

California Poll

A Softer Line on Campus Unrest

By Mervin D. Field

The public's desire to take a "hard line" with student demonstrations and faculty demands may have reached its zenith. While the large majority of the public still is unsympathetic to campus unrest, there are signs that the public's mood has softened somewhat during the past year.

The California Poll recently concluded another survey as part of a four-year series of measures to trace the reaction of the general public of California to the widening and deepening ferment in higher education today.

Each year beginning in 1967 cross-section samples of the public have been asked to respond to a series of questions covering several facets of this issue which is causing profound reverberations throughout our society.

For instance, while a majority of the public still holds to the following hard line views, the size of the groups holding these opinions is down somewhat from last year:

- It's only a small minority of misfits who cause campus demonstrations. (Down 8 points.)

- Kick out all students who challenge or defy university and college authorities. (Down 7 points.)

- Don not bend the system to admit more black students who may not meet regular scholastic entrance requirements. (Down 9 points.)

- Professors should not have the right to go on strike. Down 2 points.)

Further evidence of some possible reshaping of views on how to deal with campus unrest is also found in these changes in attitudes toward students:

- More Californians than ever before now agree that students should be given more voice in deciding campus rules and regulations. (Up 10 points.)

- A growing number (but still minority) of the public now feels that having the police on a college campus makes matters worse instead of better. (Up 12 points.)

The California Poll finds in

this survey relatively strong support for the idea of allowing students the opportunity of directing their dissatisfactions into conventional political channels. A majority endorses the recently proposed idea of rearranging college and university scheduled so that students could express their feelings by working for political candidates instead of engaging in demonstrations and protests.

AGREE

By a vote of 49 percent to 45 percent, the California public agrees with the statement: "If our elected leaders only stopped calling students names and at least listened to their ideas, most of the students would feel they didn't have to join demonstrations and protests."

And 65 percent Californians reject the view that "the way they are behaving, this generation of college students will never be fit to lead our country or the world."

Furthermore, almost nine of ten Californians still agree with the principle that "tax support of low-cost college education for all students who can qualify is a good investment in the state's future growth and prosperity."

While a majority today subscribes to the belief that "to keep its high standing, the state university and college system must stay independent of political control by the governor or the Legislature," they still feel very definite in their view that the tax-paying public should have more to say about how the state university and college system is being run.

PROFESSORS

And academic freedom fares poorly this year, as it has in the past: the public is still inclined to agree with the statement "professors who advocate controversial ideas or speak out against official policy have no place in a state-supported college or university," and not more than half the public will even support the idea that "professors in state supported institutions should have free-

dom to speak and teach the truth as they see it."

The detailed figures on which the above conclusions are based are shown in the following tables:

"I'm going to read some statements and I would like you to tell me whether you AGREE or DIS-AGREE with each one. Tell me whether you agree or disagree strongly or just somewhat"

	May '70	Feb '69	Jan '68	Jan '67
The really serious students don't get involved in campus demonstrations—it's a small minority of misfits who cause the trouble.	57	69	#	#
Agree Strongly	18	14		
Agree Somewhat	4	2		
No Opinion	10	9		
Disagree Somewhat	11	6		
Disagree Strongly				
Student should be given more voice in deciding campus rules and regulations.	19	14	14	15
Agree Strongly	30	25	20	22
Agree Somewhat	4	4	6	5
No Opinion	16	19	20	30
Disagree Somewhat	31	38	40	19
Disagree Strongly				
Students who challenge and defy university and college authorities should be kicked out to make room for those who are willing to obey the rules.	63	72	58	66
Agree Strongly	13	11	15	14
Agree Somewhat	2	2	3	3
No Opinion	9	9	12	8
Disagree Somewhat	13	6	12	9
Disagree Strongly				
Tax support of low-cost college education for all students who can qualify is a good investment in the state's future growth and prosperity.	64	70	53	66
Agree Strongly	23	19	31	22
Agree Somewhat	3	3	5	5
No Opinion	6	5	6	4
Disagree Somewhat	4	3	5	3
Disagree Strongly				
The state university and college system should accept many more black students than it now does even if many of them do not meet regular scholastic entrance requirements.	8	7	#	#
Agree Strongly	14	6		
Agree Somewhat	3	3		
No Opinion	18	17		
Disagree Somewhat	57	67		
Disagree Strongly				

#Not asked in previous surveys. Copyright 1970, Field Research Corp.