

The College Campus

The college campus - especially the "elite" college campus - has been a more important political arena than it has often been accounted:

1. In the T.V. age especially, activist movements on the campus get more public attention than they ever did - and can become the centers around which general public activism can build. (Cf Vietnam).
2. The percentage of American youth going to college has risen substantially. They are subject to the political ideas spawned on campus. The high school used to be considered the only universal "training ground" for American youth. Today, the college is that- for the "universe" of young people who will make a difference in the political life of the country.
3. The "idea-setting" that takes place on campus has always been important; now it affects a larger number of future citizenry, and the teachers of future youth. By reason of seniority, the college faculty of today is increasingly comprised of the graduate students of the 1960's who were involved in the campus activities and campus idea-setting of that decade.
4. Jewish youth have never been immune to these influences.

In all of these connections, it should be noted that relatively small cadres of students - with strong ideologies and deliberate activist programs- have been inordinately influential in setting trends.

In the 1960's restless and activist campus movements helped to shape a future America, for both better and worse. In the 1970's, while some of the changes were incubating; while international tensions were relatively reduced; while there was a reduction of unlimited affluence without serious economic hardship--- activism relaxed on the campus. The ideological cadres tried to keep alive, but without attracting mass following.

The 1980's promise a return to a higher level of activism- with an increase in international tension (spectres of nuclear warfare, draft, etc.) and possibly a more hostile economy for college graduates. Minority racial and ethnic groups on campus are better organized than ever before, a heritage of the 1960's. "Third World" ideologies are fixed. Arab students, part of the Third World complex are understandably better and more confidently organized than before.

Jewish students, as usual, are divided into three parts: those who are still attracted to Third World ideologies; those who are strongly committed to Jewish values and consciousness; and those in-between. There are visibly larger numbers of strongly committed Jewish students than there were in the 1960's. The campus is the critical place to feed rather than starve that commitment, to try to affect the indifferent Jewish student and to present Jewish viewpoints to the general student body on campus. It is in the latter sense that Douglas Kleiner talks about "the campus as a defense agency."

In the coming period the issues that become "hot" will predicatably involve Jewish concerns directly. International tensions will continue to revolve around the Middle East: Palestinian aspirations, Israeli "intransigence," the image of U.S.-Zionist conspiracy against the Third World--and in some quarters, the involvement of the American Jewish community in this "conspiracy," compounded by its position on Bakke, etc. As usual, everyone won't swallow the whole package, but by supporting the general movement will be forwarding these propositions as well.

Any attempt by the non-campus Jewish community to superimpose its activity on the campus will not only inevitable fail, but will boomerang. Those Jewish groups who

do exist on the campus (abetted hopefully by Jewish faculty) will have to carry the burden of this task. They will need support, not the least of which is ad hoc financial support - both with respect to their internal Jewish educational activities, and with respect to their social action program on the campus.

The outside Jewish community will hopefully be in a consultative role, as developed; but must also be in a funding role, and also, in that connection, as actively as possible play the role of trying to consolidate Jewish groups and activities on the campus.

Note: It should be expected that the campus temper around the country will not be as consensual as it was in the 1960's. there was, for example, some youth reaction to the Iranian- hostahe situation and even to the Afghanistan invasion. However, it is on several specific Bay Area campuses, that the anti-American (and anti-Israel) mood will be at its height. Nonetheless, even there, there will be pools of sane sentiment which can be stirred with leadership, making that leadership more important than ever.