

## State Universities: Report Terms Desegregation "Largely Token"

"Desegregation in state universities—and in the rest of higher education—has been talked about, declared, implied, and assumed to be substantial for several years. On the basis of the data presented in this report, it seems fair to conclude that desegregation in these institutions has, in fact, been largely token."

This description is found in a recently issued report which was initiated by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) and by the Southern Education Reporting Service of Nashville, Tennessee. The report, "State Universities and Black Americans," was prepared by John Egerton.

Egerton, who noted that Negro institutions had "been studied from every angle by a legion of investigators," concentrated his attention on 80 predominantly white public universities. Speaking about Egerton's report, NASULGC executive director Russell I. Thackrey commented at a press briefing, "The figures don't tell a success story; the percentage is much lower than it should be and is not even as good as at some other institutions."

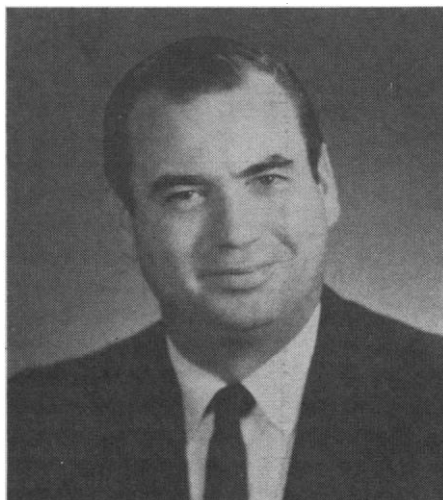
The 80 public universities which Egerton studied instruct almost a third of the nation's college students. In this academic year, slightly less than 2 percent of the undergraduates and graduate students at these institutions are Negro. Almost half of these black undergraduates are freshmen, indicating increased recruiting efforts last year. Less than 1 percent of the faculty members are Negro. Negroes comprise about 11 percent of the nation's population.

Only two of these 80 universities have a Negro enrollment of more than 5 percent—Wayne State University in Detroit, with 10 percent, and Southern Illinois University, with 6 percent. Many explanations are offered for the low percentages at most predominantly white universities, but Egerton concludes that "even when all these circumstances are taken into consideration, the conclusion that black Americans are grossly underrepresented in higher education seems inescapable."

The percentages of black students at the 80 institutions are listed in the Egerton report, and they do not differ markedly from one area of the country to another. The Midwestern universities have the highest proportion of black students (2.98 percent), followed by universities in the East (1.84 percent), then by those in the South and border states (1.76 percent), and finally by those in the Far West (1.34 percent). In the South, the highest percentage was at Louisiana State University (4.3 percent), mostly at the New Orleans campus, while the lowest percentage (about 0.3 percent) was at Auburn University in Alabama and at the University of Virginia. In an interview, Egerton termed these institutions "inexcusably elitist."

Egerton visited five of the public universities to do research and to write case studies which are included in the report. The universities treated in detail are the University of Alabama, Rutgers, the University of California at Los Angeles, Wayne State, and Indiana. Egerton said he picked these universities because they had all noticeably increased their percentage of black students during the past few years.

One of the state university systems of which Egerton is most critical is



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that of California. Two years ago, Negroes, Mexican-Americans, and Indians made up 2 percent of the university's students, and although there has been some change upward since then, it has not been "enough to reflect a percentage shift of more than one or two points." Egerton comments that "the University of California's exacting academic standards have had the effect of excluding all but a relative handful of Negroes and Mexican-Americans—and all but a very low percentage of the poor, whatever their race. The university has never been segregated by law . . . but for economic and academic reasons it has been segregated in fact."

Of the universities Egerton visited, the one that seemed quietest in terms of racial questions was the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, but this placidity did not lead him to conclude that all was well there. "Just over one percent of the student body is black; there are no black faculty members, no black students in fraternities or sororities, none playing intercollegiate athletics, none in the law school. Only about a dozen Negroes are enrolled in graduate programs outside the College of Education." Egerton, a white Southerner, notes that the Confederate flag still waves at Alabama's football games and the band still plays "Dixie," as the Alabama state legislature requires.

At Alabama, Egerton comments, "segregation is almost gone, but integration has not arrived." He quotes Larry T. McGehee, executive assistant to the university president, who commented, "Negroes are now *in* the university, but they are not yet *of* it." The chairman of Alabama's department of religion, Joseph D. Bettis, told Egerton, "There are no biracial groups on campus, and there is no real willingness to face the basic inequities that exist. I don't think the university deserves any special credit for what it's done."

Nonetheless, Alabama has enrolled more black students than have many other universities in either the South or the North. One practice of Alabama which Egerton strongly endorses is that of keeping records by race. The university has done this, with the approval of a federal court, since it first began to desegregate. "Contrary to popular belief," Egerton notes, "there has never been a federal law which prohibited such record-keeping." Egerton contends that the lack of such rec-

## President's Report

A special presidential panel of engineers recommended on 2 June that the lease of a Union Oil Company well, which blew out in January causing serious oil pollution in the Santa Barbara channel, be extended and that oil be withdrawn from the reservoir "as rapidly as possible" to reduce pressure and to "forever prevent future spillage." The 11-member panel said it is less hazardous to proceed with development of the lease than to attempt to seal the structure with its oil content intact. The Union Oil Company has estimated it will take 2 years to deplete the reservoir, but panel member Hamilton M. Johnson of Tulane University said it may take 10 to 20 years. The panel recognizes that as many as 50 new wells may have to be drilled from the present platform. Conservationists, who have demanded a suspension of oil operations, have already criticized the report. Interior Secretary Walter Hickel has moved on some panel recommendations on seepage control, but has not yet approved further drilling to deplete the reservoir.—M.M.

ord-keeping has resulted in "a very incomplete body of knowledge on the desegregation process in American higher education" and has hampered universities in knowing how many black students they have and how these students are faring academically.

One of Egerton's principal conclusions from visiting the five universities is that "administrators and students in these institutions seem more committed to drastic changes to eliminate racial inequities than are the faculties." In an interview, Egerton said that he encountered "a real strong feeling" among some professors that letting in more disadvantaged students would lower the prestige of an institution. On the other hand, he did not find administrators or students bothered by a possible lowering of academic standards that might come about by admitting more disadvantaged students.

One of the administrators who has dealt with this problem, President William Rea Keast of Wayne State University, said, "The whole cast of many disciplines is conservative, and not so-

cially responsive. Many faculty are custodians of standards, and while they have legitimate concerns, they are too often uncritically accepting of credentials. There are signs that our faculty is becoming less self-regarding, but it will take time."

Time is one thing university administrators feel they don't have much of when dealing with racial questions. Joseph L. Sutton, president of the University of Indiana, says, "It's time for us to do something about the race question. Universities ought to lead the way. If there is any aspect of racial discrimination in a university community, it has to be obliterated and it has to be obliterated now. You can't go to a black student and say we're going to take care of this problem tomorrow or ten years from now. The problem should never have existed in the first place."

Yet, at Indiana and most other American universities and colleges, there are still more foreign students than there are black Americans. The will and the resources to do something substantial for disadvantaged Americans come more slowly than the times require. One problem is the severe lack of money available to universities for "high-need" and "high-risk" students. Federal funds allocated to aid students from disadvantaged economic groups were cut sharply this year despite the greater demand that such students be admitted.

One difficulty facing many universities in admitting greater numbers of black students is that they have not developed the supplemental programs which are beneficial in helping such students adjust to their new surroundings. Egerton's report, "State Universities and Black Americans," was indirectly prompted by a study he made last year for the Southern Educational Foundation entitled "Higher Education for 'High Risk' Students." In that report he said that neither the American Council on Education, NASULGC, most of the regional accrediting associations, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, nor most of the major church bodies had been active in devising and promoting "high-risk" programs. The NASULGC leaders took some excep-

tion to Egerton's criticism of their group, and the "State Universities and Black Americans" study by Egerton ensued. The fact that NASULGC was willing to help sponsor this study is an indication that it is willing to act in a more forthright manner with regard to integration than are many educational organizations.\*

In his earlier report, Egerton concluded that, of the 215 public and private colleges he surveyed, no more than 20 to 25 have drawn extensively upon their resources to make their institutions more accessible to "high-risk" students, and that less than ten of these institutions had created truly experimental programs. Egerton also noted that no major foundation and no federal agency, with the exception of the Office of Economic Opportunity in a single venture, had done much to develop the capacity of universities to reach and teach disadvantaged students.

At a press briefing in Washington in May, Egerton was asked why he thought the nation's state universities had not done better in admitting and educating black students. "I'm inclined to believe that higher education generally has more or less avoided the question of race for the last 15 years since the segregation decision," he replied. "There are a disturbing number of schools which took a supercilious attitude. There was a general attitude to criticize the South, but universities didn't come to grips with their own racial problems. . . . They were not deliberately devious, they just didn't think about it. It was sort of an unconscious racism which brought about the situation we face today."

Not only is the temper of the times on racial questions changing but the temper of the universities is changing as well. Indiana's president Sutton, who believes in positive discrimination in the form of financial and academic support and special opportunities for minority groups and for the poor, told Egerton, "Our job is to clean our own house of discrimination—in the curriculum, in fraternities, in the student body, in the faculty, wherever it exists. We have to set the example for the rest of the social structure."

In Egerton's analysis, universities have not "set the example" for the rest of society in the past 15 years. In the next few years, the nation's universities will be under great pressure to produce results in achieving equality of opportunity for black Americans.

—BRYCE NELSON

\* Copies of Egerton's two reports may be obtained from the Southern Education Foundation, 811 Cypress Street, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia 30308. "State Universities and Black Americans" costs \$1 per copy. Single copies of "Higher Education for 'High Risk' Students" are free; for bulk orders, the price is \$0.50 per copy.