

## The Controversy at Maryland

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The news that President Wilson Elkins of the University of Maryland vetoed the promotions of two respected faculty members because they signed a letter supporting students without hearings following campus antiwar protests should not surprise anyone familiar with Elkins' past performance. In fact, the case runs a close parallel to last year's denial of a salary raise to physics professor Edgar F. Beall for political reasons.

Political repression is hardly a new development at Maryland. It may be remembered that the Elkins administration prevented the late Martin Luther King from speaking at the university some years ago. A similar attempt was made (unsuccessfully) to ban civil rights activist Bayard Rustin in 1966.

The past year at College Park has seen a number of instances of harassment of politically active students and faculty, culminating in the suspensions protested by Professors Jamieson and Adams. In the course of disciplinary hearings (held after the students were suspended) it was revealed that student political groups had regularly been spied upon by police agents. The campus newspaper, *The Diamondback*, reported on May 18 that officer John Cook had posed as a student and attended meetings of the Democratic Radical Union of Maryland (DRUM) and other political groups throughout the school year. The university administration has yet to explain its role in the matter.

In another campus controversy last spring, the University Senate, composed of faculty, student and administration representatives, voted to withdraw academic

credit from the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps program, making it an extra-curricular activity. On May 21, two days after the senate vote and before the chancellor had an opportunity to review the recommendation, President Elkins stepped in and announced that any substantive change in the ROTC program, such as withdrawal of credit, was "not practicable." Under administration pressure, the senate rescinded its decision.

While President Elkins has insisted that the university's role is non-activist and politically neutral, increasing numbers of students and faculty see the ROTC program and Maryland's large amount of militarily funded research as evidence that Elkins and the university lend strong support to the Vietnam war. Elkins' attempt to silence these critics has produced considerable anger on the College Park campus, and may partially explain why protest at Maryland resulted in Governor Mandel's proclaiming a state of emergency last May, while most of the nation's campuses were quiescent.

Even moderate and conservative faculty are incensed by the attempt to punish dissidents by attacking them through their professional and economic standing. In addition, Maryland students will undoubtedly again be involved in major antiwar actions, already being planned for October and November. Thus the likelihood of more confrontations at College Park this fall can be considered high indeed.

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