U. of Michigan: Black Activists Win a Change in Priorities

Ann Arbor, Michigan. Two weeks of turmoil and disruption at the University of Michigan ended on 1 April after the Board of Regents acceded to black student demands and agreed to more than triple the enrollment of blacks (now numbering about 1050 in a total enrollment of 34,400) over the next 3 years. Understandably, officials of the university do not eagerly acknowledge that good can come of coercive tactics. It is clear, however, that one effect of the strike called by the Black Action Movement and supported by many white students and some faculty has been to assure a change in the university's priorities.

Several millions of dollars will have to be found in order to provide for increased recruiting and support of black students and for more counseling and tutoring services. This university, like most, is now in a financial bind, and much of the money for the black admissions program will have to be diverted from other university activities. In some cases it may mean heavier teaching loads for professors and the deferral of plans to launch new research or teaching activities.

Furthermore, the faculty itself has agreed to make such sacrifices, realizing that without its cooperation the administration was in no position to meet what most professors and students here regarded as the black students' legitimate demands. Indeed, one of the things pointed up by the student strike was that, at Michigan or any other huge, decentralized university made up of semiautonomous schools and colleges, the regents and the administration *must* look to the faculty for help in deciding critical questions on the allocation of scarce resources.

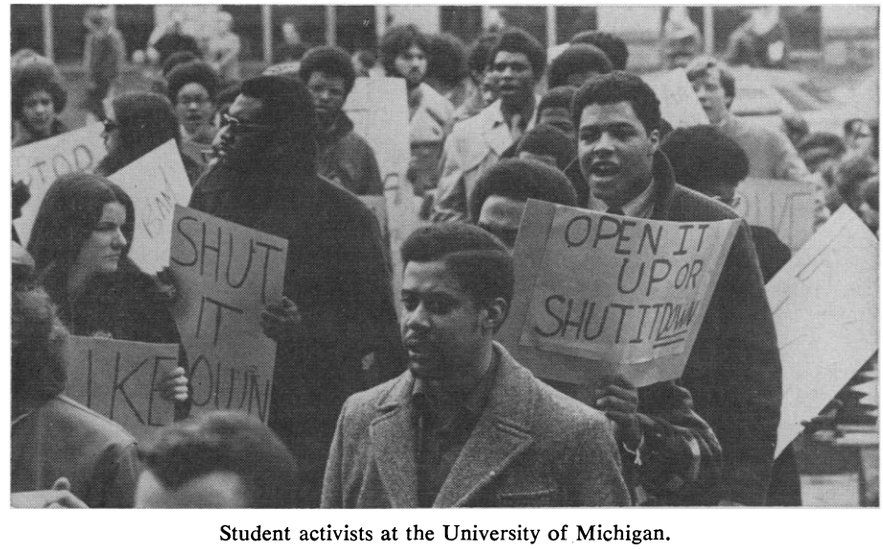
A flat, unequivocable financial commitment by the university to increase its black enrollment from the present 3 percent of the university's total enrollment to 10 percent by the fall of 1973 was the Black Action Movement's principal demand. The regents had accepted the 10 percent black admissions figure as a goal before the strike began; but, because its attainment would require a severalfold increase in funds for black student programs, they had refused to promise that the goal would be met.

Most classes continued during the strike, but attendance dropped substantially, especially in the College of Literature, Science, and Arts and in several of the schools, such as the School of Education and the School of Social Work. Some of the strikers' sympathizers in the faculty suspended their classes. While the strike produced some positive results, it had its ugly side. Even though leaders of the Black Action Movement (BAM) had asked students to avoid violence and destruction of property, this rule was often observed in the breach by both black and white students. For instance, there were bomb threats, windows were broken in some campus buildings, and, on one occasion, some 75 black students reportedly swarmed through the Chemistry Building, smashing glassware and disrupting classes. The cost of replacing or repairing property damaged during the strike is estimated at more than $18,000.

Even before the strike, some 500 members of the university faculty, upset at demonstrations staged earlier by white radicals over corporate recruiting and other issues, signed a statement protesting the "actions of the few who are driving the university community into chaos." Although it was only by chance that the full-page advertisement carrying the statement appeared in the Michigan *Daily* and the Ann Arbor *News* just as the strike was beginning and some violence was occurring, the timing gave the professors' warning a prophetic ring. Later, two Michigan legislators criticized the university's "capitulation" to the strikers. The regents themselves, in announcing that BAM's principal demands would be met, warned against further disruptions and said that the public had a right to expect the university to maintain an "atmosphere free of coercion."

Student radicals sometimes refer disparagingly to the University of Michigan as an "elitist" institution. There is truth to this, for the university has become primarily a highly selective training school for the sons and daughters of people who can afford to worry about crabgrass and buy table wines. Students at Michigan, coming from families having an average income of $17,000 a year, generally have enjoyed a good secondary education. And most have ranked in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating classes.

The university has an affluent and numerous alumni, 242,700 strong, which is well represented in corporate executive suites. In fact, Michigan is one of the few institutions (Harvard, M.I.T., and Berkeley being among the others) of which it can be said that its influence is pervasive. Its research budg-



Student activists at the University of Michigan.

et of $62 million is one equaled or surpassed at few other universities. Its production of Ph.D.'s is prodigious (522 Ph.D.'s were conferred by Michigan in 1968).

If this university is "stamping out parts for the technological society," as one student here was recently heard to say, certainly most of these parts are excellent and fit easily (and lucratively) into the machine. And, inasmuch as upward mobility is increasingly a function of receiving an education at a strong, prestigious institution such as Michigan, it is understandable that black students should feel frustration at the fact that relatively few of their race have attended the university (although the first Negroes were admitted here over 100 years ago, in 1868).

Militant Atmosphere

For several years black students have been urging the university to do more to admit blacks, but until this year they have not made much more than symbolic use of coercive tactics. Michigan has had no lack of white militants (Tom Hayden, prime mover in the founding of Students for a Democratic Society, was a Michigan student), and sit-ins and other demonstrations have been common here. Last fall, for instance, Ann Arbor police were called to the campus after a take-over of a university building by students (in a dispute involving the issue of full student control of a new bookstore) and more than 100 students were arrested.

In Michigan's atmosphere of student militancy, it is surprising that black students have not pressed their case for more black admissions before now. Early this year, however, black students organized the Black Action Movement, bringing together blacks from other groups, such as the campuswide Black Student Union, and the black student organizations at the Law School and the School of Social Work. Shortly thereafter, at the February meeting of the Board of Regents, BAM presented its demands. Besides the demand for increased efforts to recruit and support black students and bring black admissions up to 10 percent of the total enrollment, BAM wanted a number of other things (such as a Black Student Center), but from the beginning it was clear that the admissions question was the big one.

The university administration had its recommendations on the demands ready for the next regents meeting, which began 18 March in a campus atmosphere of rising tension. The administration, headed by President Robben W. Fleming, had concluded that black enrollment could be doubled by the fall of 1973, bringing it to 7 percent of the total enrollment, but that to promise more would be hypocritical and unwise, though it would try to accomplish more.

According to U.S. Census Bureau projections, 12 percent of the Michigan population in the 18-to-24-year-old age bracket is nonwhite, and the vast majority of young blacks are from poor families and have weak academic preparation. Since the fall of 1964 the university has had an Opportunity Awards Program (OAP) for students from such "disadvantaged" backgrounds. Under OAP and related programs, students of this kind have been recruited under relaxed admissions criteria and given special counseling, tutoring, and scholarship aid. Some 860 blacks are currently being aided under OAP and the program has, on the whole, been a success. Some 15 percent of the OAP undergraduates are dropping out or failing their work, but, while this is several times the rate of attrition for all Michigan undergraduates, it is not discouragingly high. (In some graduate programs, however, the attrition among blacks is discouraging; in economics, for instance, about 85 percent of the blacks enrolled are failing to complete degree requirements.)

In a letter written to BAM before the regents met, President Fleming said that the university was pinched for funds and indicated that, even in doubling its black enrollment, it would have to divert money from other activities. He observed, too, that "we do not know how much further deviation we can make in the [admissions] criteria and still accomplish anything. At some point," he added, "it is clear that the student is far better off to enter a college where the competition is less severe and where the course options are less academically oriented."

BAM viewed the administration's reply to its demands as the ritualistic response of a "racist" institution—racist not so much in the sense of despising blacks but of refusing to adjust its priorities to the urgent needs of black people. In a letter to the Michigan *Daily*, Darryl Gorman, a BAM leader, observed that it was not just the administration that was to blame: "A cursory look at the university will show that . . . deans, department heads, Senate Assembly, and other faculty groups have benignly neglected our demands."

The regents, an elected body of eight voting members (Fleming is an ex officio member), twice held open sessions to hear BAM leaders, the first meeting being in a large room packed with students who were in no mood to be put off. After the second session with BAM spokesmen, the regents announced their decision, which was essentially to adopt the administration's plans assuring at least a doubling of the black enrollment, but to look to a tripling of the black enrollment (to the 10 percent level) as the goal.

To this, BAM responded with some heady rhetoric. The regents' proposal, BAM said, is "worse than the president's weasel-worded statement. It is worse because it is an attempt to dupe the people of Michigan, pretending to make a change when all it does is capitalize the same old message: 'S-H-I-T.' Until the regents come to their senses—to their sensibilities—we shall not recognize their authority, their legitimacy, or their existence. Such officials are an insult to the power of the people."

Symbolic Cop Out

To black students, and to some whites as well, it seemed symbolic of what they regarded as a middle-class cop out that Otis M. Smith, the one black regent on the board, had missed the regents' meeting. Smith, an attorney for General Motors, was quoted in the Michigan *Daily* as saying that he was tied up in a court case that "means a great deal of money for GM."

BAM called for a student strike, and, during the afternoon after the regents' decision, blacks and their white sympathizers, perhaps 800 students altogether, gathered about the tightly locked administration building, a fortress-like structure built in a strange modern-medieval style. When Fleming and one of the regents appeared at one point, students surrounded them, chanting "open it [the university] up or shut it down."

BAM had called for a strike and it was becoming evident that the black students had support enough among the white students possibly to shut down the university. A Coalition to Support BAM had been organized by antiwar mobilization groups, the student government, and others. The coalition kept its mimeograph machines busy, turning out leaflets and off-the-cuff treatises holding that only a "white racist sense of spending priorities" would allow the university to carry on such things as ROTC

programs, a job placement service, and athletics (partly supported from the general fund), while recruitment of black students suffered for lack of money.

Virtually all candidates running in an upcoming student government election supported the BAM demands. And numerous campus groups, including ENACT, sponsor of Michigan's recent Environmental Teach-In, also were supporting the demands. Editors of the Michigan *Daily* were giving BAM sympathetic news coverage and exhorting students to support the strike.

As the first week of the strike wore on increasing numbers of teaching assistants and professors supported the strike by canceling classes, holding classes off campus, or using class periods for discussion of the black demands. The university's black faculty members, of whom there are now more than 40, were early supporters of BAM and did missionary work for BAM within their various schools and departments. A new campus group, called the Radical College and made up of some 200 members (about half of whom are professors and teaching fellows), agreed to support the strike and said that the campaign for more black admissions marked a "beginning of the humanization of the university." The Residential College canceled its classes, and some schools and departments did likewise.

At midweek, the Senate Assembly urged the faculties of each school and college to help the administration achieve a financial plan for 10-percent black admissions. Later, in response to an appeal from President Fleming, the schools and colleges agreed that this would be done. Here was the critical development that led to a strike settlement. It offered the university a way to meet the black demands despite its severe financial problems, which Fleming had described earlier.

The university, Fleming had said, already faces a $1.75 million deficit; fees for out-of-state students must be increased; and a fee increase for Michigan students is likely, even if the university's new budget goes through the legislature intact—this being in doubt because it depends in part on passage of new tax measures in an election year. Also, cutbacks in federal research support are creating other difficulties.

"It is not enough," Fleming had added, "to say that the university can, if it wants, guarantee that several million dollars will be put into a black student program regardless of what other events take place in the next 4 years . . . [much] of this money must be found by rearranging internal priorities. That, in turn, takes place largely within the colleges."

After the action of the schools and colleges, BAM and the administration arrived at an understanding which the regents, meeting last week in special session, in effect ratified. Vice President Allan F. Smith (for academic affairs) later told *Science* where the schools, colleges, and departments will look for means to support the black admissions program: Gifts and endowment income often will have to be allocated to this purpose; more research assistant positions must be assigned to the support of black graduate students; teaching loads may have to be increased to keep staff positions to a minimum; some new programs or program expansions will have to be postponed; and supporting personnel such as secretaries and laboratory assistants may have to be kept at present strength or even reduced.

While the regents deplored the disruptions that occurred during the strike and called for the drafting of policies to deal with campus strikes and boycotts, they observed that the "black students, unlike many of the white radicals who seem bent on destruction for its own sake, have been pursuing the legitimate objective of trying to make more educational opportunities available for their people."

And, clearly, it was the strike that focused the attention of the faculty on the need for changing priorities in favor of more black admissions. There no doubt will be other intrusions on the peace of the academic sanctuary, here and on other campuses, if those who dwell therein neglect to deal with social injustices that are partly within their power to correct.—LUTHER J. CARTER

HEW: What Will Decentralization Mean to Research Evaluation?

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) presents management problems on the scale of the late Ottoman Empire, and the Nixon Administration faces a real challenge in its effort at HEW to redeem a Nixon campaign pledge of more effective government.

A main feature of this administration effort is a decentralization program which involves a major shift to regional officials of authority and responsibility for HEW's far-flung grant-in-aid programs. Among HEW's research clientele in the universities and health and welfare institutions there is rising concern that decentralization will involve a sharp reduction in influence of the study-section review system under which professionals from outside government provide scientific evaluation of HEW research and training activities.

The decentralization program is in its early stage, and at this point changes have been made in advisory procedures in a relatively small number of research and training programs in agencies which are primarily "service-oriented." The review process for basic research programs seems unaffected. There are enough equivocal signs, however, to have set the scientific community's early-warning system buzzing.

One agency in which the effects of decentralization are taking hold is the Social and Rehabilitation Service which administers programs for special groups such as the physically handicapped, children, and the aged. A clear picture of the effects is, however, difficult to form. This reporter's attempt last week to ascertain the status of the technical advisory panels on research and training under the Older Americans Assistance Act, for example, revealed a lack of clarity in the situation. A professor who sat on one technical advisory panel said he had received a letter informing him that his panel had been dissolved and later got a phone call from a Washington functionary who said the panel might be reformed at a later date and inquired about the professor's political affiliation. A middle-level SRS administrator said both the training and research panels