

# UNIVERSITY REFORM

A PLATFORM STATEMENT

By ALAN OGDEN



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## UNIVERSITY REFORM: A PLATFORM STATEMENT

I am running for the student council for the following reason: as a student with ideas for a renewal of the institutional bases of life at the University, I would be in a better position to demand change as a councilman representing a student constituency than as a single voice against the encrusted powers. I did not solicit the support of the two traditional political societies or of the University Party because I feel that all three organizations are hampered by obedient mental habits and by lack of vision.

Many students are concerned that the University has failed to fulfill its potential as a creative, experimental force for society and for their own lives. We are confronted rather by the spectacle of a power conservative force, walking arm-in-arm with the unimaginative, fearsome Government and corporate establishments, conditioning us students, alienating us, and threatening to suck us into the sterile vortex of the "great" society. We find that we have little or no power as against the administration, that we are often rushed along against our will through a maze of uninteresting courses, exams, and other brainwash, that independence means trouble, and that our social life is commandeered by agedness and by pre-modern sexual fantasies. What glitters to sentimental alumni and to high school juniors can seem very empty to undergraduates.

It is my conviction that what ails this university is the fault neither of the students nor of the people currently in charge, but of the structural foundations of the University. My platform, therefore, aims at the change of a stodgy paternalist system into an experimental, generative system, wholly free and responsible.

I. Democracy--an end to "in loco parentis"--students in control of their own lives.

- A. All dorm regulations and restrictions not directly related to fire safety or public health should be abolished as nonsensical.
- B. The Student Council should have a popularly elected president.
- C. The seats on the Student Council should be numbered, so that there will be a contest of direct opponents for each seat.
- D. The off-grounds approved housing list should be abolished. A student should be able to live in a tent if he likes.
- E. First-year students should not be required to live in the dorms. This is in the interest of freedom. I doubt that too many first-year students will elect to live off-grounds, if the dorm complex is made a place where both men and women live.
- F. Students and faculty together should determine policy, not the administration. The administrators should administrate: handle money, keep records, cut the grass.
- G. Student-faculty control of the food services.
- H. No car regulations. These regulations are spurs to grade competition, which is destructive to learning, and are punitive, discriminatory, and oppressive.

II. Equality--an end to bigotry--a re-examination of laissez-faire.

- A. Co-education. End of racial segregation. The students at the University of Virginia, Mary Washington and Virginia State are victims of a disgusting policy of 3-way segregation (men-women-"colored"), which more closely resembles hell than it does civilization.
- B. A full-scale investigation of the way certain racist professors are able to hurt black students (the few that this place attracts) should be conducted as a beginning of an end to bigotry.

- C. A full-scale investigation into the extent to which the offering of scholarships to black students is discriminatory.
- D. When the decision was made not to actively recruit black students, when the authorities decided not to institute summer preparatory courses for those who can't meet academic standards because of their inferior public school background, we got a bigoted, consciously discriminatory policy. This is a case in which opting for laissez-faire is opting for an unacceptable status quo. The University should be an active force for social change.
- E. An investigation should be made into whether a quota on Jews exists in admissions policy.
- F. 1. Maintenance employees are vital to the University. Their wages should be raised; benefits and working conditions could stand some improvement, too. A united front of University and workers against the state legislature would very likely improve the position of state employees generally.
2. The University should officially announce that they would recognize a local of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union, and that it would welcome the formation of such a local.

### III. General Academic Reform--a free university in a free society.

- A. ROTC should be summarily kicked out. If there is one thing a university should not be, it is a boot camp. ROTC officers take up valuable office space and air.
- B. Defense contracts give the University the scent of napalmed bodies. Rather than being a lap dog for the Establishment, the University should be a free entity, in the forefront of creative, progressive social thought and action.
- C. In order for a group of students to become a recognized student organization, all that should be required is that they announce the organization's formation to the Student Council.
- D. There should be no required courses. A University student is old enough to choose what he doesn't want to spend his time studying.
- E. Meaningful learning is not enhanced by competition. The grading system in fact is productive of envy, loneliness, unhappiness, an artificial sense of failure. The true community that the University could be is in part prevented by people climbing nowhere on each other's shoulders. The grading system should be axed into oblivion and a simple pass-fail system introduced in its place.
- F. The University should not be an arm of the Selective Service gang. The registrar's office should decline entirely to cooperate with those gatherers of cannon fodder.
- G. Education is a voluntary act on the part of each student. Attendance records need not be kept.
- H. The undergraduate college is the heart of the University. Current trends seem to indicate that priorities are being shifted to the graduate schools. These trends must be opposed.
- I. Students should not be assessed automatically for athletic programs. Either the teams make it on their own, or they wither away.
- J. Professors must be freed to teach. Demands of publishing and of administrative detail (including the requirement of giving final exams) should be radically eased.
- K. Students should have a voice in the hiring and firing of faculty.
- L. Students should have the opportunity to set up courses for credit. The idea runs as follows: Four or more students formulate a course. Anyone can teach. To become recognized, what you have to do is to sustain meetings regularly for two weeks.

M. The Alderman Library needs a revival.

1. A more automatic policy of book purchase.
2. Students should be able to order books.
3. A more efficient reserve book system.
4. More copies of basic books.
5. More study space.
6. Longer hours.
7. Drinking fountains that work.

N. The automatic lecture system, which discourages original creative thought and response, should be curtailed.

O. The Dean of the University is rumored to tap phones. A full and diligent investigation as to whether this is true must be conducted. That kind of stuff is for the birds.

P. An investigation into the Dean of the University's suspected student spy network should be conducted. If it exists, it must be stopped.

Q. An interdisciplinary forum should be set up to explore some of the basic questions raised by liberal education.

#### IV. The life of the community.

A. A free psychological counselling service should be instituted.

B. The Honor System, based on fear and punishment, should be desystematized.

A spirit of honor is fine; a farcical and illusory system is worse than nothing.

C. Hundreds of communally-owned bicycles for the general use of the University community should be placed on the grounds.

D. Individual students should have the right to decide what magazines are sold in Newcomb Hall.

E. In short, the University at present is somewhat of a drag. No women, no life, no blood, no Vision. Down with prosaic bureaucrats.

LET'S LIBERATE OURSELVES.

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(Alan Ogden is an honors history student at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. This was his platform when he ran for the Student Council in May, 1967. He is a member of the Executive Committee of SSOC.)

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