

JUN - 4 1968

616 W. 116th St.  
New York 10027

June 1, 1968

Miss Martha Peterson  
President, Barnard College  
606 W. 120th St.  
New York 10027

Dear President Peterson,

As you may remember, our committee, trying to promote a feeling of understanding between parents and students, is sending Barnard and Columbia parents a letter giving some background information of the Columbia strike. With the financial aid of Barnard and Columbia faculty, we have mailed 2700 letters to Columbia College parents, and have received many responses thanking us for our concern.

All of us at Barnard would like to maintain communication between administration and students; certainly, with communication goes cooperation. As a Barnard organization, we requested twice use of a Barnard facility, the addressograph machine. (At least one other organization - Mortarboard - has already used the addressograph for a mailing to parents.) We would like you to reconsider your decision and allow our committee to use the addressograph. This would cost Barnard nothing, but would save some of its students much labor. (Our fingers are very tired from typing.)

Therefore we ask you to please grant us use of the addressograph for our mailing. I shall call at your office Monday, hoping you have considered our request favorably.

Sincerely,

*Kathy Shenkin*

Kathy Shenkin  
Chairman

Independent Committee for  
Understanding the Strike

P.S. I enclose a copy of our letter.

cc

*This was  
done by the  
Barnard Fund off  
Not by  
Students  
of*

Dear Parent,

Many Columbia students have received anxious letters and phone calls from parents who question the integrity of student demands and actions of the past few weeks.

It is important to us that parents understand what has been happening. This has been difficult because of the distorted, incomplete coverage of Columbia events in newspapers. And so, we would like to explain some pertinent facts behind this April's crisis.

We want to get back to classes. We came to Columbia to learn.

But something has happened here more important than classes.

We have learned that for years our university has been expanding into the community, evicting and harassing tenants. Now it wants to build a gym on Harlem's park land, even though Harlem's three elected officials object to the plan. We don't want to live in a university that disregards black people's - or any people's human rights.

We have learned that our university is a member of the Institute for Defense Analysis, which develops techniques and weapons for Pentagon use in war, as well as for suppression of city riots. We don't want to live in a university that in secret involves us without our consent in war research, and expends its academic energies for an outside corporation.

Why, then, you might ask, don't we leave the university, if we don't like what it's doing? The answer is, we don't think we should run away just because our place of learning is committing mistakes. Socrates wrote in the Crito, that any citizen who disapproves of his country's laws can either leave the country, or remain and try to change the laws. We and our faculty think it is our moral responsibility to remain at the university and to make it a better place.

That is why for years campus groups have been going through the proper channels trying to change certain university policies we thought morally wrong. Yet students have met, time after time, with total unwillingness to listen or to change on the part of the administration.

#### RESULTS OF GOING THROUGH THE PROPER CHANNELS

- I) - This year students and community members marched three times to protest the gym: Feb. 21, 22, and 28.  
.. - The chairman of the Columbia College Citizenship Council met with Vice President Truman and two deans, on March 8th, and suggested a new plan for the gym, by which the community would administer the gym.  
- Commissioner of Parks Hoving criticized Columbia's arrangement for taking the gym land - as early as spring '65.

- Community members protested in letters to Pres. Kirk.
- All three of Harlem's elected officials took active stands against the gymnasium. (Basil Patterson, Percy Sutton, Charles Rangel.)
- Students raised objections to the gym repeatedly in fireside chats with Vice President Truman.

YET IN A COLUMBIA SPECTATOR INTERVIEW ON APRIL 17TH,  
PRES. KIRK WAS ASKED: UNDER ANY FORESEEABLE CIRCUM-  
STANCES, WOULD THE GYM BE ALTERED OR STOPPED? NO,  
REPLIED PRES. KIRK.

II) - A tripartite committee (of students, faculty, and administrators), commissioned by Pres. Kirk in '65 to investigate student life at Columbia, presented their report to the President in the fall of '67. The majority report recommended

- a)an advisory role for students in university policy-making decisions..
- b)control by students of rules affecting only students.
- c)no ban on indoor demonstrations.

-ONE MONTH AFTER THE REPORT, PRES. KIRK PROHIBITED INDOOR DEMONSTRATIONS (SEPT. 67)

-HE REFUSED TO MAKE THIS REPORT PUBLIC UNTIL NINE MONTHS LATER WHEN THE STUDENT COUNCIL THREATENED TO RELEASE THEIR REPORT.(APRIL, '68)

THE PRESIDENT HAS DONE NOTHING TO COMPLY WITH ANY OF THE REPORTS' PROPOSALS.

III) - Last year Prof. of Math Serge Lang called a meeting in Low Rotunda to discuss the university's secret research. At this meeting Vice President Chamberlain denied that Columbia belonged to IDA.

- At a faculty smoker on March 23,1967, Graduate Dean Ralph S.Halford also denied any Columbia affiliation with IDA. When a March 31 issue of Spectator disclosed Columbia's membership in IDA, Dean Halford admitted that he had lied.

- On October 20th,1967, students presented President Kirk with a petition requesting the severing of ties with IDA: Kirk made no response. His excuse was that there was no return address on the petition. Students sent Dr.Kirk a letter telling him the address. Kirk did not reply.

- On March 14-16,1968, students fasted to protest Columbia's IDA affiliation. There was no response from the administration.

- On March 27th, 1700 students signed a petition against IDA. President Kirk made no response to this petition. A sit-in followed on the 28th.

- Students invited President Kirk and Vice President Truman twice to talk publicly about IDA. They refused.

As you doubtless know, on April 23rd over 800 students

marched to the gym construction site and smashed a section of the fence surrounding it. After marching back to campus, they occupied Hamilton Hall; in the next four days, four more buildings were seized. New York papers reported that a "small minority" of 200 students was involved in the demonstrations; there were actually more than 725 in the buildings (the number flushed out and arrested April 30th), and many more sympathizers who kept a vigil outside the buildings. A large group of faculty members patrolled to protect those inside. The newspapers who described the demonstrators as a "small unscrupulous minority" were wrong: A great majority of students regret that such measures had to be taken, but what they did was the only effective method against an insensitive, intractable administration. Far from being a small group, the Strike Steering Committee of 70 members now represents approximately 4900 students.

We have written in order to explain what has happened at Columbia, and why - and to ask for your support in the hard months ahead, as we try to rebuild a more democratic Columbia - a place where faculty and students can take the responsibility of making the decisions which affect them.

Sincerely,

The Independent Committee for Understanding  
the Strike

#### OTHER FACTS

- 1) The University of Chicago and Princeton University have recently disaffiliated themselves from IDA, on the recommendations of faculty governing organizations.
- 2) Newspaper reports of vandalism were highly exaggerated: students on the whole respected all books and papers in the buildings, even organized daily clean-up squads. There is eyewitness and film evidence that the police vandalized the buildings on April 30th, after clearing them of students.
- 3) How Columbia has been harassing community inhabitants:
  - Wanting to remove tenants from an apartment building it had bought, the university raised the rent 25% one month, and would have raised it 25% more the next month, had not the Columbia newspaper revealed the plan.
  - In some cases the university has simply nailed non-legal notices to apartment doors telling tenants to move out. These notices have no legal force, but frighten the tenants into leaving without asking any questions.

(source: the Columbia Spectator)

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