidents occurred which seemingly jolted the air of superficial contentment established between the administration and the student body here at WSSU. Use of the word "superficial" in describing this relationship is justifiable in this instance because the activities of the past two weeks have revealed that true rapport between the two must not have ever been attained initially since these bonds were broken almost instantaneously. During this period, the administration and the student body were and still are, in fact, engaged in open "warfare." A plausible conclusion drawn by taking a more critical look at the serious allegations, needless threats and hasty remarks slung from one "camp" to the other is that the wounds received as results of the battle will take quite some time to heal.

If the beginning of the trouble can be pinpointed with one specific incident, then Monday evening, January 20, must be such a point. It was during that particular SGA meeting that the students of WSSU strongly felt the need to illustrate disapproval of the administration's tendency to listen to the students' sentiments, listen through partially closed ears. One example of this practice is the co-ed visitation proposal which had been before the Administrative Council since October 1974, yet even after three months, members had made no definite commitments concerning it.

The students arrived at the understandable conclusion that administrative persons felt that co-ed visitation required perhaps a more responsible attitude than the students here possess. One might assume that frustration teamed with anger over the administration's underestimation of our students caused the mass gathering on the Chancellor's lawn as well as the take over of the library which followed that night. The students demanded definite action from a rather vague administration. A meeting of administrative officials and student body representatives the following morning was the result of this demand.

Was or rather could the student body be punished as a result of the severe actions taken the night before? This question remained unanswered in the back of many minds as the week progressed.

The game against A&T, a long, long time rival of WSSU, was approaching on that Saturday, January 25. In order to provide both visiting A & T and our own students with a post-game activity, the SGA had planned a dance to be held in the gym, featuring Blackbyrd, a disc-jockey from out of town. However, the administration apparently had different ideas about such a function. On Saturday Ray Williams, SGA President released a newsletter to the student body. Item number three read:

"The Dance scheduled for tonight has been canceled, although we asked for the gym in December. Approval for the use of gym had been granted, but was denied today. It was suggested that we pay "Blackbyrd" and forget about the dance. Or we could use the ballroom, but the Union has set up for programs on Sunday and besides with the equipment, the number of people and small facilities, it would be disastrous. Also, we would have to hire four security guards. Thus no place to have a dance."

Students viewed denial of the gym as an act of punishment whether it was intended as such or not. On talking with Chancellor Williams and Coach "Bighouse" Gaines, who is in charge of the gym, both viewed the allegation as false. The two list similar reasons for the denial of the gym for the dance. Coach Gaines cited the full schedule of activities already planned for the gym that week-end as well as the fact that the floor had just been refinished. He told the News Argus that in the past after such dances the gym had been in a very deplorable condition (wine bottles and other debris were strewn) and he wanted to avoid this. Chancellor Williams said that he backed any decision made by Gaines concerning the gymnasium. Furthermore, he was under the impression that there was an agreement among Coach Gaines, Reverend Lewis and the SGA which stipulated that no dances would be held in the gym during the basketball season. Thus—no dance.

Students decided once again to act on their own and as we all know, the dance was held in the gym but without the permission of administrative officials. No one individual should be held responsible for such a massive act, not even the SGA President who had canceled the dance. Such an assumption, though logical seemed impractical as the administration needed a scape goat or rather according to one student, "an example," utilizing Ray Williams for such a purpose.

The following Monday, January 27, Coach Gaines, angered at what he termed "inferences" in the newsletter, approached Ray and Jimmy McEachren, Director of Social Affairs in the cafeteria. He told each of them at separate times that they had better not lie on him again because if either did, he would "kick their (expletive deleted) personally." Coach Gaines did not seem to mind that there were student onlookers. In fact, he even repeated his words later and added a few (including another expletive) for the benefit of the faculty seated at his table.

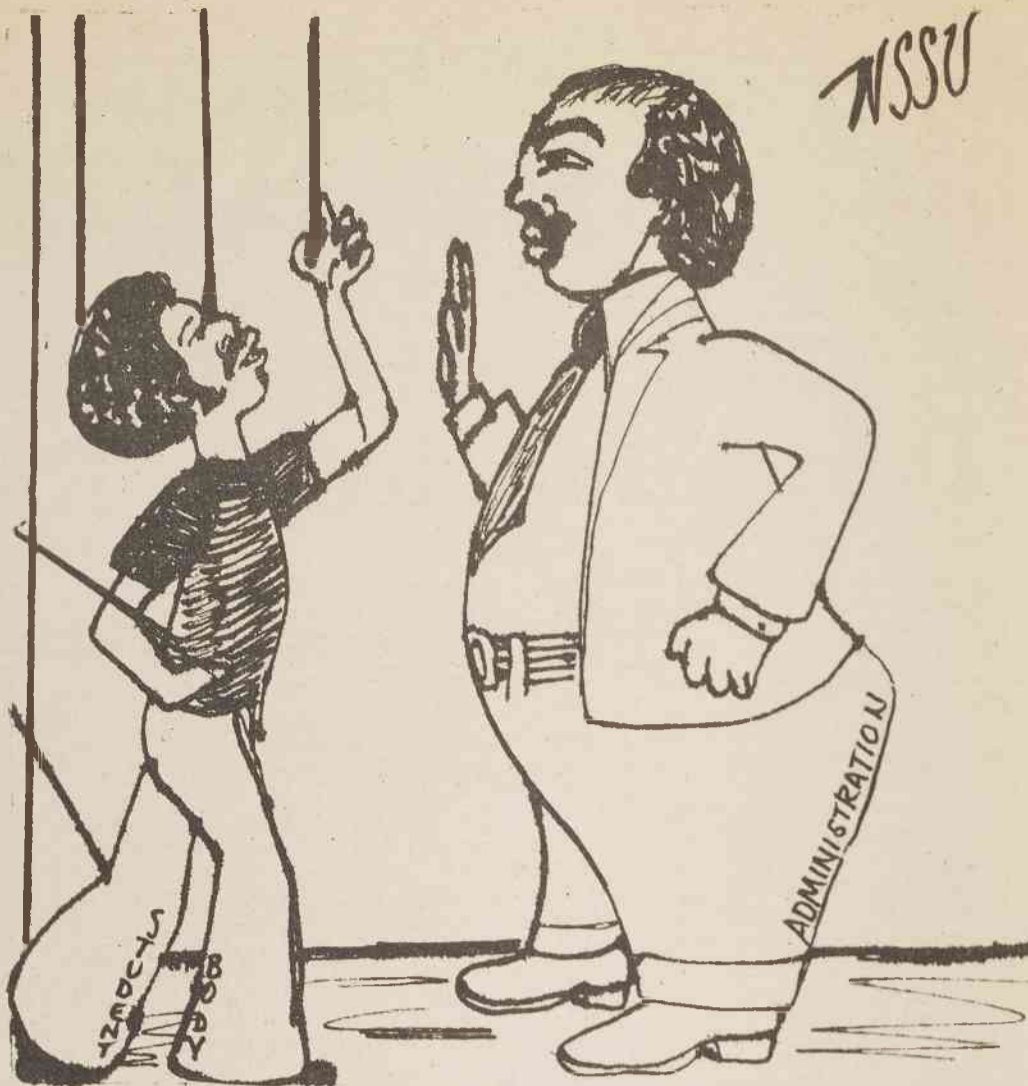
In talking with Coach Gaines about the incident, he stated that he regretted the incident. He also said that of course he was speaking to Ray on a person to person basis rather than on the student-faculty member level. One can question the application of such a statement based on facts uncovered that evening. Ray was told later on Monday in a private meeting, that he should actually apologize to Coach Gaines; Gaines' display was understandable due to his own "frustration." In addition, Ray was told that he was little more than a figurehead. In essence, the student voice and the administrative voice were channeled on two distinct, separate, unequal levels. Finally, Ray was threatened with disciplinary action as a result of Saturday night's dance. He was told that he was responsible for the actions of the student body because he serves as SGA President.

It appears that the administration's rally behind Coach Gaines, even when he was obviously in the wrong, seems to show a very unfortunate attitude which disregards our existence as living, breathing, thinking individuals who possess minds of our own. The importance behind being a faculty-administrative member does not also carry any type of parental obligations as well which can allow administrative members to demand respect while the student in return receives little or none. The system of double standards as they exist on campus is the key issue. The knowledge that the administration can always pull the upper hand when the atmosphere gets too hot for them in student body-administrative matters is more important than the actual confrontations themselves.

One can't help but wonder, If the student body is virtually "powerless" as far as the acquisition of their wants and needs is concerned, then exactly what are the functions and purposes of campus organs, primarily the SGA?

We welcome all comments.

Mickey Flowers
Editor



Hmm, the strings on this puppet must be broken

Letters To The Editor

Support for SGA

Dear Editor,

It's often been said that today's Black college students are tomorrow's Black leaders. Assuming that the statement is basically true, then it logically follows that today's Black student leaders are the best bet to be tomorrow's Black community leaders.

For the most part, the most representative student leader on today's Black college campus should be the student government president because he is elected by the students' popular vote. However, since the advent of many militant masses on student movements, the relevance of the Student Government Association has been questioned. Black students should and do question everything and everyone, including themselves.

The SGA is an arm of the administration. In determining whether the Student Government is relevant in terms of students' needs, you must evaluate the quality of the leadership. If the government has good quality leadership and is constantly meeting the needs that are basic in nature to serve the students, then it is relevant.

An SGA president should feel that his chief responsibility is to the student body. He was elected by fellow students, so therefore, that should be where his first priorities lie.

He should serve as a liaison

between the students and the administration. He should seek the resolution of conflicts between the two. He provides a strong link between the two. But many administrators still want to keep a blockade between the students and themselves, which includes the SGA president. I once heard an old saying: "Along with rights and privileges also comes responsibilities and requirements." Time and time again, after raising demands for greater voice in school government and better quality facilities and instruction, students have asked, "What do we do now since we can't get any response by asking peacefully?"

As a result of my opening remarks, I'd like to say that our SGA president, Ray Williams has fulfilled many of his required duties as President of our SGA. He has tried to serve as a liaison between the students and the administration, but as a result he may be punished (like a child) for speaking out on how the students feel about certain issues on campus.

The SGA as a whole which includes us all shares a part in this disturbance, whether we be guilty participants or just nosey onlookers. No matter what part we played we must put our heads together and come up with a solution to all the problems

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Student Editorial

Recently there was dissension between the administration and members of the student body about co-ed visitation rights. The cause has changed but the strife appears ever present between the authority figures and those not in authoritative positions be it student-teacher, employee-employer or child-parent.

Yes, child-parent. Take a close look at what happened and this can be evaluated as an attempt to break the "mystique hold" that our parents have on us. Are some of their moral values not acceptable? Just how many of us would go home and tell our community, "Today I marched in the streets so that I could visit in the girls (or boys) dorm for no longer than four hours?"

Is this the real issue? What would have been gained by this new freedom? What learned? Too many will secretly smile at this question. But be honest. Is not our ultimate objective to grow, to become a cognitive and functioning member of the "outside" world? We are trusted; our being here proves that. We must be careful of the rules that we seek to change for they may be "right on" now but tomorrow our sons and daughters will follow these very rules. Thus protest most emphatically. This is what will strengthen our democratic government but we must beware of the cause for which we raise arms.

Nathaniel Barber

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