

Bringing it All Back Home:
The Height of the Anti-Vietnam Movement at the University of Oregon

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Spring 1970. America is fighting battles abroad and within as public support for the war in Vietnam continues to slip and those dissenting grow increasingly vocal. President Richard M. Nixon has failed to put an end to the conflict in Indochina, rather he is expanding the United States' commitment into Laos and Cambodia behind the nation's back. It has been five long years since the first fighting troops landed in Vietnam, twenty years since the first military advisors arrived there under President Truman, and it is still three more years until the U.S. makes its defeated exit from the tiny, war-torn country. This conflict in Vietnam, a nation thousands of miles away, a nation most would have been hard pressed to locate on a map before the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964, is dragging on with no real resolution in sight despite optimistic reports of success from the field and empty promises of imminent victory. Across the U.S. unrest has been festering and spreading. The president's approval ratings have begun a descent from which they will never recover.¹ It is against this turbulent national backdrop that we turn our attention to the events of April 1970 on the University of Oregon campus.

The University of Oregon in our era has become a paradigm of the "liberal university." Situated in Eugene, Oregon, it is well known to students of my generation that U of O is a "hippie" campus, a left-leaning institution fostering progressive ideas. This identity, however, is a fairly modern development. It was during the 1960s and 70s that the school and community took great leaps to the left, towards where we are now. In 1961 Arthur S. Flemming began his seven year run as president of the University. During

¹ General Approval Trend for President Nixon (1969-1974). The Roper Center: University of Connecticut. <[http://www.sopercenter.uconn.edu/ibin/hsrun.exe/Roperweb/PresJob/Preslob.htm;start=HS Nixon](http://www.sopercenter.uconn.edu/ibin/hsrun.exe/Roperweb/PresJob/Preslob.htm;start=HS%20Nixon)>

those seven years Flemming would come under attack numerous times for what many believed was the inexcusable liberalization of the institution. Flemming himself was a liberal Republican and made such controversial decisions as allowing the United States Communist Party to speak on campus, and eliminating curfew and visitation rules in the dormitories.³ Many in the community saw these decisions as enabling the moral decay of their young and a conservative anti-Flemming campaign was waged against him.⁴ Flemming resigned as president in 1968 (under circumstances unrelated to the campaign) and was succeeded by an interim replacement, Charles Ellicot Johnson. His year in office was marked by almost continual unrest on campus, though very little of it was directed at the war. There were protests over the California Table Grape Strike, racism in athletics, poverty, censorship, and even long hair.⁵ As for the escalating war in Vietnam, there was relatively little campus activity and it was mainly directed at the draft, not the war itself.⁶ Johnson's arduous term ended tragically when he was killed in an auto accident on June 17, 1969.⁷ His replacement was Robert D. Clark, who would serve as president until 1975.

Robert Clark came to the University of Oregon from San Jose State University where he had served as president from 1964 to 1969. He *was* no stranger to the UO however, having been both a professor and dean for the College of Liberal Arts before accepting the presidency at San Jose.⁸ Clark was also no stranger to campus unrest. His

² Ken Metzler. *Confrontation: The Destruction of a College President*. Eugene: University of Oregon Press. 2001. p22.

³ Ibid. 25.

⁴ Ibid. 28.

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⁶ Col. Terry Bernhard, interview by author, Portland, Oregon, May 14, 2006. Metzler. 3.

⁸ University of Oregon Office of the President Digital Archives < <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/ukatdept/digcolklark/collectionBrowse.html>>

five years at SJSU were marked by large-scale protests and conflict. Clark proved his abilities as an administrator by dealing with racial discrimination protests, faculty strikes, and a particularly challenging protest against the presence of Dow Chemical Company recruiters on campus. During this strike Clark actually called on the police to disperse the crowd with tear gas, resulting in a 2,500 person protest the next day agitating against the police presence.⁹ Clark would be reminded of this situation three years later at Oregon.

The evolution of the anti-war movement at the UO in many ways lagged behind that of the national anti-war movement. 1968 was an incredibly turbulent year for the nation on numerous fronts, and the war in Vietnam was one of the most divisive. During the '68 spring semester alone there were 200 protests on more than 100 campuses.⁹ Violence erupted at Columbia University in New York City, where 1,000 police were called in to quell an eight day protest by students. The assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy shocked the nation. King's death in particular inflamed racial tensions and resulted in surges of violence. President Johnson's decision not to run for reelection echoed the emotional exhaustion of the country at large. But nothing so much as the Democratic National Convention in Chicago that summer turned the tides of discontent. The violence outside the convention reached millions of Americans in their homes via extensive television coverage, while the crumbling Democratic party inside offered the nation little in the way of a strong candidate to battle Richard Nixon. While the tide of protest at UO did follow suit and mount more legitimate campaigns after 1968, the campus wouldn't really explode for two more years.

⁹ Mara K. Hoogerhuis. "Why here, Why now? The story of student protest on the University of Oregon campus, April 1970." (BA Honors thesis, University of Oregon, 2004). 17.

¹⁰ George C. Herring. *America's Longest War*. Fourth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill. 2002. 261.

Prior to 1968 the focus of protest at UO was on the draft rather than the war itself. Col. Terry Bernhardt, a 1968 graduate of the University, recalls that prior to the Democratic National Convention, "I was seeing a few demonstrations around campus once in a while and they were kind of low key, disorganized, not very many people, a curiosity more than anything ... It would just be 20 people with signs walking in a circle." But Col. Bernhardt recalls the turning point for more legitimate protest: "The great divide was the Democratic National Convention in August of '68 because that really polarized a lot of people ... after the DNC the focus shifted to be just generally anti-war."¹¹ While protests escalated from 1968 onward they would come to a head in 1970.

"Oregon's pretty unique in the whole United States in that we have no military bases and no defense industry... about the only presence [at UO] was Army and Air Force ROTC." Col. Bernhardt's observation explains why the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) became the main target of anti-war agitation on campus. A flyer circulated around campus in the winter of 1970 shows a cartoon image of a tank with "ROTC" emblazoned across the grill rolling over a Vietnamese man.¹² Obviously the ROTC was getting saddled with responsibility for a much more significant role in the war than they were actually playing. In fact, dissension within the ROTC was becoming more common as the war drug on. A popular saying among them at the time was "I love the Commander in Chief, but I can't stand President Nixon."¹³ In a February 1969 poll 2,232 students voted against the elimination of the ROTC on campus, while 919 supported it.

¹¹ Col Terry Bernhardt. Interview.

¹² Office of the President Archives: Robert D. Clark, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. Box 36. File 20.

¹³ Interview with Iva. McMains 5/23/03 as retold in Hoogerhuis thesis, p41.

The margin of support was narrower in a poll conducted only three months later when the question was "Should courses designed by the Defense Department be given academic credit?" Only 1,068 supported the conferring of credit, while 964 were opposed.¹⁴ In June of 1969, a six member faculty-student committee was formed to consider ROTC curriculum.¹⁵ Meanwhile, violence against the ROTC was escalating. On January 6, 1970 three female students made a grandiose display of disapproval by splashing animal blood on an ROTC registration table.¹⁶ This incident marked the beginning of a period of near weekly protest against the ROTC. In the early hours of January 23 the ROTC offices were vandalized by an unidentified group who escaped before the police arrived.¹⁷ Less than a month later a 4-alarm fire in Esslinger Hall caused \$250,000 worth of damage, primarily in an ROTC storage area where the fire department believed the arson to have originated.¹⁸

Tensions over the ROTC reached the breaking point on April 15. At what was estimated to be the most heavily attended faculty meeting to date a vote was taken to determine the future of ROTC's presence on the UO campus. After two hours of debate, in front of a crowd estimated around 800 persons, the faculty voted by a slim margin of only 14 votes to retain the ROTC program.¹⁹ The ROTC vote was the only item on the agenda that night and the meeting concluded at 5:45pm. It would be a mere 15 minutes before the violent repercussions of the decision were felt.

¹⁴ "Unrest at State System Institutions: A Progress Report" Oregon State System of Higher Education. Office of Academic Affairs. June 9, 1970. p52. Office of the President Archives: Robert D. Clark, Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. Box 39, File 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ University of Oregon News Release, Jan 6, 1970. University of Oregon Office of the President Digital Archives <<http://boundless.uoregon.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISOROOT=/clark&CISOPTR=319>>

¹⁷ Hoogerhuis. 31.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 33.

¹⁹ "Faculty Votes to Keep ROTC" *Eugene Register-Guard* April 16, 1970. B1

When the conclusion was announced it elicited scattered jeers and angry shouts from some students gathered in the audience, but this response belied the true magnitude of the outcome. A crowd variously estimated between 100 and 150 persons stormed the ROTC building in French Hall. They smashed doors, broke windows, and overturned furniture and files. An attempt was made to set fire to the building but it was promptly extinguished by cadets.²⁰ While no one was injured in the fray, the damage to the building was considerable. Oregon Governor Tom McCall put National Guardsmen and auxiliary Oregon State Police on alert, after conferring with President Clark.²¹ The second round of violence took place later that night when a crowd of 300 to 400 persons, wielding torches to light the way, marched from the student union to the ROTC building. The keyed up protestors adopted a battle chant: "Bring the war back home" as they hurled rocks, fruit, lit torches, and explosive devices at the old wooden building.²² Fire was avoided by the efforts of someone inside the building wielding an extinguisher where flames threatened. During a lull in the violence the flashgun of an unidentified photographer went off and the students, believing it to be a police photographer, rushed in the direction of the light screaming "Pigs off campus!" Sixteen Eugene Policemen were caught standing in the direction of the swelling onslaught. They responded by launching tear gas grenades into the surging crowd. The protestors and spectators began dispersing in shock, tears running down their faces.²³

²⁰ Mike Stahlberg. "ROTC quarters sacked; tear gas routs protestors," *Eugene Register-Guard*. April 16, 1970. A1.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Mike O'Brien & Bob Newcomb. "Angry mob struck twice against ROTC," *Eugene Register-Guard*. April 16, 1970. B1.

²³ Ibid.

Though most of the crowd scattered after the tear gas was released, sporadic violence occurred later into the evening, with windows being broken at Johnson Hall as well as in cars parked along University Street.²⁴ It is important to note at this point that the violence of that evening was not simply the direct result of the faculty meeting held earlier. April 15 had already been chosen by the campus New Mobe committee, an organization created to raise anti-war awareness, as a day of "mobilization against the war in Vietnam."²⁵ Certainly, however, the faculty decision bolstered the cause.

The police wasted no time gathering information from witnesses and by Thursday morning seven students were arrested in connection with the riot. A crowd of 1,500 descended upon the city-county jail that evening calling for their release.²⁶ At the arraignment Friday morning, protest continued, this time directed at the lofty \$25,000 bail set for four of the students who faced "participating in a riot" charges. While the bail was reduced to \$10,000, the presiding judge, William Beckett, refused to release the students without bail.²⁷ The four students were eventually indicted on the riot charges, but were released on bail after the figure had been dropped finally to \$3,000.²⁸

On campus, the days following the riot were fraught with tension and anxiety. The police presence remained, much to the indignation of the students. A Friday night concert of The Rascals at MacArthur Court was postponed in response to the unrest.²⁹ On Friday afternoon the student activist group calling itself the April 15 Movement held a rally at the student union, drawing a crowd of several hundred. The flyer promoting the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ John Lanier. "Police, demonstrators clash on ROTC," *Emerald*. April 16, 1970. pl.

²⁶ Mike Stahlberg. "Four UO students arraigned on riot participation charges," *Eugene Register-Guard*. April 17, 1970. Bl.

²⁷ Ibid

²⁵ "Four indicted on riot charges," *Eugene Register-Guard*. April 23, 1970. Bl.

²⁹ Dennis Higman. "Militants, Clark Talk.; U of O Tension Eases," *The Oregonian*. April 18, 1970. p8.

rally railed against "university complicity with the war in Indochina."³⁰ During their oration they laid out three demands of the administration: abolish the presence of the ROTC at UO, remove all police from campus, and grant amnesty to those students who had been arrested in connection with the riot.³¹ Following the rally a large contingency of the crowd marched to Johnson Hall to address President Clark directly. Clark entertained their request and talked with them on the steps of the administration building and responded to their demands. On the issue of the ROTC presence Clark disclosed his own personal anti-Vietnam stance but added that, "getting ROTC off this campus has nothing to do with the war in Vietnam."³² Regarding the police presence Clark made clear that he would be more than happy to remove the police from campus upon the cessation of threats of continued violence. He added that he was "indeed reluctant to bring the police on campus, but it becomes necessary where there is violence... [by your actions] you invited the police on campus."³³ On the final point of amnesty, Clark simply stated that the matter was not in his hands and was clearly at the discretion of the authorities. He ended the discussion by voicing his concern for the relationship between the school and the community and saying "that there may be a welling up of desire for revenge, and of vindictiveness against the students on our campus."³⁴ The discussion was productive and, for the time being, appeared to assuage the hostility that had been fomenting all week.

Unfortunately, the sense of calm was premature, and less than a week later the campus would again be the scene of confrontation. At noon on Wednesday, April 22, 1970

³⁰ Flyer. University of Oregon Office of the President Digital Archives.
<<http://boundless.uoregon.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISOROOT=/clark&CISOPTR=223>>

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Lloyd Paseman & Bob Caldwell. "Campus uproar quiets down," *Eugene Register-Guard*. April 18, 1970. AS.

³⁴ Ibid.

to 200 students, led by the April 15 Movement organization, began a sit-in protest in the lobby of Johnson Hall. The protestors vowed to remain in the hall until the University met the demands laid out in Friday's rally and informal meeting with Clark.³⁵ The students also added an additional stipulation that all U.S. Navy Recruiters stay off campus. They insisted that, despite the demanding agenda, this demonstration would be peaceful.³⁶ At 2:00pm the students held a news conference on the steps of the building where they announced, "Today Johnson Hall has been occupied. We have a very real reason for being here. The University's complicity with the slaughter of Asian people goes on this very minute."³⁷ Around 4:30 Clark came out of his office to speak with the students. He advised them that the violent actions of the last week had severely damaged the credibility of the sit-in they were now attempting to wage. The discussion was heated but garnered no results. The estimated crowd of around 300 vowed to remain in the building until all four of the demands were met. This posed a significant challenge for President Clark. The building closed at 5:30pm and there were rumors abounding that he would again call in the police to enforce the closing time and evict the protestors.³⁸ Clark convened a secret meeting of the administration, a faculty security advisory committee, and ASUO (Associated Students of the University of Oregon) president Sonja Sweek. Sweek received a phone call from Clark at her home, requesting her assistance in handling the matter, "he kind of implied that his idea was not to clear out the building, but if there could be some kind of mediation so people could go home because people

³⁵ "150 students stage sit-in at university," *Eugene Register-Guard*. April 22, 1970. B1.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ John Lanier. "Students take Johnson Hall; stay all night," *Emerald*. April 23, 1970. p1.

³⁸ Ibid.

were trapped."³⁹ Sweek's recollection of the hall was that people were "floor to floor, wall to wall ...if they had decided not to move their bodies it would have been impossible for someone to walk."⁴⁰ The meeting reached the conclusion that police intervention at this stage was to be avoided at all costs. Sweek then returned to the crowd and announced that as long as the students allowed the administration to return home to their families, they would permit the protestors to remain in the building overnight. These terms were accepted and Clark emerged around 7:45 assuring the students that the police would not be called if the protest kept its promise of nonviolence. He also presciently reminded the students that "your occupation of the building ... is an infraction of the law."⁴¹

According to newspaper reports as many as 200 students spent the night in Johnson Hall.⁴² The sit-in continued all day Thursday and by that evening there seemed to be no resolution in sight. At 5:05pm Clark informed the protestors that he would not allow them to remain in the building for yet another night. He also told them that if they did not leave peacefully they would be arrested for trespassing.⁴³ At this point Clark had made the decision to call in the police, having already been advised against seeking a court injunction by the state's attorney general," and in light of the recent violent events on campus. The students beseeched Clark to allow half an hour for negotiations before calling in the authorities but he refused, granting them instead five minutes with full knowledge that Johnson was already surrounded.⁴⁵ Eugene police, backed by Lane County sheriff's deputies, then entered the building from the front and rear doors. The

³⁹ Sonja Sweek, telephone interview by author, May 19, 2006.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Lanier. "Students take..."

⁴² Bob Newcomb & Bob Caldwell, "UO to ask police intervention in sit-ins only 'with reluctance,'" *Eugene-Register Guard*. April 23, 1970. B1.

⁴³ Don Floyd. "Long hours of indecisive talk end abruptly," *Eugene Register-Guard*. April 24, 1970. A17.

⁴⁴ Rick Fitch. "Clark 'sadly' calls police; views from Fenton Hall," *Emerald*. April 24, 1970. p1.

⁴⁵ Floyd. "Long hours..."

students did not try to resist them until they were pulled out of the circle they had formed on the floor of the lobby and handcuffed.⁴⁶ Some 30 or more students walked out the front door with their hands up to be voluntarily arrested.⁴⁷ The activist anthem "We Shall Overcome" was intoned as the protestors left the building. The sit-in seemed to be breaking up as non-violently as it had started.

Suddenly chaos erupted at the rear of the building. A group of protestors staged a sit-down in front of one of the police vans. The police reacted quickly, releasing tear gas and clearing a way for the van." It was at this point that the National Guard entered the scene. From his vantage point on the ninth floor of Prince Lucian Campbell Hall Professor Hovet observed the pandemonium which ensued:

"..as the wagon started to move off, some students were observed laying down in front [of it] ...A burst of tear gas, or smoke was released, and at the sound and sight of this the crowd fled in every direction...the crowd was just dispersing when all of a sudden two squads of national guardsmen [sic] rushed... towards Johnson Hall. In an instant, and fantastically visible from the ninth floor of PLC, the crowd which was fleeing, suddenly turned, and rushed back to Johnson Hall and the national guard. The crowd was suddenly angry, shouting in unison 'get the guard off campus – get the pigs off.'"

Hovet's conclusion was that the crowd "was not an angry mob until the national guard were moved in."⁵⁰ The crowd of spectators had swelled to an estimated 700 people and seething criticisms were directed at the police: "Pig, what do you tell your wife and children when you go home at night? That you attack people protesting nonviolently?"⁵¹ Over the pandemonium someone was heard lamenting, "This is a nightmare, not a

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Re Johnson Hall Sit-In, 23 April 1970 – personal observations by Prof. T. Hovet. Office of the President Archives: Robert D. Clark. Knight Library, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. Box 36 File 24

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Kevin Cape. "This is a nightmare, not a university," *Emerald*. April 24, 1970.

university."⁵² Many followed the police vans as they made their hurried retreat from campus hurling rocks, trash, and even cement chunks from curbs.⁵³ The police intervention resulted in 61 arrests of trespassing or disorderly conduct.⁵⁴ Both Clark and Gov. McCall would later come under fire for their decision to call in the National Guard.

Later that evening a massive crowd of 2,000 gathered in front of Johnson Hall to discuss the next steps to be taken. The "discussion" was unproductive, and about half the crowd dispersed. The other 1,000 marched to the student union where a strike plan was solidified.⁵⁵ A general strike of "classes and all university business" was to commence immediately.⁵⁶ An emergency session of the UO Student Senate held late that night endorsed the strike, as well as a demand that Clark remove "all law enforcement agents" from campus.⁵⁷ A delegation of nine students met Clark at his home to inform him of the decision, when he refused to comply with their expanded nine point demand roster and cancellation of classes the next day, the group stood resolutely by their decision to strike. The major issue articulated by the student government in a Friday morning press conference was the "subordination of students within the university's governing structure."⁵⁸ Sonja Sweek, who had formerly aided Clark in his initial negotiations with the protestors was quoted saying, "The strike will end when student subordination ends ... we're tired of always having the administration's foot on our necks, of always being at the bottom of the heap."⁵⁹

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Floyd. "Long hours..."

⁵⁴ Art Bushnell. "Strike declared, 61 arrested," *Emerald*. April 24, 1970. pl.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Lloyd Pasenrian. "UO student activists move to take 'upper hand,'" *Eugene Register-Guard*. April 24, 1970. A17.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

While a smaller scale sit-in was attempted at Johnson Hall several days later on April 28, it had nowhere near the turnout or effect of the initial demonstration. 100 to 150 persons occupied the building at closing time, a trespassing notice was read, the police were not called and those who failed to leave when told were quietly arrested later.⁶⁰ The fervor of protest had spilled out beyond the bounds of anti-war and students were soon caught up in barricading 13th Street, the campus's main thoroughfare, and agitating for its closure to city traffic.⁶¹

The new wave of protest, however, was much less confrontational and did little to distract from the fallout of the previous two weeks. In the aftermath of such violent action on campus the University community, as well as the city and state communities at large were left to assess the situation and, in particular, its handling by Clark. The true effects of the protest can be gleaned by an examination of the abundant and varied responses it elicited.

First of all it must be said, though it should go without saying, that these protests were waged by a minority of students. The kind of militant anti-war sentiment that led to these demonstrations was in no way a unanimous or even majority philosophy on campus. Though it is difficult, if not impossible, to make an accurate categorization of an entire university of people, there are several clues which can be pieced together to paint a rough portrait of the student body.

The anti-war protestors were not the only vocal faction on campus. On the afternoon of the second day of the sit-in, prior to the confrontation with police, a counter-

⁶⁰ "Faculty Report on Student Unrest" Office of the President Archives: Robert D. Clark Collection. Knight Library, University of Oregon: Eugene, Oregon. Box 36, File 24.

⁶¹ Hoogerhuis. 39.

demonstration was held outside of the law school.⁶² The brief display consisted of about 100 students. A spokesman for the group stated that "We deplore the occupation of Johnson Hall...I feel that this action represents only a small minority of the campus."⁶³

In a similar vein, nearly a week after the events, a statement was issued by an assembly of various student groups who were also offended by the actions of their peers.⁶⁴ In it they condemned not so much the motives of the protestors but rather the use of "illegal and disruptive tactics" in attempting to undermine the policies of the University and emphasized that the majority of students "do not subscribe to the philosophy of destruction."⁶⁵

A poll conducted less than a week after the sit-in by the Graduate Student Council revealed that most students (87 to 51 of those polled) opposed Clark's decision to call on police force in dispelling the protests.⁶⁶ The poll, which was taken of a random sampling of students, also addressed the ever looming ROTC issue. Fifty respondents favored keeping the ROTC on campus but retracting its academic credit, 48 supported its complete elimination, 56 students wished for the program to remain functioning in its present capacity and two were undecided.⁶⁷ From this sampling it would appear that a majority of students sided with the protestors, though there is no measurement of the personal importance the issues held to them, and certainly there is a considerable difference between supporting the cause in a poll and taking militant action on its behalf.

⁶² Lanier "Police end..."

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Edwards. "Anti-disruption group circulates position paper," *Emerald*. April 28, 1970.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Art Bushnell. "Poll reveals views on police, strike," *Emerald*. April 28, 1970.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

In my interview with Sonja Sweek I asked her, as student body president, what her perception was of the general feelings of her peers,:

"I think there was a group of people who were active, probably a group of people who belonged to ROTC and the fraternities and sororities perhaps that were appalled that students at the university they attended would act this way, and then there was probably the middle group that just went to class."⁶⁸

It is often most difficult to ascertain the feelings of that 'middle group.' Newspaper reports are littered with quotes from the vocal leaders of the factions, those who compete with each other for public recognition of their cause. The *Old Oregon*, a newspaper now long out of print, initiated a project during the winter term of the 1969-70 school year wherein it asked four students to keep a journal of their daily lives. Only one of the four journals provided the paper with the kind of perceptive diary it was looking for and this girl, "Riki," was encouraged to continue writing through the spring term.⁶⁹ The product of this coincidental project now serves as an invaluable contemporary record of that historic spring through the eyes of a freshman much more concerned with boys and parties than with ending the war in Vietnam.

Riki was at the student union on April 15 when the police released tear gas on the ROTC protestors. She recalls hearing "shouts and cheers from the other side of the building" but when she attempted to investigate she was warned about the tear gas and retreated to her dormitory.⁷⁰ When the sit-in at Johnson Hall began Riki once again found herself near to the action, but disassociated with the significance. "I wasn't around for the Johnson Hall gassing, but I spent most of the night there before it. The trouble is I don't

⁶⁸ Sonja Sweek

⁶⁹ "The Diary of a Freshman Coed" *Old Oregon*. January-February 1971. p19. University of Oregon Office of the President Digital Archives
<<http://boundless.uoregon.edu/cgi-bin/idoviewer.exe?CISOROOT---/clark&CISOPTR=93>>

⁷⁰ Ibid. 27.

support the cause, but it's so much like a party." ⁷¹ She goes on to explain that she stayed as late *as* she did because a certain boy was there and only made the decision to leave when some of the protestors started smoking marijuana, "I wasn't going to get busted just for a few kicks."⁷² Her summation of the unrest was probably a sentiment shared by many spectators: "The speakers talk and talk and talk but no one listens. The administrators are tied in red tape and the kids are all stoned, drunk, or just don't care. It's the biggest farce I've seen in a long time."⁷³

The lack of a consensus opinion was strong not only among the students but the faculty as well. ASUO President Sonja Sweek recalls "it wasn't really us against them. Some faculty backed the students whole heartedly, some backed the student point of view but not their actions and some just totally felt threatened by the students, period."⁷⁴ Donald DuShane, the dean of students, responded to questions about the ROTC violence by explaining that, "It is like a temper tantrum. They didn't get their way so they reacted by kicking against a wall."⁷⁵ Speech professor Bower Aly found the protestors more threatening than children throwing tantrums: "We just have to reckon with the fact that we have a group of activists whose aim isn't to improve the University but to destroy this society."⁷⁶

Many professors saw themselves as an obvious bridge between the administration and the students. Several attempts were made to organize a student-faculty committee that could serve as a channel of communication to the administration. Political science

⁷¹ Ibid. 27.

⁷² Ibid. 27.

⁷³ Ibid. 28.

⁷⁴ Sonja Sweek.

⁷⁵ Pearl Bakken. "Student protests on ROTC bring varied faculty opinions," *Emerald*. April 17, 1970. pl.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

professor Joseph Allman organized a "rap-in" the day after the ROTC protest to air grievances and encourage communication. The event was attended by about a dozen faculty members and 150 students.⁷⁷ The meeting resulted in the formation of a Student-Faculty Coalition whose goal was to provide the students with the option of "a continuing organization rather than using more dramatic and coercive tactics."⁷⁸ Unfortunately the coalition was not nearly *as* successful as Professor Allman anticipated and was unable to do anything to stave off the sit-in at Johnson Hall which took place only a week after the meeting.

There seemed to be a general consensus that the class strike, which was announced after the police intervention at the Johnson Hall sit-in, was an "ineffective tactic."⁷⁹ Many professors voiced support for the students' cause but were put off by the strike itself. George Stressinger, co-chairman of the biology department summed up the sentiment by saying "I strongly feel students need to be involved more in the University's decision-making process, but I don't think a strike would be an effective way to achieve that."⁸⁰

Many faculty members did not hesitate to share their opinions of the protests with President Clark. Following the events Clark was flooded with mail from the community, which I will discuss later, but also with much intra-University correspondence. One example of the faculty's eagerness to lend their opinion is a recommendation received from James It McWilliams, a professor of Germanic languages. After organizing some discussion with his colleagues he called Clark on the 23rd to express their joint opinion

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Pearl Bakken. "Professors call strike 'ineffective tactic,'" *Emerald*. April 28, 1970

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

that all students involved in the sit-in should be suspended from the University." It is some testament to the volume of correspondence Clark received that he was unable to send Professor McWilliams a reply to his phone call until May 7, two weeks later. In his reply Clark cited that this tactic "proved to be less than successful on the campuses which have utilized this device,"⁸² but thanked McWilliams for his counsel.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the protests, and the decision for which Clark would come under the most fire, was the use of police intervention. Most evidence shows that a majority of the faculty backed Clark's decision to call in the police while the use of the National Guard was generally seen as an excessive step. Biology professor Aaron Novick saw the decision to bring in the National Guard as a mistake but also stated that "I don't see the administration had any alternative but to call the police. They had to be able to carry on with their work."⁸³

Not everyone let the administration off so easily. Obviously, a majority of students felt threatened by the police presence, as illustrated earlier in the polling figures and in the protestors' demands, but they were also made to answer to the broader city and state communities for their actions. The use of tear gas by the police, which was its first ever use on campus,⁸⁴ caused a great deal of the subsequent controversy. In a statement to the campus paper, the Emerald, Dean of Administration Ray Hawk maintained that "Our only resource was to go to city police ... When property and people's safety became involved, it left us no choice."⁸⁵ According to Hawk he and President Clark made the

⁸¹ Memo to President Clark. Office of the President Archives: Robert D. Clark Collection. Knight Library: University of Oregon: Eugene, Oregon. Box 27 Folder 1.

⁸² Letter to Prof. McWilliams, from Clark. Office of the President Archives... Box 27, Folder 1.

⁸³ Pearl Bakken. "Faculty members respond to confrontation strategy," *Emerald*. April 24, 1970.

⁸⁴ Hoogerhuis. 35.

⁸⁵ Art Bushnell. "Officials defend using police against ROTC demonstrators," *Emerald*. April 16, 1970. p9.

decision to call in the police as soon as they learned about the damage taking place at French Hall, ROTC headquarters. He also notes, however, that the decision to call in county and state troops was solely at the discretion of the Eugene Police Department. The administration took a similar hands-off responsibility for the punitive action against students stemming from the arrests. "The police were called in to acts of breaking the law. We assume they will follow up with arrests and charges" stated Presidential Assistant John Lallas.⁸⁶ Clark further defended his decision to call in police in a press release issued the day after the ROTC protest: "The prompt action by the officers resulted in a relatively quick restoration of calm to our campus and total damage appears small."⁸⁷

The UO administration did not stand alone in their defense of police intervention. Throughout the ROTC protest President Clark had been in close contact with Oregon Governor Tom McCall. In another statement released on the 16th McCall, who had been lobbying hard for police intervention from the outset, acknowledged his role in the decision, and also revealed his feelings about the protestors in general:

"Last night I instructed the State Police to move a sizable component into the Eugene area. I also instructed the National Guard to put units on alert status. It is my hope that their in-close availability will dissuade this tiny minority of anarchists from choosing to go to war against law and order again. It is the conclusion of the University, city law enforcement officials, and me that rapid response is the only answer to those who would change society by destroying it."⁸⁸

When Clark was again forced to call on the police to disperse those sitting-in at Johnson Hall on the 23rd, he was made once more to answer for his actions. It is

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ News Release. April 16, 1970. Office of the President Digital Archives: Robert D. Clark Collection <<http://boundles.uoregon.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISOROOT=/clark&CISOPTR---402>>

⁸⁸ News Release. April 16, 1970. Office of the President Digital Archives: Robert D. Clark Collection <<http://boundles.uoregon.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISOROOT=/clark&CISOPTR-297>>

important at this juncture to note that McCall's hard-line stance was not necessarily shared by all those involved in the decision making process. In a statement released shortly after students were cleared from the building Clark displayed a level of compassion for the protestors' motives, uncharacteristic of someone in his position and of his generation:

"We ought to acknowledge, candidly, that the Vietnam War has corrupted our relations with the young — parental, personal, institutional. It has distorted our perspective, caused the young to misjudge the University's alleged 'complicity,' and the older generation to condemn almost without discrimination the protesting acts of the young."⁸⁹

Despite his recognition of the difficulties of the time he went on to make clear that he did not condone the actions of the protestors, as they were unlawful."

As was mentioned earlier, the days and weeks following the protests saw an incredible influx of mail into the administrative offices. In an official tally compiled by the University of the 430 letters received by the administration regarding the many incidents of unrest occurring from January through the end of the school year, 193 addressed a specific incident, 85 of those, or 44 percent were responding to the two large April protests.⁹¹ The administration also received 237 general letters between April 15 and the end of the school year in June. Of these, more than half expressed full support for the administration:⁹²

⁸⁹ Statement by President R.D. Clark. April 23, 1970. Office of the President Digital Archives: Robert D. Clark Collection
<<http://boundless.uoregon.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISOROOT=qclark&CISOPTR=299>>

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Table of Letters Received. Office of the President Digital Archives: Robert D. Clark Collection
<<http://boundless.uoregon.edu/cgi-bin/docviewer.exe?CISOROOT=/clark&CISOPTR=3338cCISOSHOW=332>>

⁹² Ibid.

Those letters lauding the administration do not necessitate quotation here, *as* their contents are variations on a general "job well done" theme. A comparison between two letters written by parents of UO students will serve *as* an adequate example, as they stand firmly and vocally on two sides of the issue. The first, from Duane and Mabel Westerfield of Portland, Oregon, praise Clark on his handling of the situation. They refer to the protestors as an "irresponsible, immature group of young people" and they firmly pledge that "You and Governor McCall would have our complete support in any action necessary to restore order."⁹³ In contrast, the letter from K.B. Salmonson speaks for that minority of letters praising the protestors rather than the administration. The Salmonson's two older children were among those arrested during the sit-in. "In my mind I have penned many letters to you, in the anguish of the days and nights since then [the arrests]. Only now do I dare express to you our shock and disappointment at your actions."⁹⁴ The letter goes on to ask Clark some of the questions articulated by protestors and their supporters throughout the larger anti-war movement:

"The young people were engaged in a non-violent protest, their constitutional right as American citizens. You promised to allow them this privilege as long as they remained peaceful, which they did. How could you have broken your pledge? How can the students ever again put trust and confidence in you?... As a father and no doubt a grandfather, how can you sleep nights or live with yourself days, facing the enormous responsibilities and challenges of each morning?"⁹⁵

Not all the letters took so strong a stance. Rather, many asked for compromise and tolerance in order to avoid further confrontation. "I pray that you will continue to remain

⁹³ Letter to Clark from Westerfields. April 17, 1970. Office of the President Archives. Box 27, Folder 1.

⁹⁴ Letter to Clark from Salmonson. May 8, 1970. Office of the President Archives. Box 27, Folder 1.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

firm, but with an understanding of how these kids feel," wrote alumna Doris Fassett Schmmel.⁹⁶

On April 30, 1970, while the UO was still reeling from the violence of the previous weeks, President Richard Nixon delivered a televised speech revealing the government's secret incursions into Cambodia.⁹⁷ This startling expansion of the war reignited the spark of protest nationally and on May 4, a now infamous date in American history, four student protestors were shot and killed by National Guard troops at Kent State University in Ohio. Two students were also killed at Mississippi's Jackson State University in the rash of campus protest that swept the country.⁹⁸ President Clark made the decision to cancel all classes for May 6, 7, and 8 both out of respect to those killed and also to avert any further violence on his own campus.⁹⁹ University of Oregon was one of more than 500 schools across the nation to temporarily close their doors that week.¹⁰⁰ This was a perceptive move by Clark, who understood the high level of emotion surging through campus that spring which had already done so much damage.

Small-scale protest continued after April but the University had seen the peak of its unrest. In the wake of the fatal violence visited upon other campuses nationally, the UO emerged as a school that was able to quell their protests without any significant physical harm being done to either the demonstrators or the authorities. Granted, there was considerable property damage at French Hall but the building remained standing despite efforts to burn it down. Students were arrested, but this is a well known risk involved with challenging authority and the status quo. President Clark should be

⁹⁶ Letter to Clark from Schmmel, May 2, 1970. Office of the President Archives. Box 27, Folder 1.

⁹⁷ George C. Herring. 293.

⁹⁸ Ibid. 293.

Hoogerhuis. 40.

¹⁰⁰ Herring. 293.

commended on some level for holding the University together despite protest, violence, police intervention, and student striking for many other active campuses did not fare so well in this turbulent era. Clark was faced with pressure from a faction of students in one direction, and pressure from the community and even the Governor himself in another. He was backed by, at best, the mixed support of his faculty, straddling a narrow bridge between his generation and this new one - an alien product of the revolutionary 1960s.

The great conflict of the 1960s was essentially the battle between two generations as divided in ideals, philosophy and culture as two foreign states. America had changed significantly since the youth of "the man" and this older generation was now fighting for relevance in a world drastically different from the one they grew up in. Constant clashes between young and old characterized the turbulent decade, which in itself was fraught with myriad challenges and struggles. At the end of the 1969-70 school year Sonja Sweek was invited to address the faculty senate. In her speech she touched upon the general seed of discontent that the protestors were seeking to remedy. What they didn't seem to realize, and what the administration and older generation perhaps did, was that what they were trying to accomplish, finding steady ground in the midst of cultural revolution, could not be done by throwing rocks at an ROTC building or by occupying the administrative hall: "I hoped they could understand what the students were all about and what they were protesting and what they were really trying to secure was a future for themselves and for their potential children and families."¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Sonja Sweek.

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