



PROVOST, PROTEINS, PROTEST, POT: Higher Education in America Today

by Paul Saltman

Provost, Proteins, Protest, Pot—this has been my life these last eight months. How long it will continue is only in the hands of the student radicals, I guess.

Let me talk about being a provost. Let me talk about the crisis that confronts the administrator of the American university today. And not just the American university but universities throughout the world. I pick up the morning paper now like I used to look for the sports results. Who beat who? I want to see who's ahead at Columbia—the profs or the kids. And then I go to Denver, and just as the plane touches down, Denver University erupts—a nice, quiet private-enterprise college nestled in the Rocky Mountains—and they've got 40

students sitting in. The game continues to be played. The University of Paris is shut down. Northwestern has finally endured.

What do I see? Why do I feel that this is happening now?

It is very interesting when you sit in a university. When you're a student, you're sure that it is a conspiracy of faculty and administrators to make your life miserable and to alienate you from any love of learning that might have at one time crossed your brow. As a faculty member, you play another game. The game is—how do you *not* teach the students and extract lots of money from the administration and get promoted very quickly? And then, as an administrator, you're sure that there is a plot

abroad, and that plot is a cabal of faculty and students seeking to destroy the vestiges of this beautiful place which you have built with your very own hands. Why aren't they thankful to me for what I have done? It's a three-cornered game, baby. It's two on one. And you can never always be on the side that has the man-power.

And then, as the milling and pushing and shoving and fighting and brawling and sprawling goes on, it turns out that looking on and surrounding you are such creatures as members of the board of trustees, powerful alumni, governors, and—the people, whoever they may be. But they're there. Whatever you say, you'll get a telephone call or an assemblyman will write you a letter, as one writes to me, protesting my a) morality, b) lack of courage, c) "comsymp" philosophy, and d) lack of understanding of the role of a university. I get something like that about once a week.

But, the fact of the matter is that where there should be a unity of purpose, a community of scholars, a community of people learning and teaching one another, there tends to be this terribly stratified, terribly non-communicating, terribly anti-intellectual world which is the university.

One of the major problems with universities today—one of the great issues that is facing us now—is the fact that we have not created, in the environment of the microcosm of that institution called the university, that kind of world which indeed we are trying to give everyone else.

A recent development which I think bodes ill for the University of California involves a circumstance in which, where there had been some hope, and some struggle to achieve this kind of idyllic world that I described to you, there is now chaos. The Board of Regents met in April. One of the matters on the agenda was the rally concerning the draft which was to be held on the campus at Berkeley. Berkeley, as you know, has been symbolic of the new student, so to speak, and the turmoil on the campus. As a result of the 1964 Free Speech Movement escapades, President Clark Kerr is no longer with us; Chancellor Strong is no longer with us; lots of deans and professors are no longer with us. But they, the regents, did bring in a man named Roger Heyns to be chancellor

at Berkeley—a magnificent man and a fine educator who for the past two or three years has been working assiduously with his faculty and with his students to bring together these torn and bloody pieces of that beautiful tapestry that was once Berkeley. He had finally worked it out so that what was to be a protestation of questionable legality and taste, to be held in the Greek Theatre, was finally resolved to be a real educational teach-in concerning the law of selective service and the laws of dissent and protest. And the regents, in their infinite wisdom, sought to examine the issue at their last meeting. Now it is very curious: The regents are forbidden, *by law*, to be concerned with the content of the educational events taking place on campuses of the University of California. I emphasize the words *by law*. That power is explicitly delegated to the president and his chancellors. But the regents chose to break the law. And they stated that it was not a function of time, place, or manner that was causing their concern; it was the *content*, and on that basis the rally was not held in the Greek Theatre, but rather on the steps of Sproul Hall. How long will Roger Heyns survive? I don't know. How long can the regents sit in their meetings decrying the breaking of the law by the students when they themselves seem to ignore or forget it? True, they don't wear beads and beards, but to violate the spirit and letter of the law nonetheless is really a curious circumstance.

PROTEINS

I use that word to designate *my* hangup. I've got a sweatshirt on underneath the one that says *Provost* which says *Biochemist*. I'm a card-carrying biochemist. I rose through the ranks, not on the basis of the fact that I was a great teacher, or that I was interested in students, or that I was concerned about the society in which I live. I rose because I have 70—count them—70 publications. My rat bill last year at USC was \$6,000. Now I've heard a lot of my colleagues in industry say, "Saltman, you've never had to meet a payroll." I may not have had to meet a payroll as big as theirs, but I've had to raise \$150,000 a year, including that six grand worth of rats, to get anywhere in the problems of the chemistry and biochemistry of iron.

What I am trying to point out is that there is a terrible polarization inside the faculty member today in higher education. And this is the conflict—the *apparent* conflict—between the time that he devotes to teaching and the time he relates directly to the creation of some sort of scholarly manifestation which can be weighed, counted, or measured by some dean. It's very interesting, this business of quantitation or counting and weighing—measuring the number of prizes a man has won or the dollar value of the grants that he attracts to the institution.

How do you measure a man's teaching effectiveness? Is there some device you can shove into a student to find out how well he is learning? Try sometime to go to the faculty and say, "Boys, what do you say, let's really have an honest evaluation of the faculty by either an outside group of your peers who are considered fine teachers or, better still, by an outside group plus the students." And oh, you watch a lot of guys tighten down. Walk, as a provost, into a class and have a professor say, "I didn't invite you." Hard to measure teaching effectiveness—easy to count the grants.

And then, whom do you teach? Well, I had a man come in the other day who is a fine economist from a famous midwestern institution. His publications are double mine and six books besides, and he is considered one of the hottest properties in economic show biz. We were talking, and our economists were hot to trot with him, and he was hot to trot with us, and I said, "By the way, what sort of program at the undergraduate level do you think you'd like to be involved with when you come here?" And he said, "I don't teach undergraduates. I only want to work with a small group of graduate students who are really able to work with me on my research problems."

I said, "Well, I hope the surf comes up on the Wabash because it isn't coming up here!"

I think the time has come when we have got to stop this nonsense about looking down on the undergraduate as some sort of cross we must bear in order to go forward in our work.

About a year ago I wrote an article called "The Science Jungle" in which I vented a little of my spleen at Caltech. I had two professors in the first four years I was there that, outside of the humanities faculty, I felt cared

and worried about the way that they were approaching me, at least in the learning and loving of science. Both of these men are terrific scientists. The first was Linus Pauling, and Linus turned me on in a freshman class in chemistry. I kept waiting for the next time, and it didn't come until four years later when James Bonner salvaged me from the Harvard Business School by a little course called Plant Biochemistry. Now those are two very outstanding scientists. Later there were others, and in every case the great teachers, for me, were the great scientists as well.

To me, a great teacher is the person who, being sensitive and loving and creative in the discipline in which he is working, and actually right on the cutting edge of that discipline, can bring that excitement to the freshman. I don't know any other way to do it. Maybe the trick is to find a way to create some new biochemical drug that, when swallowed by a reluctant professor, makes him need this sparkling attention, this vision of students coming alive and being turned on in a freshman or a sophomore class, and seeing these students go forth and enjoying vicariously their thrills, their excitement, their creativity.

I don't think there is, then, a conflict between publish and perish. I think that you perish intellectually if you don't publish, but to allow it to become the driving force of higher education in the selection of faculty and their recruitment is to destroy the essence of teaching in the university.

It is interesting and curious, though, to note what has happened because of the involvement of the federal government in basic science and in higher education. Not only are you promoted on the basis of your publication record, but the wealth and well-being of your campus is a function of your publications. Oh, yes, there are a few millions to be doled out to what they call the "emerging" universities. We tried for one at USC and failed; we had not emerged. Who gets the loot? Caltech gets the loot. MIT gets the loot. Harvard gets it. UC Berkeley gets it. And UC San Diego is getting a piece of the action, man. We have 21 National Academy of Science members and 3 Nobel Prizewinners. And don't think we don't raise those numbers up high. And don't think they don't impress. It relates to a phenomenon

that a sociologist wrote about recently in *Science*. It was called the Mathews Effect: the rich get richer. And if you think there's a dichotomy between the have-not nations and the haves, think of what it is like between the emerging universities and the emerged. Twenty universities enjoy roughly 80 percent of the major research funding in the sciences.

PROTEST

I was asked by a group of students to have



an informal talk the other evening about what I thought universities were about. I talked a bit, and then I opened the meeting for discussion. Up jumps a kid wearing black pants, black boots, leather jacket, a Che Guevara beret, and a beard. Clutched in his hand is a little red book. He opens the little red book and he starts reading: "Chairman Mao says—'Fight, fight, talk, talk.'"

I said, "O.K., you son of a bitch, come on down here! You want to fight down here, or do you want to fight out on the plaza? Where do you want to fight?"

He said, "Don't get excited, don't get excited."

Why is there protest today? Why does a student who is smart enough to be at an institution like ours read and quote from Chairman Mao and insist on confrontation?

I think it is really a pretty ridiculous world in which we live, and I think perhaps I understand why the protests and rebellion. Look around. We live beset by the threat of a nuclear holocaust which could destroy us immediately. Peripheral to this are the slow deaths of the population explosion and famine that face two-thirds of the world with an immediacy that few of us are sensitive to and realize. And look around you in terms of the environment—the geosphere and hydrosphere, polluted and despoiled, and the biosphere in a state of incipient ruin and destruction, and a psychosphere of our own minds, warped and wrought and twisted by an urban environment that leaves little to admire or love as beautiful. Couple this with a war of dubious value and dubious cause; and relate this to the threat that is held over every male student who is not blind or pregnant that he might have to go and serve. And you ask the students to go to pep rallies and sing of old Alma Mater? No thank you! But I don't want that alienation and that sense of anomie and that anarchy which seems to prevail everywhere, to burn down and destroy the most potent source of social change that I know of, and that *is* the university.

It is curious about this business of protest. When I was at SC, I was considered the leader of the faculty-student Mau-Mau organization—a constant threat to the president and to the board of trustees and an irritation to many of the faculty who were content with their two-

days-on-campus and three-days-in-consultation world. I came to the university at La Jolla thinking, "Well, I may have a tough time with the faculty and administrators down there, but me and the kids will straighten it out." And the first day I was there the students started passing out illegal leaflets; and the second day they flew the North Vietnamese flag on the plaza; and the sixth day the Marines landed. And on the seventh day, I rested.

There's a great tendency on the part of the person not involved with campus life these days to say, when a boy walks by with the long hair and beads or a girl unwashed and mini-skirted up to her hip, "Why don't you grab those kids and cut their hair and wash 'em up and put a reasonable-sized sailor middy and dickie on them and shape them up and make them be good students?"

Look out, baby; don't touch! If you grab for them—if you grab for their symbols of protest—every student at that university, who has up to this point been totally oblivious to your existence and theirs, rushes to their defense, and they cry, as has been cried to me by a student on the plaza, "We're white niggers, and you're Bull Connor." (I wish I'd had a cattle prod at that time.)

You see, it has come to the point where the student is frustrated and feels helpless to act. After all, he senses more acutely after an education at a university, or during an education at a university, some of the grave consequences of this world in which we live. He finds himself unable to do anything about it. In this loneliness he feels pain and frustration. He lashes out, and he lashes out stupidly and raises the North Vietnamese flag.

Can you imagine anything more pathetic than a scene that was played the other day in the free speech area at UCSD? Some students of the New Left—all six of them—flying proudly the banners of North Vietnam and North Korea, clustered around their booth, while 2,000 students streamed by oblivious to them. Now I think the war in Vietnam ought to be stopped, but *God damn*, it won't be stopped by people putting up North Vietnam flags! It is going to be done through reason, logic, and through the agencies of government and law.

How can we get students to recognize this and be involved and *really* participate in the

governance of a university? This is the major problem on most university campuses today. This is the problem that Tom Hull, dean of students at Revelle, and I have addressed ourselves to on our campus. We go before the students and faculty shortly to create what I think will be a true college government, in which the faculty and students and the administrators sit down and begin to work—in which doors are not closed and students dismissed as too immature or unwise, and in which the



faculty agree to come out of their labs, and in which the administrators are no longer fearful of taking it from legislator or citizen and are concerned primarily with giving leadership to the institution that must be. Then perhaps the college will truly become a center for change.

POT

A couple of weeks ago I was on a radio call-in show, and my colleague on the show was the head of the narcotics squad for the San Diego police. Last spring, before I had arrived, the campus made the headlines, because the Narcs hit. They arrested three students at 4 a.m. with no previous warning to the faculty or the administrators or the deans or anyone. They *did* warn the press, because reporters were there in number, as were the television cameras to photograph four kids being led handcuffed out of the dorm.

Now, you see, I have a vested interest in the hallucinogenic drugs. In 1960 I took some LSD as part of an experiment that Dr. Sydney Cohen was doing at UCLA, and we filmed it and did a couple of television shows on drugs and the mind. That was in 1960—before Leary got hip and made a big thing of it. The frightening thing is to see what is happening to the mind expanders, as they are called. (In a true sense they are most contracting, and most destructive.) There is a quality of pathos associated with the students who have turned to drugs as a form of instant Nirvana and escape. I guess I should have been relieved, because on that radio call-in broadcast the lieutenant was pleased to announce that for the past two weeks he had had undercover agents on our campus and had not been able to make a buy. I crossed myself silently over the radio and was delighted, because there is a lot of grass: the grass grows green close to the border, and it is destructive stuff. How is it destructive? Well, it wasn't the grass that got her, but about three weeks ago we had a little gal who tripped out on LSD, and she is still in a mental institution and will probably be there for quite a while. Two fellows made a buy of a kind of peyote, and it turned out to be so toxic that one student was within a half hour of death before we could get him to an emergency ward, have him pumped, and antidotal material put into him. The other was stopped while trying to

jump off a fifth-floor rail.

I'm not telling you horror stories just to make you shudder; I'm telling you horror stories because it is horrible to me that within a population of students as we have, there should be this need, this drive to find instant Nirvana. And yet, don't go cluck, cluck, cluck, because it is you and I who drink the booze, who take the tranquilizers, who seek all kinds of hedonistic techniques of "tripping out," but find it somehow not within our understanding to understand their "thing." I'm most concerned about pot not because of the primary pharmacological and physiological effects; I think they are secondary. I am concerned because I think I can understand why a black man in Watts might want to "blow his mind" and find instant tranquility in some form of escape from his ghetto poverty; but I can't understand it with the bright students in the universities, where they can be so turned on by the creative events in which they can participate throughout all ranges of man's human endeavor.

Provost, Proteins, Protest, Pot: Higher Education in America Today. Do we leave it here and walk away? I don't think so. I think it is time for every individual institution of higher education that is worth that name to begin to examine the reason for its being. And in setting up that existence, these institutions must find creative ways of expressing it, living it within their own communities. But even that is not enough. Universities were first built with great walls surrounding them, and the concept of town and gown as two separate entities reigned supreme. We still tend to feel that way on the university campus. I'll never forget that when Watts was burning two years ago, I was on the USC campus in the middle of it doing an experiment. The fires raged *literally* around the walls of the university, but not one scratch was put on one wall during the Watts riots. And we later found out why. Watts didn't even know USC was there.

Reach out; touch; feel; sense. Be a part of this world that must be changed. The talents, the abilities, the minds to change this world are in the university today, but they must be in the community and the world as well. It's time that the fires raged within man's guts and not within the buildings at his universities.