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THE STATES-ITEM

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The States-Item prints the news impartially. It supports what it believes to be right. It opposes what it believes to be wrong, without regard to party politics.

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The Southern tragedy

The death of two youths at Southern University in a confrontation on the Baton Rouge campus between students and law enforcement officials was tragic and served only to underscore the terrible price that forceful protest often exacts.

Many students obviously felt they were justified in seizing temporary control of the university's administration building, but, having done so, they set in motion a chain of action which, given the events of the past few weeks, was bound to lead to serious trouble.

This is not said to absolve law enforcement authorities of hasty and indiscreet action if such, in fact, proves to be the case. But students, no less than the law enforcement officers whom they often see as adversaries, must abide by the law or face the consequences.

We are not in a position to pass upon the validity of student complaints at Southern University. There may be much to support the complaints. As a matter of general

principle, however, we believe it is unrealistic for students, who spend but a brief time during their maturing years at an institution, to expect a significant degree of control over its operation. And yet, youth is often outraged, and rightly so, by the wrongs and hypocrisies that older persons accept with world-weary resignation. The issue, in short, is not clear-cut.

Finally, it is indisputable that, through the years, Louisiana has had two systems of public education, one black, one white, separate and unequal. This is the heart of the problem and until it is dealt with forthrightly restiveness and resentment will persist.

We can only hope, therefore, that Thursday's tragic incident will shock all of those concerned — the school's administration, the State Board of Education, the governor and, most importantly, the students themselves — into an awareness that there is no reasonable alternative to a peaceful resolution of the issues.