

YESTERDAY'S DISCORD

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And Sam Kaplan

BEING MORE LIKE sociologists than historians, people tend to immerse themselves in their present, habitually ignoring the possibility that the roots of present difficulties might be anchored in the past—or, to bring this into context, that mass student outbursts are nothing new on the Berkeley campus. A review of the last thirty-five years of them shows they have differed greatly in form, purpose, and number of participants. And these differences can be related both to national and international events and to the composition of the student body. But one thing is clear: almost every year, except under unusual circumstances, at least a part of the student body engages in crowd outbursts that make things temporarily uncomfortable for administration, faculty, other students, Berkeley townspeople, and sometimes, the public at large.

If we review the files of the *Daily Californian* and other Bay Area newspapers, and talk with campus old-timers, we find it convenient to divide these last three and a half decades into four periods of mass student activity. To make it easy, each period can be conventionally named according to the decade in which it flowered; of course, no period coincides precisely with a decade. The most recent period, for instance, seems to have begun in about 1957; when it will end, no one can be sure.

Until the end of the 'twenties or so, at least according to the recollections of campus old-timers, mass student activity was "traditional" and strictly non-political. Football games and other social events were the focus of collective energies; and particularly exciting victories on the gridiron were often followed by good-natured, exuberant marches into downtown Berkeley. Sometimes, though, the exuberance spilled over, and the students became heady

enough with victory and their own massed energy to rock trollies off their tracks.

A proper accounting of the last thirty-five years begins, however, with the 'thirties. The tenor of campus life changed—it was, of course, the depression. But student activity was not much concerned with the economic issues of the depression. Instead, students engaged in a continuing protest about the breakdown of disarmament and the approach of war. This lasted throughout the decade, until late into 1941, when America finally entered the Second World War. Annual strikes—a grandiose name for what actually happened—for peace were the major feature of the period.

From 1941 through the late 'forties, the campus became quiet, as campuses were everywhere. Neither football nor politics provided sufficient focus—so it would seem—for collective outbursts; and if the late 'forties might have been expected to see a release of student energies in demonstrations of some kind, the heavy preponderance of veterans in the student body right after the war and then the coming of the Korean War seems to have put a damper on them.

For a time, the 'fifties were the period of the "Silent Generation." But the student body was silent only in the sense that the students of the 'twenties were silent: that is, they were not political. For they did engage in massive, energetic crowd behavior—it was the time when panty raids were invented and enjoyed a national vogue. U.C. had a particularly vigorous panty raid in 1956.

But in the late 'fifties, student political protest arose again. The "Silent Generation" enjoyed only a short stay. The protests of the 'fifties, however, were strikingly differ-