

Southern U. Meets Few Student Demands

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BATON ROUGE, La.—It has been two months since two young black students were slain during what Louisiana Attorney General William Guste has called "overreaction" by sheriff's deputies to a Southern University campus protest.

Most of the 9,000 students at the main campus of the nation's largest predominantly black university are back at their books now, while nine of the most vocal protest leaders are spending an estimated two weeks in court.

They have already been suspended from school, and they are fighting the university's attempt to get a court injunction barring them from entering the campus or influencing other students. Attempts to reach an out-of-court compromise on the issue failed several weeks ago.

Behind these scenes some changes have been made. While they're hardly revolutionary, some old, capitol hands around the Baton Rouge statehouse find it amazing that the all-white State Board of Education allowed them to be made at all.

One of the early student demands that set off the chain of boycotts, disrupted classes and clashes with police that finally led to the closing of the school was for a student voice in how the university was run.

Students United, the umbrella protest group of 41 campus organizations, demanded the creation of "departmental councils," made up equally of faculty and student votes, to control every aspect of each university department, including hiring, firing, and tenure.

On Dec. 8, the State Board of Education announced that it had approved, in a telephone poll of its members, setting up advisory departmental councils, with elected student and faculty members.

The advisory councils, which would not have authority to make decisions, were recommended by an investigatory committee the state board appointed in November. The committee of four board members and three blacks also said:

"There are several student grievances alleging that certain members of the faculty are not adequately performing their teaching functions . . . there may be some merit in these accusations . . . we are convinced that one of the criteria for determining the quality of teaching should be the evaluation of teachers by students."

The state board asked for recommendations at its next meeting for a method of evaluating teachers, "and that . . . student evaluation of their teachers be included."

While the board flatly refused to fire university president G. Leon Netterville, a black administrator firement who is two years past normal retirement age and whose replacement was a key demand of Students

United, it agreed to appoint a "search committee" to look for potential presidents.

The committee should be given six months or more to make a report, the board said.

During long shutdown from Nov. 16, when the campus was closed in the wake of the deaths of Denver Smith and Leonard Douglas Brown, to Jan. 3, when it reopened for the first time, university officials were busy, too.

Faculty and administration officials held more than 50 community meetings throughout Louisiana with students and parents.

The dormitories have been spruced up with new draperies and coats of paint. Four extra janitors were hired, extra efforts were made to eradicate pests, new beds were ordered, and

repairs were made to water coolers, fire extinguishers, plumbing and other facilities that Students United had complained about.

Some of the classroom buildings were cleaned up, and talks are under way with new catering companies to improve food service in the dining halls.

The only external signs of the conflict that remain are a fire-gutted wing of the registrar's building and a new guardhouse installed in the middle of the main entrance road. All who enter must now identify themselves, and show they have a legitimate reason for driving onto the campus.

Student reaction to this activity has been mixed.

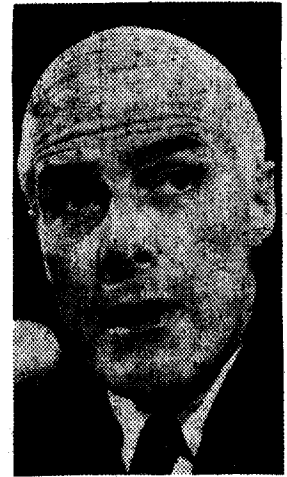
In reaffirming its call for a continuing boycott of the spring semester, Students United argued that the main issues, including quality of education and its political direction, had been ignored.

"They have gotten pest control, new curtains, more underpaid janitors, and ashtrays have been placed in the student union," the group said in a statement.

"But is that what brother Brown and brother Smith were murdered for? Is this what Students United is all about? . . . what happened to Southern University adhering to the needs of black people? What happened to self-determination?"

On the other hand, university officials say about 7,000 of the 8,700 students signed statements saying they intended to return to classes peacefully.

"There was a lot of support for those grievances," one faculty member commented. "Now that it looks like there's some movement,



DR. CHARLES EDWARDS
... senior medical officer

the students are willing to give it a chance and see what happens."

After small and brief disruptions on the first two reopening days, university officials say, school has settled back to normal with more than 8,000 of the students attending classes.

Louisiana Gov. Edwin Edwards, who said after his attorney general's report came out that he didn't personally believe the state's official position that sheriff's deputies threw the first missile, said he is now hopeful.

"I believe that if we're

successful through court action in keeping the few students who won't be satisfied with anything off the campus, that we can resolve this," he said.

I feel that if we use this opportunity . . . that we will not only build a better university but establish some further confidence in Southern University."

The governor said there are no plans to close Southern's main campus and integrate it with the predominantly white Louisiana State University system, a proposal that has surfaced several times over the years with strong feelings on both sides among blacks and whites.

"There is a general awareness among black and white people in Louisiana of the importance of this education system," the governor said. "We have no plans or desire to do it."

He did not offer the same reassurance for the smaller Baton Rouge campus, where pleas to continue the boy-

cott have also been largely ignored.

The Baton Rouge campus would be closed down, the governor said, "only if the students refuse to use the facility as an educational institution."

In November Netterville said he thought that the issue of keeping Southern University as an independent school was "far greater than any other issues at this time . . ."

"Southern University and

Grambling College are the last black citadels of learning presided over by black people," Netterville told a state-wide meeting of SU graduates.

"I am worried about the future of Southern University," he said, "for its image has been tarnished and persons who were friends of the university are no longer friends."