

m.s.u. - U.S.

## A HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT AT MSU (abridged version)

The "movement" in an active political phase at Michigan State began in the late Fall of 1964. Prior to this beginning there had, of course, been groups of students interested in reform at the University and in the civil rights struggle in the South, but no significant dent had been made in the awareness of this university.

Out of discussions in the Fall of '64 came the Committee for Student Rights (CSR) which hoped to promote the welfare of students at MSU. The original CSR platform called for an end to women's hours, the end of compulsory dormitory living, better library facilities, the right of students to print and distribute literature freely, and similar changes which were of obvious benefit to the student body. At the present time all of these original demands have been met in part and in this sense political action by concerned students, not all of whom by any means consider themselves part of the movement, can be counted successful.

CSR itself due largely to internal dissention and lack of vision and imagination dissolved at the end of Winter Term 1966. Its activities have been taken over by another group founded in the Fall of 1966 called United Students (US). The first chairman of US, W.C. Blanton, was elected to the Student Board of ASMSU this past spring, as were Bradford Lang and James J. Friel, prominent members of the group.

A brief recounting of action which CSR and US have taken part in since 1965 will probably give some idea of the intentions and dedication of the people involved.

Shortly after CSR entered the campus scene with the first issue of "Logos" members of the organization passed a petition requesting easing of restriction on students wanting to move off-campus. Over 4,000 students signed, but Mr. Nonnamaker and the student government committee on off-campus living refused to accept the petition. Nevertheless for some reason the off-campus living age was lowered, enabling more students to escape the dormitory.

The second major action CSR was involved in was the campaign to secure an "open occupancy" law in the city of East Lansing led by the campus chapter of the NAACP. The campaign, lasting over a month, climaxed in a sit-in in Abbot Road in which 59 people were arrested. Again nothing obviously related to the action was done, but later a student was added to the E. Lansing Human Relations Commission and efforts have been made by citizens of E. Lansing to end discrimination in E. Lansing.

At the end of Spring Term 1965, Paul Schiff, editor of Logos, was denied readmission by the Dean of Students' office after being accepted as a graduate student by the History Dept. He took his case to court and was readmitted for Winter 1966 before the court ruled. Again no definite decision was reached, but no student since has been faced with refusal of admission for political action.

In the Fall of 1965 four MSU students were arrested for distributing anti-Vietnam war literature at Career Carnival. The students were charged with trespassing, in the Student Union. When the following spring the students were convicted by the Ingham County District Court and sentenced to from 10 to 30 days and denied appeal bond ten students launched a vigil and hunger strike at Cowles House demanding that appeal bond. After 2½ days in below-freezing temperatures the Michigan Court of Appeals directed that bond be set. Last Fall SDS passed out anti-war leaflets at Career Carnival without incident. This was the last action undertaken by CSR.

In the Fall of 1966 some students felt a need for an organization more directly involved with campus issues than SDS, which was then the only activist group functioning. Nine students founded United Students (US) that Fall. In late November US sponsored a week-long sit-in at Bessey Hall to protest the firing of three instructors in the ATL department. The Board of Trustees, for the first time in history, agreed to see students who had a grievance. The men were not rehired, but strangely enough in many departments there are now "Student Advisory Committees".

US then collected 3,500 signatures of a petition calling for a "Student Bill of Rights", which is now being considered by ASMSU. Just this Spring US led a march of 250 students on the State Capitol to demand that the MSU budget appropriation not be cut. US was one of the organizations in the short-lived "united front" which pressured the administration into abolishing hours for most women students.

It could be said that student activism has failed to accomplish anything, that the time, energy, and hope that many students over a three year period have poured into activist organizations has been wasted, that the people who have gone to jail, marched miles in the hot sun or rain, who have sat-in, starved-in, kissed-in, etc. have been cruelly deluded. However, there is no doubt that students are now listened to more carefully. The major portion of the activist program has been implemented. No, credit cannot be given to individual activists or activist groups. The active students have helped to make MSU a freer place in which to live and study. They make mistakes, are hung up, and even kind of stupid; but they tried to initiate change when nobody else would. For this they should be remembered and maybe even thanked.

printed and distributed by  
UNITED STUDENTS OF MSU

JD/US ap