

# Edwards Forced to the Right

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**BATON ROUGE** — The militancy of black student leaders in the Southern University episode may be forcing Gov. Edwin Edwards into a right-wing box he's been trying to avoid.

More and more, the governor's words seem to be siding with the college administration and taking a harder and harder line against the students.

Monday, as school reopened at Southern's New Orleans campus to continued student boycotting of the classrooms, Edwards apparently made the determination that no matter who pulled the trigger on two dead students at Baton Rouge, the students themselves were responsible because they precipitated the crisis.

**THE GOVERNOR** has made three decisions since the unrest began on the SUNO campus when students occupied the administration building there.

Then he was lenient, conciliatory and anxious to bring about a settlement devoid of strife and bitterness. He even gave way to a student demand for the head of the top official there, Dean Emmett Bashful.

But the situation has changed. Now Edwards:

—Asserts that students won't be allowed to occupy buildings.

—Declares that students won't be allowed to take over control of running the schools.

—Asserts that students are at fault in the Baton Rouge tragedy because they created the strife. He is convinced now that they started the battle

with police and inflicted severe property damage on the buildings.

"**STUDENTS ARE** going to have to recognize that colleges are for study," Edwards told a group of LSU students who marched to the steps of the State Capitol in sympathy for the Southern students.

"Students are not going to control the university," he told them.

The bloodshed that developed in the student-police confrontation was predictable, the governor said.

Edwards reminded that in the early days of negotiations with students at Southern in New Orleans and later with those at Baton Rouge, the administration was willing to give in to many of the demands either through correcting the grievances or through compromise.

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NOV 29 1972

## by S. U. Militancy?

"**THEY WOULDN'T** sit still for it," Edwards said. "These students did not want to resolve things. They wanted control of the university.

"Students were adamant to have control of the university and Netterville's head."

Dr. G. Leon Netterville is president of the Southern University system, which includes campuses at Baton Rouge, New Orleans and Shreveport.

The first note of transition from conciliation to hard-line opposition in Edward's approach to the problem appeared when he went before the Board of Education to urge the Board not to accept Bashful's resignation.

**HIS HOPES** that the New Orleans crisis would be solved by Bashful's quitting were dashed in continued stu-

dent refusal to restore the campus to normal.

Even as he spoke to the board, events at Southern were exploding in Baton Rouge.

While Edwards may have had a sympathetic ear for the students' desire that there be a change in college administration, it began to turn deaf over developments that he could not seem to control.

He found himself forced to side with established authority, including the campus administration. The more students determined to chop the heads of Bashful and Netterville, the more determined Edwards grows to protect them — if nothing more than to demonstrate his already stated position

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Gov. Edwin W. Edwards

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that students will not be allowed to run the show.

**THERE IS** considerable infighting in the black community over the presidency of Southern, a position of prestige and power. Netterville, who at 65 is eligible for retirement, is being backed by blacks who have been close to Edwards.

One of the men who appeared in line to succeed Netterville is Jesse Stone, former Law School dean and now an assistant superintendent of education for the state. Stone backed Edwards' opponent in the gubernatorial race.

Because of the crystalizing of positions, Stone may be out of the race for the presidency altogether. He seemed to understand and sympathize more readily with the students than Netterville, or those close to the administration.

Edwards, who owes much to the black community for his election, feels the black militants are doing a disservice to the blacks.

**THE FIRST** to suffer in a breakdown in established authority, he said, is a minority group. Edwards really feels he has gone out of his way to help the black cause in the current situation, but a militant group is locking resolution of the problem.

Edwards demonstrated Monday that he is still willing to meet with any and all — a move apparently designed to show he has not closed his mind to the black position. He even went so far as to be sworn into a wholly unofficial hearing staged by blacks, appearing to explain his position.

Although Edwards told the black hearing that if it turned out a policeman deliberately killed the two students he would be prosecuted, he still holds students responsible for having set the stage.

It is unlikely that any policeman will admit having deliberately tried to kill students and, therefore, equally unlikely that anyone will be prosecuted.

This issue is what the blacks want — and the more shrill their cries become, the more difficult it becomes for Edwards to hear them.