

# A Season of Discontent

THERE IS no simple explanation for the huge and unparalleled groundswell of protest that disrupted the ordinary life of the Berkeley campus throughout the fall semester. Unquestionably, the causes of the student revolt were many, the results even more ranging, and the interplay of forces set in motion by a bewildering sweep of events a matter that even a careful historian, armed with pertinent documents and writing at a safe distance, would have difficulty interpreting with a high degree of certainty. This said, one may begin sorting out the details of what one writer has called the "most dangerous crisis" in the history of this institution.

For most of the academic community the semester began almost as inconspicuously as any other—with President Clark Kerr in Tokyo dedicating the latest center in the University's Education Abroad Program and Chancellor Edward W. Strong in Berkeley predicting that enrollment on this campus would exceed the maximum figure of 27,500 undergraduates and graduates. It came near this figure. Most students had returned to the campus by September 14, the first day of registration. Several dozen of them had traveled perilous roads into Mississippi to work on civil rights projects. The Republican convention in San Francisco's Cow Palace had drawn the active participation of hundreds of Bay Area students. At Berkeley, card tables sponsored by several student political groups at the Bancroft and Telegraph entrance to campus urged students to participate in candidate demonstrations, protest demonstrations, and a host of other activities at convention hall.

To those who, long ago, had attended Berkeley as undergraduates, the scope of activity that signaled political involvement—the Goldwater, Scranton, Rockefeller stickers and literature, the civil rights placards, the tables with ardent and articulate spokesmen manning them, the clusters of students engaged in noisy dialogue—might represent an unfamiliar sort of Vanity Fair. True, there had been spokesmen, crowds, demonstrations in the past, but this activity was neither as continuous nor as varied as the



show at Sather Gate that marked the opening of the University's 95th year of business. Elections figured most importantly in this.

One thing, then, that set the fall semester apart was growing student political involvement. Another factor, less easily defined, was the growing discontent within parts of the student community. Its roots were in the past and it took many forms, ranging from an expression of annoyance by a graduate student who had just found out that he would have to pay a full fee to register *in absentia* during the semester he was to write his Ph.D. dissertation ("Just who do you talk to around here?") to the preaching of absolute grievance and the tocsin for absolute redress. Groups also sounded discontent. Prominent among these was SLATE, the independent liberal political party