

M May 14, 1965

Dean Henry Boorse
Dean of the Faculty
Barnard College

Dear Sir:

Last Friday, May 7, I was one of about 150 students who participated in the demonstration on the steps of Low Library.

At about 1:30 p.m. I walked out of Butler Library and past Ferris Booth Hall where I noticed through the glass windows a group of students assembled listening to speakers. I walked into Ferris Booth and listened to speeches by 2 faculty members and 2 students discussing the American policy in Viet Nam and Santo Domingo. Although I had known that a picket line had been planned (there is one every year) if the weather was good and NROTC were graduating outdoors, it being rainy, I had pretty much forgotten the matter and would probably have missed the demonstration which actually occurred entirely had I not been walking past Ferris Booth at that particular moment. I mention this because it seems to me that I was not exceptional; many students drifted into Ferris Booth accidentally and thereby ended up participating in the subsequent demonstration.

At about 2:00 p.m. (I am not sure of the exact time since I was not wearing a wrist watch) the entire group left Ferris Booth Hall and began walking in the direction of Low Library. In a manner I would describe as spontaneous, good-natured and mildly confused we filed up the steps and stood behind the pillars. I was personally standing about 40 feet to the right of the main entrance to Low and could, by no stretch of the imagination, be said to have been blocking the door.

I had been standing for no more than 5 to 10 minutes chanting "End ROTC now!" when suddenly a shout of "hear come the cops" went up. On to the campus were swarming some dozen uniformed policemen. I was deeply shocked. For about 3 or 4 minutes however, the police did nothing but huddle among themselves at the foot of the stairs. My attention had been momentarily distracted (I was borrowing a cigarette from the boy next to me); when I turned back towards the campus, at least 2 dozen policemen were running up the steps. I had time for no further reflections as I was seized roughly by a policeman and hurled ^{down} the stairs. Although I managed not to fall down, I was considerably shaken - the more so since when I collected myself, I saw the police hurling, pushing and hitting my fellow students.

I wish to emphasize that no university official had at any time before the arrival of the police appeared on the scene and addressed the students. I had intended to picket in a peaceful and orderly manner; and if asked to move to some other area by a Dean or Proctor, or to disperse, I would have willingly complied. I was given no such opportunity.

After the police had been manhandling the students for several minutes, Dean De Koff appeared on the scene, followed by Vice-Chancellor Chamberlain and President Kirk. Although I was no more than a few feet away from them, what they said was inaudible due to the general din and chaos. The number of persons present on the

steps had by now increased ^{due} to the arrival of curious spectators and counter-pickets chanting such things as "Expand the war in Viet Nam" and "We want Wallace now!".

I stayed around for a while because by now I was hearing alarming reports that several students had been badly hurt by the police, and I was concerned for my friends. Happily, as I later found out, although students had been injured and beaten, the injuries had not been as serious as I had feared. About 3:15 or 3:30 I left.

It was only later that I learned that the names of several students had been taken and that they had been threatened with expulsion or suspension. I found this rather incredible as in the general confusion (precipitated by the onslaught of the police), the persons seized, as I later learned, as "instigators" were singled out from the rest in a totally arbitrary manner. It is for this reason that I signed the statement which I delivered to Dean De Koff on Tuesday. All the students participating bear an equal responsibility for the deplorable chaos which ensued, but the main burden of responsibility must be borne by the university, which failed to address us before the police were summoned.

Sincerely,

Zane Berzins

Zane Berzins '65