

Protests And The Campus

The direct confrontation between students at the University of California at Santa Cruz and the recruiter from the United States Air Force was delayed last week when the air force postponed their visit to the local campus.

The students were prepared for an extensive display of protest.

We do not disagree with the idea that students have the right to protest. If they wish to protest against the recruiting by the air force or the Peace Corps or General Motors or the Episcopal Church, that is their privilege.

But the protest must be legal and orderly or the students should face the penalty of disobeying the rules and regulations of the university or of general peace and order.

The air force has just as much right to make their organization familiar to students and graduates as the Peace Corps or other groups, both private and public.

We do not believe the students have the right to block streets or surround automobiles or generally disrupt the operation of the university.

Obviously, in their numbers, they can do these types of protests as has been accomplished on numerous campuses around the country, but they still should

face the discipline which follows breaking the rules, whether it be civic laws or university regulations.

If they believe in their cause so that they favor civil disobedience, they must be prepared to pay the penalty for such action.

Unfortunately, the more active student apparently believes that his rights are greater, that he can do as he chooses when he so desires, regardless of laws, regulations or the general university code.

The university or the college campus or the junior college campus is a product of the people. It is owned by the state or the public district, representing an agency of the people, not just the students or the faculty. Obviously it is used primarily by the students and the faculty. That is its purpose.

But neither the students, nor the faculty, have the proprietary interest. This interest is held by the people.

And the people have far more than a proprietary interest in the campus; they have an extraordinary investment in the students as well. And perhaps an even greater interest in the faculty and the administration for, in their hands, this huge investment is entrusted.

This investment is not just in dollars.

It represents human values even more, for eventually these students will become the citizens and the leaders of tomorrow.

As such there is a dear need for the responsible response. Protest if they must, but protest in an orderly manner. If the students believe the only way that a protest can be constructive or effective is by destruction then we have, indeed, lost something in our system of education.

As the highest level of our educational system, the university holds a position of awesome responsibility. Not just the school or the students or the faculty or the administration or the taxpayers who support it, but the whole university as it meets the challenge of today.

It should not become an agency of destruction, nor should it be stagnant. It should be, as it is, a stirring force.

But once again, we stress that this force must be controlled within the boundaries of responsible conduct. The right of dissent should be heard, including those who dissent with the dissenters.

But it should not become a plaything for those in search of more time in front of the television camera or greater headlines in the newspaper.

Disorderly action may gain them these goals, but far greater goals will be lost.