

CONCLUSION

Through knowledge of the history of student activism on the UT campus, one can identify cycles of protest activity followed by those of student apathy toward the politics of the university and of the larger society. Examination of such patterns facilitates the development of an understanding and conclusions about past student political struggles.

During the period covered in this history, student activism took many forms. It encompassed activities ranging from discussions of student concerns with the regents or other administrators to boycotting classes in demand of change, from circulating or signing petitions to occupying the university president's office, from filing lawsuits against the university for the abrogation of constitutional and civil rights to sabotaging and destroying university property. The fact that students have sometimes resorted to such drastic measures must be understood within the context of student disenfranchisement from the decision-making processes of the university.

During the early 1960's, a small group of predominantly black students was able to expose the university's racist segregation policies through public statements and pickets. Through persistence, these and subsequent civil rights activists gained the support of their fellow students as evidenced by the poll and student votes cited in Chapter 1. It took four long years before the demands first raised in March of 1960 were institutionalized and another eleven years until the university was forced to comply with the Civil Rights Act. In the late 1960's and the early 1970's, UT student activism peaked. The gains of this period of activism became apparent in the early and mid 1970's when students won new academic programs (e.g. Ethnic Studies and Women's Studies) and when national student protests led to such victories as an end to the Vietnam War and the establishment of the right to vote for 18-year olds. The student body in the late 1970's and early 1980's was comparatively apathetic. However, student activism resurged on the UT campus during the mid-1980's with the free speech and anti-apartheid movement, the protests against tuition hikes and legislative cuts in higher education appropriations, and the teaching assistants' demands for reinstatement of health benefits.

The issues and demands which students have raised in their protests have tended to be reactive. The larger student demonstrations at UT responded to such crises as UT's violations of students' rights to free speech and assembly, the U.S. invasion of Cambodia, the state legislature's decision to raise tuition fees, repression of fellow students by the university or the criminal justice system, and the university's failure to take affirmative action to compensate for past (or present) racial discrimination. In a majority of these situations, the interests of at least some students were threatened. Although student activists have made conscious decisions to oppose what they have seen as immoral, unjust, or repressive, they have not often set the agenda for their protests which tend to seek the negation of an evil or injustice. However, there are some examples of student attempts to create a positive or a community of their own, for instance the draft counseling services provided during the Vietnam War, the establishment of food and housing cooperatives, the publication of underground or alternative newspapers (e.g. *The Rag* and *The Spark*), and counter cultural spring celebrations such as Gentle Thursdays in the late 1960's.

The pattern of administrative opposition to and repression of radical student groups has been characteristic of the entire period covered in this thesis. Administrative tactics in dealing with protesters have become more sophisticated as the university has gathered more experience in controlling student protest. For example, in 1967 the Chair of the Board of Regents addressed an illegal student demonstration and pled for a restoration of campus tranquility. Nowadays, the regents are distanced from the student body; they utilize their administrative subordinates to repress student activism on the campus.

Just as the university administration has learned from its mistakes in dealing with student protest, student activists must acquaint themselves with the history of student struggle on the campus to avoid making mistakes of the past and to realize that persistent and determined efforts to change the university have, at times, been effective.

The history which I have written in these pages will hopefully serve as an overview of the past 28 years of student struggle. I recommend further research into the following: structural oppression of students within the university, the connections of the regents to the business community, and past efforts to establish an alternative student community or a counter-culture.

As the student anti-apartheid activists have frequently encouraged each other - *Aluta Continua!* or *The Struggle Continues!*