STUDENT LIFE
-an introduction

Prepared by: Committee for Social Pacification

Stanford University
September, 1972
It is a pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the University to the Stanford campus. By now you have probably received enough factual information to familiarize yourself with the essential features of this institution so I will dispense with formalities and attempt to clarify what is perhaps most important - namely, what student life is all about. Many students attend university without a clear conception of what to expect from such a place; many in fact don't know how to be students. As a result their academic experiences have not been as successful as they might have and misunderstandings have led to extreme disappointments. In an effort to assist you in adjusting to Stanford we have prepared this brochure as a general introduction to student life - we hope it will prove to be of considerable use to you.

In these times, when institutions of higher learning are undergoing significant change, it is above all necessary to keep sight of the function of the university and the role of students within it. Although many people, educators included, still retain various illusions about the university being an isolated center for scholars, we at Stanford have demonstrated a pragmatic and modern approach to higher education. We view the educational process as nothing else than the acquiring of certain skills; what the university dispenses is a form of training which is socially necessary. Education is a vocation and, in this sense, the student is a kind of worker. Your career at the University should be viewed as such - as a job in preparation for future employment. This consideration should not be viewed with apprehension; rather, student life is a challenge which, if successfully overcome, will prove of lasting value. The knowledge acquired here will be of use both at your place of work and in your personal life.

When you enter the university, we expect your cooperation in achieving a mutual aim; namely your education. This expectation on our part should not be construed as an effort to supervise or control your activities - we believe that students are fully capable of regulating their own behavior. Today's student is a mature individual, willing to participate in the direction of his own education. Here at Stanford we have

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been among the first to actively involve students in the university's decision-making process. Not only have students become part of the Board of Trustees' committees, we have created joint student/faculty committees on academic policy and, more recently, the Office of Ombudsman (an impartial mediator for student grievances) has been established. These changes have not been purely formal or limited to only official structures - they have taken place in the classroom itself. Students have taken responsibility in developing curricula and in some cases have initiated courses themselves. All of this suggests that students are fully capable of exercising a significant degree of control over the functioning of the university.

We at Stanford, like any other university, have had our share of "student unrest." Despite all the publicity given to the events, however, a significant fact has been overlooked - the vast majority of student protest has taken place over issues external to the university proper. Almost all the demonstrations at Stanford have been about the Vietnam war. While we have sustained damage to our buildings, the University has remained relatively unscathed. Even the most supposedly "radical" students have only brought up such peripheral issues as war research or racism when criticizing the university. We have in fact been able to resolve many student grievances without altering our basic structures; we have extended the privileges of a university education to minority groups, made the university a more democratic institution - all without ceasing to pursue our primary academic tasks.

In conclusion, we feel this is a progressive university. Reflecting current social changes, Stanford is no longer a sanctuary for the upper class; it is a mass institution and, while we have retained a personal approach, we are much like any other large metropolitan campus - most of our students come from an average background. Their parents are not members of a social elite, but form the majority of the population, they work at salaried and wage labor. The following brochure should dispel any myths about the university in general and Stanford in particular.

President Richard W. Lyman
professors and students

Becoming a student is like becoming anything else in this society - it involves sacrifice, submission to authority and a conspicuous absence of pleasure. None of this should be a surprise, however. By now you've had enough experience to know that school, like all work, is a bore, teachers, like all functionaries, are only paid to maintain the system and educational authorities, like all bosses, only want to keep everyone where they already are. If you don't, you may consider yourself "well educated".

University life is only the extension of a denial of life that you've been subjected to all along; "higher education" only reproduces the aspects of other schools on a different level - the training process which began earlier continues here. While it is an obligatory custom for students to say that they are coming to Stanford to "further their education," most know that they are only buying time, forestalling the inevitable for four years.
Shockley, William: Genetically inferior, like the students who "disrupt" his classes. Transistorized robot created by the administration to serve as a convenient target for student protest. Dismiss as irrelevant.

Brown, Robert McAfee: This one is at least honest. Mentions Mao and the toad of Nazareth in the same breath. Takes his sacrificial militantism literally.

Franklin, H. Bruce: President of alumni association. Before graduating, earned reputation as biblical scholar - special interest: Modern Chinese interpretations of Puritan ethic. Has left Stanford to become full-time community manipulator. Now wears denim jacket instead of suit & tie: this is his idea of "class analysis." The 'H' stands for "stalinist punk."

Even the most senile professors don't believe they live in an "ivory tower" anymore. The death of this particular myth is only of interest to educators; the university never did exist "outside" of social reality, in any case. For a long time, it has been little more than an assembly-line producing the specialists required to operate the machinery of advanced capitalist society. While this function of the university is carefully concealed in the trappings of academic ritual, its presentation of "knowledge" is, in fact, socially determined. The workings of the university become less mysterious as you enter the lecture hall where you are expected to conform to the dictates of a certain role. Here, however, it is not merely the professor who is in command, but the entire ideological apparatus of bourgeois society.
Behind the variety of courses offered at the university lies a general fragmentation of knowledge, in which every conception of society as a whole is suppressed. One is instead given various isolated perspectives (sociological, historical, etc.) with which to view the world. This ideological peephole limits the field of vision so that the students see only frozen, separate images of what is in reality a totality of interdependent processes. This technique of mystification is subtle; the pseudo-learning dispensed by the university can afford to say everything because it actually says nothing.

"All professors are cretins! Come, come you don't mean all of them do you? After all, I'm a Marxist!"

The guardians of the university are called professors, deans, and counselors. While they play an analogous role to others who wear the badge of authority, their weapons are much less primitive. Those who maintain the university are clever; they don't merely discipline you, they have you run the show for them. "Progressive" education offers students the ability to construct their own alienation; with the help of "radical" ideologies of "participation" a more humanist environment is devised. The "freedom" to run classes, hire professors, etc. only conceals the farce that is taking place; "educating" yourself is like policing yourself, you're being had.

THE STANFORD POLICE FORCE

"Those who want to destroy the university are only cutting off the branch on which they are sitting."

-Herbert Marcuse
President of the Campus Peace Officers Association

Soon after you arrive at Stanford you will become acquainted with its security forces. While you will easily recognize most campus police by their distinctive attire, the activities of its plainclothes department go unnoticed by most students. The following are members of this undercover branch.

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Our goals are as radical as our methods. In talking to you as we have done, we have taken the first steps in establishing a dialogue with everyone who wants to take themselves, and not the university, seriously. The revolt against the dead structures that presently dominate everyday life begins with the radicalism implicit in every individual's desires and not as a simple reaction to some "external" issue. This subjective rebellion will become effective, however, only if it is made collective. Organized radical activity has nothing to do with the mini-bureaucracies of the New Left; in their practice, revolutionary organizations must reject the principles of hierarchy and sacrifice through the full democratic participation of their members.

In exposing various realities of student life, we have also outlined the nature of our project. The real game of subversion, though, has yet to begin and awaits all those who refuse to remain nothing. To want all is to reverse the perspective imposed by the powers of the old world; to start to take it is the first act of revolution.

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The facility with which the university has been able to incorporate the demands of the student New Left (student power, end to racism, women's studies, etc.) only shows that this movement never understood what the University, in fact, is. The "revolt" of the New Left was easily contained because it only formulated a partial opposition to the university and capitalism in general; despite militant rhetoric, its perspective was fundamentally reformist. The image of revolution it took to be authentic (Leninism, the state-capitalist "socialism" of China, North Vietnam, etc.) was an image defined by capitalism. Limited by a facile "anti-imperialism," the New Left was unable to see that class-society exists everywhere—forces of capitalism are not limited to the U.S. Today, Nixon is a better Maoist than Bruce Franklin.

Here at Stanford, student protest never advanced beyond the impotent moralist crusade of the anti-war movement. For all the window-breaking of the ROTC riots, the University was never in danger. Stanford "radicals" have traditionally remained under the tutelage of a professor—their idea of (counter-)revolution has come from the Stalinists of Venceremos. If now, however, Stanford students have abandoned the New Left, it has not been for anything better. They currently draw their inspiration from another ex-professor, George McGovern.

The only radical response to bourgeois society and its university lies in their destruction. Revolt cannot be conceived in a purely physical sense, however—the actual negation of existing conditions can only be accomplished through their complete transformation. This desire to change everything is what separates us from the feeble reformers of the Left. It is not a particular aspect of the university or society that needs to be corrected, everything must be called into question. Those who seek to limit radical activity to reformist ends or who would impose leadership upon it act as recuperators, preventing the development of an authentic revolutionary movement.

What is the meaning of this? Even Venceremos is supporting McGovern and you situationists talk of proletarian self-management? The experience of workers' councils in Russia, Spain & Hungary?

Towards the creation of a real opposition to capitalism, we have undertaken a number of projects—among them several at Stanford (People's Victory, On Contradiction). These agitations only mark a beginning in developing a radical situation here. The actual sabotage of the university will start when those involved actively combat the institutions and authorities which now define them. The practice of not being a student (or professor, or worker) does not mean simply "dropping out"; the rejection of any role has meaning only if it is expressed directly against its source. The end of the university begins within its walls.
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The relationships of spectacular society, where life is packaged and sold as a show, are mirrored in the classroom and throughout student life in general. Here, absolute passivity is demanded and student life centers around contemplation. Impoverished conditions of daily life are not unique to the student, however; his misery is only part of that experienced by all those who are unable to control the conditions under which they are forced merely to survive. This status shared with everyone in the modern proletariat goes unrecognized by most students, however; if they are discontented, they easily fall victim to the most naive illusions - electoral politics, religion, or the New Left.
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