

Office of Public Information  
Columbia University  
New York, New York 10027  
Telephone: (212) 280-2371

May 24, 1968

John Hastings, Director

TO THE STUDENTS OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY:

The events of Tuesday night, May 21, present, more clearly than anything that has occurred in the past five weeks, a serious choice all of you, especially to those who up to now have not committed themselves. The choice is fundamentally a simple one: Do you support the small group of persons who go to any lengths to destroy this University, or do you support those who are dedicated to the use of orderly processes to accomplish the aim of building a stronger and a better Columbia, one that will continue to be a great University?

You are not asked to support any person or any "administration. But you can be asked to accept the fact that there are many faculty members, students, administrators, Trustees, and alumni who know that changes must be made and who will work long and hard to plan these changes and to see that they are put into effect.

Will you put your trust in those who clearly have no respect for the values that the University represents, who have consistently employed misinformation and half-truths to inflame the situation, and who are willing to resort to coercion and destruction in order to impose their will on the great majority? Or will you place your confidence in those men and women, especially the members of this faculty, who are dedicated to Columbia, to honest inquiry and honest statements, and to the resolution of problems and disagreements by

- more -

civilized means?

No one can now say exactly what will occur during the next few months. Along with the rest of us, you cannot know precisely the forms that will emerge from the efforts at reform that are under way. However, you can and should be able to decide now what principles you believe in and what procedures for making changes you respect and want to see followed. And, of course, as particular proposals for change emerge from faculty and student groups and from the Trustees and the administration, each of you should employ his critical intelligence in analyzing them and debating their merits and shortcomings.

The decision that you now take does not have to be based simply on faith in the integrity of the faculty, some of your fellow students, the administration, and the Trustees. During the last few weeks all these groups have made strong, positive commitments to reform of the University's structure and processes, and already there are positive, tangible accomplishments that you can assess.

The Trustees have set up their own Special Committee, headed by Mr. Alan Temple, to work on the problems of reforming the University; that Committee has already had productive discussions with the President and me, with the Executive Committee of the Faculty, with other elected faculty representatives, and with elected student representatives. The Executive Committee of the Faculty has already had discussions about reforms with many faculty members and students and has plans for research and drafting of proposals during the summer.

A notable example of student participation in the administration of university affairs, is the Joint Committee on Disciplinary Affairs, made up of seven students, seven faculty members,

and three administrators. The Joint Committee has, by extraordinary devotion and hard work, produced a unanimous report recommending disciplinary procedures to be used in the present situation; the various Deans' offices, faculty - student - administration tribunals in each school, and the Joint Committee itself as the appellate body are involved in these processes. These procedures have been accepted by the administration of the University and are now being carried out. Even more important for the long run, the Committee's work has demonstrated the reality of the University's commitment to student and faculty participation in decisions affecting them.

In many schools and departments, faculty and student committees have already been set up to discuss changes in policies and procedures and to provide for student participation in academic reforms to the fullest extent compatible with the faculty's responsibilities for instruction and for maintaining the highest possible standards of excellence.

A number of other commitments to change and preliminary accomplishments could be listed. I have indicated some of the most important, so that you will be aware that the choice you are being asked to make is one that is based on rational grounds and on hard facts as well as on faith in the future. You cannot escape making a decision between the forces of construction and renewal in this University, to which I, along with many others, am completely committed, and the forces of destruction and anarchy. The choice you make is vitally important, not only for you, but for those who for many generations to come will be teachers and students in Columbia University.

David B. Truman