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Beleaguered Presidents

Campus strife, student and faculty tensions, and pressures from outside the campus all come together in the office of the college or university president. His occupational hazards have long included building and equipment shortages, faculty inadequacies, and assorted pressures from professors, parents, and politicians. Now he must cope with new difficulties.

During the fall of 1967, students disrupted activities on 62 campuses. The presidents who called in police to restore order and protect the university knew in advance their decisions would exacerbate student-university relations. Those who did not request police help risked damage to property, possible injury to students, and public criticism. Sometimes police action and the resulting criticism came anyway, as the raid at Stony Brook demonstrated, for the police can make political hay out of campus raids.

Some demonstrations have not been directed against university policies, but have dragged the university into controversy over Selective Service procedures or American participation in Vietnam.

A legal scholar has sued the *Rutgers Law Review* for rejecting an article he submitted. Suits have been instituted, or threatened, to eliminate out-of-state tuition charges, overthrow campus regulations and admissions decisions, and revise faculty hiring and promotion policies.

Recent changes in Selective Service regulations are interfering with orderly planning and are suddenly altering staffing requirements.

In all of this, journalists have been generous in giving publicity to power seekers, police, pot, and protest; professors have sometimes taken leading roles; and many a president must feel he is living in the center of a conspiracy to destroy the institution he is trying to lead.

Civil suits and legal actions provide one means of reducing the tumult, but surely a less desirable means than internal agreement and self-government of the university community. Internal control may seem difficult to achieve, for faculty members have sometimes been prominent among the protesters. Nevertheless, the president can take some comfort in the findings of David Brown's nationwide study* of what influences scholars to accept or leave faculty positions. Among the determinants of job choice, the quality of administration ranks high, and among the factors that persuade a faculty member to leave for another post, inadequacies or incompetence of the administration lead the list.

While this finding may solace the presidents, there is more that faculty members can do to protect their universities and their own interests. The kinds of decisions that have traditionally been made within the academic community or within an individual university are more likely to continue to be made there if decisions are supported by a strong sense of corporate responsibility. Strife and divisiveness, however, increase the probability that the power of decision will be taken away from the university to be exercised by the trustees, at government level, or in a court. James Perkins has pointed out that the substitution of police power, civil rule, and court procedures for self-government within the university threatens two values essential to university health and strength: the right to make qualitative distinctions among students and faculty members and among their intellectual products, and the ability of the university to protect the academic freedom of students and faculty.

In selecting their own jobs, faculty members give evidence that they value good administration. It would be prudent policy to make it more obvious to each other, to students, and to the public that they support good administration all of the time.—DAEL WOLFLE

* David G. Brown, *The Mobile Professors* (American Council on Education, Washington, D.C., 1967).