

Office of Public Information
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File
Colum. Riots
May 13, 1968

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John Hastings, Director

Statement by President Grayson Kirk of Columbia University:

During the past three weeks, the faculty, the administrative officers, and most of the students of Columbia University have been engaged in a struggle to preserve academic freedom -- freedom to teach, to learn, and to carry on research -- against a small minority's effort to employ violence and fraud in order to bring to a halt the basic operations of the University. We who have been fighting to preserve the integrity of this University and of other universities have constantly been aware that, even in the midst of crisis, we must hold to our commitment to academic freedom and to our respect for truth and the conscience of the individual. We have, therefore, resisted a natural temptation to imitate the tactics of those who are bent on destroying the principles and the practices by which a university must live.

It is for these reasons that we cannot support any effort, no matter how well-intentioned or how emotionally satisfying it may be, which seeks to punish participants in university disturbances by means that endanger either academic freedom or the proper autonomy of the university community. Any attempt by governmental authorities to deprive these offending students of financial aid which they are now receiving under Federal or state programs would be difficult to administer equitably and would pave the way for the adoption of tests of political orthodoxy that would endanger the freedom of opinion and expression which all universities cherish.

At Columbia, we do not intend to use financial sanctions as a disciplinary measure in place of, or in addition to, regular academic discipline. Students of limited means who happen to be placed on disciplinary probation should not be compelled to withdraw by being deprived of financial aid. If students are suspended or expelled from the University, the question of financial aid is no longer an issue, since they cannot receive any form of assistance if they are not registered.
