The first report of Clark Kerr's blue-ribbon Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, issued in December, called on the federal government to begin channeling massive aid to higher education primarily through grants to individual students from families with incomes below $6,000 per year. The stakes are high; if adopted, the Commission's plan will have the federal government spending $13 billion annually by 1976 -- the bicentenary of the American Revolution. In the meantime, a million students from low income homes who would not otherwise have been educated will have benefited ("liberty, fraternity, equality").

By tying federal aid to their success in attracting and educating the poor and disadvantaged, the Carnegie Commission plan provides the nation's colleges and universities a strong incentive for a long overdue look at admission policies and educational programs. At present, Kerr's group noted, only 7% of the nation's college students come from families in the lowest income quarter.

Within hours of the release of the report, spokesmen for the land grant universities association were expressing their unhappiness with it. They would have preferred grants directly to the institutions, they said, in order to "keep down costs for all students."

Education for the poor, the black, the brown, the red, the disadvantaged, is making headlines. We can expect them to continue. The situation at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign campus, suggests why.
In the fall of 1967 only 259 students, or 1.2% of the 22,017 undergraduates enrolled at this land grant university, were Negroes; this is less than one tenth of the proportion in the state of Illinois. In September 1968 over 600 new black students arrived on campus, tripling the black enrollment in one leap. From that time on an atmosphere of constant crisis has permeated the Illinois administration, headed by David Dodds Henry, president of the University since 1954 and a member of the Carnegie Commission.

Blacks weren't the only identifiable group effectively excluded from the Urbana campus in 1967. A survey of freshmen that year indicated that 93% came from families with more than $5,000 annual income. More than 10% of America's families have less than $3,000 annual income; the UI reported no freshmen from such families.

A general impression of affluence among UI students is borne out by a chronic complaint of Earl Finder, director of its massive student union. Finder reports that he can never find enough students to staff his food, recreation, and other services. It may be his wages -- he offers only $1.40 an hour for many of his positions. (The University often appears to fear the wrath of local business, holding the line on prevailing wages and prices.) But there seems to be plenty of ready money in the hands of UI students, who pay about $1500 a year less (typical total expenses are about $1900) than they would if they attended private schools.

The UI's admissions policies are typical of American universities. Serious pressure on available space at the University developed in the late fifties and early sixties as it did for most institutions. Decisions about who to let in and who to keep out had to be made. The easiest criteria to apply -- because data were available, because they appeal to faculty and administrators, and because
they seem most defensible to parents -- were ones which purported to select students who "can best take advantage" of what the University offers. What counts is rank in high school, recommendations, and -- very important -- test scores.

As pressure of applications increased, "standards" were raised. For years faculty and administrative groups at Illinois have noted the effect of these criteria in excluding the poor, the minorities, the students from poor secondary schools. But little more than committee reports, quickly buried, resulted. Reasons are not lacking. In the massive 1962 survey, The American College, its editor Nevitt Sanford remarked:

Colleges are, of course, interested in turning out good products, that is to say students who possess desired qualities. One way to accomplish this is to start with students who already possess these qualities... Those who would predict success in college by means of tests or examinations administered prior to the student's entrance, must be clear in their minds whether they are predicting retention of desirable qualities or predicting change or progress.

Particularly for a state institution, anxious to justify its budget to a legislature which necessarily judges it on its output, the temptation is very great to take the easiest students to handle and those most likely to perform well.

In addition, few faculty are ready to face the task of teaching deprived students. It is fun to deal with witty, urbane, intelligent, polite, well-dressed, socially conscious students. It is not pleasant to deal with students who appear rough, unpolished, blunt, and socially indifferent. It is all too easy for faculty to acquiesce in a policy of "higher standards", even when they realize that these are tied less to innate ability or to capacity for development, and more to the fortunes of birth.

There is also the matter of cost. Even if low-income applicants are
"qualified" it often is the case that it takes more to send them to college than it does to send more affluent students. And when they have some deficiencies to make up, they can cost the institution considerably more than better prepared students. Student financial aids and teaching resources go further when spent on affluent students; this way immediate returns seem highest.

The rueful dictum "those who've got, get" applies relentlessly: the students who gain admission are just those whose parents have the connections which land them lucrative summer jobs. The University can then speak proudly of its scholarship students' impressive "self-help."

Parents are relatively well-heeled; costs are low; summer jobs are better than average. It is the Affluent Society. Liberty, fraternity, and equality -- for those who get in.

When it comes to fraternity, the UI is second to none -- literally. Illinois has the nation's largest fraternity-sorority system, incorporating about a quarter of the undergraduates. The frat houses occupy several sections of the twin cities (total population, about 100,000). Their imposing facades blend in nicely with the private homes in these sections. Champaign-Urbana lies in the midst of some of the flattest, bleakest, corniest -- and richest -- farmland in America; it seems to have more than its quota of massive homes.

There is also a rather well-defined line running east and west, south of which there are large homes with impressive lawns, wide streets, and frequent, well-kept parks. On the north are the Negroes. It is possible to spend four years at the University -- which lies south, without ever venturing into that part of town.
Martin Luther King was murdered on April 4, just prior to the University's spring vacation. Shortly thereafter Champaign's "Let Freedom Ring" -- a recorded telephone message self-described as "an anti-communist service now in 125 cities; hear the TRUTH the managed news doesn't dare let you know!" -- announced to callers that Negroes in the twin cities were about to riot. Whites were advised to purchase guns to defend themselves. Anonymous callers phoned local Negro families and told them to dial "Let Freedom Ring"'s number. (Despite these efforts, no riot materialized.)

"Let Freedom Ring" is right at home in Champaign. "When I was a boy in Alabama," a UI physics professor says, "they used to say that if you had an uppity nigger the best thing you could do was send him up to Champaign (which lies on the important Illinois Central line from the South to Chicago). Up there they'd take care of him." A Harvard chemistry professor, who taught at Illinois after the second world war, says, "I left after a year. I just couldn't take it. I was from New York, a Jew, and a liberal. The smug Bible-belt hypocrisy in Champaign, where Negroes couldn't be served in any decent restaurant, was too much for me." Such conditions continued into the fifties. Today the cities' past is shallowly buried at best; although there is little open discrimination, there is abundant prejudice.

Meanwhile at the University a coalition of faculty and non-vacationing students formed "Citizens for Racial Justice" and drew up a set of demands. They asked that University hiring policies be examined and that the administration take affirmative action to bring up the percentage of black non-academic employees at the University to match the percentage of blacks in Champaign-Urbana.

CRJ's research indicated that

In 1967, the University employed 306 Blacks; 209 or nearly 70% were employed in the most menial categories of "unskilled laborers" and "service workers." None of the 238 semiskilled jobs and only 9 of
the 562 skilled jobs were held by Blacks. Furthermore, fewer than 3% of the 2343 "office and clerical" employees on this campus during 1967 were Black.

Negroes make up 14% of the Champaign-Urbana population.

CRJ further demanded that the University take drastic steps to force contractors working on the campus to comply strictly with the non-discrimination clauses in their contracts, and to halt construction if they did not. As for University employment, the group announced that they were not interested in anything but actual job counts. Promises, training programs, new policies were not enough — they would continue "picketing and peaceful demonstrations until significant action is taken by the Administration. Until such time when actual results are produced in the only place where they count — in the number of Blacks on the job — CRJ will reluctantly conclude that this Administration is either unable or unwilling to live up to its stated goals."

The word was "unable" according to Jack W. Peltason, chancellor of the C-U campus since September 1967, when a reorganization of the University introduced this office on each of the UI's three campuses. (The other two are the Chicago Circle commuter campus, and the Medical Center, also in Chicago.) After CRJ representatives left his office on one occasion, Peltason remarked to his next visitor, "They come in here demanding that I do something at once. As they walk in, they go past my Negro secretary and the office of my right hand man, also a Negro. Neither are tokens; they are both the best people I could get.

"These people come from departments without a single Black faculty member or non-academic employee. I don't control the departments; I don't control the unions; I don't control the attitudes of white employees. They think all I have to do is give an order. To whom?"
In fact Peltason had given orders -- and continues to give them. Shortly after he took office he pressed for recruitment and trainee programs for blacks, and for waivers of requirements of high school diplomas and other questionable criteria which had excluded them. He was in no position to comply with many CRJ demands -- such as that 50% of all non-academic employees hired each month be black. But he was acting with unprecedented measures.

Peltason had also put into motion a program which was to bring in 189 economically and educationally disadvantaged students in September 1968; most of them would be black, given the make-up of the Illinois population. But in mid-April the Black Students Association, only a year old and pressing hard in the aftermath of the King slaying, denounced a committee report to Peltason which mapped out a long-run program for such students. Its goal of 600 students by 1972 was absurdly low, they said. BSA spokesmen countered by demanding at least 500 new blacks a year, starting at once.

Several days later, on May 2, the chancellor announced that the fall program would be expanded to 500 who would enter in addition to the usual freshman class [which had already been filled]. The University was to begin at once to find money, personnel, and students and to plan appropriate supportive services.

He had reached an agreement with the BSA which committed them to massive recruitment effort, in cooperation with the office. The black students also helped the planning group with a number of suggestions, drawn from their experience at the University, for program and supportive aids.

Peltason's intention was to counsel the UI's deplorable dearth of minority group students and at the same time broaden the economic and cultural base of the
University. He was consciously avoiding the two prevalent approaches at other institutions. On the one hand, it is well-known that the "super-Negro" -- with high test scores and miles of ambition, comfortable around white people, and with a "cumulative academic deficit" from his primary and secondary education -- can practically write his own ticket. An official of the College Board acknowledged recently the existence of an "all-out recruiting war among 500 to 1,000 colleges for a very few Negro youths of moderate-to-high ability" (usually judged by the verbal aptitude tests, etc.). While specifying that minimum entrance requirements be met unless there were other strong indications that a student was exceptional, Peltason nevertheless wanted to admit only students who received no offers of assistance from other schools and would not go to college unless the UI took them.

The UI chancellor was also wary of the other extreme -- setting up a separate, "easier," curriculum for disadvantaged students. The thesis he and his advisors wanted to test was that students who met the University's minimum requirements could make up any academic deficits with strong tutorial assistance, while taking ordinary freshman and sophomore courses. Reduced work loads, perhaps necessitating a five-year program, and reinstitution of several discontinued courses in math and possibly other subjects, would be the only formal concessions to the disadvantaged.

Peltason saw in his "Special Educational Opportunities Program (SEOP)" a return to the historic mission of the land-grant institution: to take the citizens of the state as it found them, help them overcome any deficiencies in their previous education, and get them through a degree program recognized everywhere.

"We have ramps all over campus, special buses, and a staff of people to assist our paraplegic students," he said on numerous occasions. "The University of
Illinois is world-famous for this program, and no one complains. All we will do now is provide "ramps" for people whose handicaps are economic and environmental."

So reasonable and unobjectionable was this plan, Feltason thought, and so ready was the university community for it, that he urged students who had formed a Martin Luther King Memorial Fund to drop their goal -- a $20,000 endowment -- and try instead for several hundred thousand dollars in ready money for the program's pilot year. More permanent funding could be found later to continue the program, he said; what was needed now was seed money. A lot of people were looking for something they could do; the Fund would give them something.

At the same time, University officials approached the Ford Foundation and the U. S. Office of Economic Opportunity. Ford, which does not generally give money to public institutions, agreed to grant $37,800 for recruiting and staff for the first year. OEO made the University a supplemental appropriation sufficient to insure that all 500 students could receive the legal maximum to which their economic need entitled them (the OEO grant ceiling is $800 per year).

Adequate NDEA loan funds were available as well; however it had been impressed on Charles Warwick, director of admissions, by the black students that indebtedness was large especially undesirable for students from low income families, some entering the University as high risks. Warwick's goal was to keep first year loans below $470, and he hoped to get them down to $300.

Key to keeping the loans down was development of non-federal government support. The University sought tuition and fee waivers from its board of trustees, and urged students to apply for Illinois State Scholarships and Grants. High hopes were concentrated on the Martin Luther King Fund.
Recruitment began shortly after the end of exams in early June. Students, some of whom were identified by the Black Student Association, took a brief training course from admissions personnel and then headed out, many to their own home areas, to find interested and qualified students. About the same time the chancellor's life was threatened by a small extremist group who were upset by the program. Bullet-proof glass was installed in his office. (Since nothing public was ever said about either the threat or the glass, many observers misinterpreted it as a sign that the administration expected trouble from student demonstrators.)

By July 15 the financial aid picture was clearing. The King Fund had met more apathy and open hostility to the SEOP than generosity. About ten percent of the faculty and slightly over five percent of the student body contributed to the fund. (However discouraging the percentages, the amounts given were impressive: the average contribution was $20, with some undergraduates of far from comfortable means giving $50 and $100 and faculty giving up to $500.) The total given or pledged was only about $30,000. The University of Illinois Foundation, fund-raising arm of the UI and depository of income from patents and other University properties, contributed about $10,000 to the program. The UI board of trustees, asked for 500 tuition-fee waivers, granted 150 out of 100%, to be used at the Urbana campus. And 94 state grants and scholarships were awarded to students who entered under the program, before the state scholarship commission's July 15 deadline.

There was no particular administration concern over student aids at this time. The money available seemed adequate, especially since early returns from the recruiters, who had started work early in June, indicated that there might be some difficulty in reaching the goal of 500 students. In addition there were other problems, including the instructional cost to the University of educating these students.
A worse year could not be imagined, perhaps, in which to have committed
the University to additional programs. Massive cutbacks in federal aid to science
departments had brought on a near emergency; at the UI, as at other institutions,
University funds were being used to rescue researchers put out of funds. One
nuclear physics program alone lost an annual $500,000 in federal backing. In mid-
spring Vice Chancellor Herbert Carter had frozen all empty positions and urged
all departments to practice unusual economy.

By early August it was apparent that the University was in trouble --
and included in the trouble was financial aid for the students. At least three
major unforeseen factors had tipped the delicate aid balance. First, although
recruitment had started slow, in late July it took off. Not only was the 500 goal
likely to be exceeded, In addition many of the students had been identified too
late to apply for State scholarships and grants. Second, fewer students from
Champaign-Urbana had been located than planned; the savings on room and board
which they had represented were not to be possible. Finally, fully 97 students
-- a measure, perhaps, of the Nation's need for such programs,
entered from other states! This meant out-of-state tuition, travel expenses, and
other unforeseen costs.

Worse, the flood of applications crested after August 1st. August is the
month when Champaign-Urbana becomes a ghost town. Summer school lets out in the
middle of the month and administrative offices cut back for vacations between then
and the beginning of school. Applications poured in, financial aid packages to be
calculated piled up, housing officials tore handfuls of hair trying to juggle an
always-tricky operation with a new nightmare added. Bond issues for the resi-
dence halls obligate the University to maintain 96% occupancy. To do this, the
housing division always over-subscribes the space, counting on a number of "no-
shows' and first month drop-outs. In July the housing division had visions of un-filled SEOP spaces and unpaid bonds; in August the problem was reversed.

SEOP students began to arrive a week before other freshmen, who in turn come a week before classes start. They kept arriving, and kept arriving. In some cases, University officials running the orientation and testing program found that they had no record whatsoever of students who appeared.

The next thing anyone knew, it was the night of Monday, September 9 and over 300 black students were gathered in the Illini Union, demanding to see the Chancellor. The immediate stimulus was a complaint from 19 SEOP co-eds that the rooms to which they had been assigned after the initial week were so far inferior to those they had occupied during that period that they felt they could not succeed in college because of the conditions. But all week there had been increasing concern over the financial aid situation. Many students had been given aid "packages" which included loans of more than $1000.

As it was to emerge, the blacks' growing concern with their loans was justified. In a report to the faculty on October 23 the chancellor would announce that the average NDEA loan to 88 out-of-state students was $959; 404 students from Illinois had taken out loans averaging $623. This was fully $100,000 short of Warwick's May target of a $470 loan maximum. The University had been caught in the squeeze of at least 65 students beyond its goal out-of-state tuition and other costs for about a fifth of the students.

In the Union on September 9 the BSA was charging "broken promises, unkept commitments." Already irritated by delays in processing applications -- which they continued to send in through August -- BSA recruiters now developed and propogated theories of deliberate and malicious University sabotage of the program. They accused the administration of reneging on their agreements. They were unwilling to
Compounding the consternation was the degree to which the program had been over-sold. Black Students Association recruiters had in their zeal painted a rosier picture of the program than was wise. Further, some of Peltason's guidelines had been lost in the shuffle: several students had turned down offers of assistance from other schools and now found themselves saddled with substantial loans; others had slipped through the screening with records which indicated vanishingly small chances of success.
view Warwick's goals as goals; they had been "commitments" and they were not being kept.

As the fall progressed charges of duplicity, or at least criminal negligence, would be taken up by white students and faculty, many of whom had offered what they were convinced would have been perfect solutions to SEOP's emerging financial and programmatic difficulties. In May and June an overworked central administration had ignored numerous schemes; the price was paid in the fall as it dealt with endless requests for "explanation" and numberless renewed demands that a particular plan be heard.

An example is the case of Bruce Morrison, Graduate Student Association general chairman and an organizer of the King Fund. In June he suggested to the chancellor that he approach the Big Ten to have it lift its ban on professional football in the college stadium, and then see if Chicago Bears owner George Halas (a UI alumnus) would not agree to an exhibition game. The benefit, Morrison had argued, could easily net $100,000 for the program.

In the days after the Union incident and continuing into the late fall Morrison repeatedly scored Peltason publicly for his decision not to pursue this suggestion. The story was taken up by the campus SDS, neither Morrison nor the SDS being impressed, apparently, with the improbability of the scheme in the first place nor with the relevance of Halas' sale of the Bears shortly after the suggestion was made.

Morrison eventually generalized his attack, condemning the University's strict control of campus entertainment (students are not allowed to use the 16,000 seat Assembly Hall, paid for by student fees, unless a "concert and entertainment proposed board" approves the event and the/disposition of any profits). He argued that benefits could play an important role in funding programs like SEOP.
Internal debate over the program's funding has expanded and broadened. Student aids were merely the top of the iceberg; rhetoric and mathematics departments, especially, have had to face the problem of additional staff needs, and the cost of tutoring and other supportive services is being assessed. Few in the university community still hope to find appreciable relief locally; the professor who rose at a faculty senate meeting to propose that each faculty member give up a fraction of his salary for SEOP financial aids is in a distinct minority.

Peltason must have known that he was gambling in May. The lead time for the program was exceedingly short, and he hoped to patch together resources for somewhat its first year somehow, even squeezing them out of departments already/strapped by asking them to re-assess their priorities. Observers who agreed with his reasoning that "there are no experts in this area; we will have to learn by trying" readily defend the program against critics who suggest that it was "hastily put together," "ill-thought-out," or "done too quickly."

But what concerned many was whether public recognition of a crisis in America was over the future of her poor and her minorities as great as Peltason thought it was. In particular, would the people of Illinois, through their business concerns, and their legislature, see the importance of investment in human resources drawn from these segments of the population? Would they, or would the whole nation, through a program such as that described since by the Carnegie Commission, provide at the University of Illinois to extend higher education space and the necessary funds to the poor, the black, the disadvantaged?

The answer continues to come; in Illinois it promises to be shaped largely by what people think occurred in the Illini Union on the night of September 9, 1968, and not by a consideration of the long-term educated, people of Illinois in producing/productive citizens from hitherto excluded youth.
What people think happened is primarily what they read in their newspapers, which gave the incident prominent coverage. The most prevalent beliefs about the evening, and the program, are those created by the Chicago Tribune.

Under David Dodds Henry, the University of Illinois has never enjoyed a particularly close relationship with the press. Governor Otto Kerner remarked at the University's Centennial Convocation in March 1968 that it was always a source of great sorrow to him that the very real accomplishments of the University, which had emerged since the war as one of the top ten in the nation, were not widely known, even within Illinois.

Henry, on the other hand, is known to be not a little proud of how well his University has done entirely on its own, without any help from the mass media or public good will. One suspects, in fact, that he much prefers it that way. It is easier to keep a limited number of influential people informed and happy; besides, Henry personally would just as well escape the bother of public attention. To his mind, the UI has been able to do very much as it has pleased at least in part because no one pays close attention to it.

His critics are inclined to a different view. One of the best ways to escape fame or notoriety is to play it perfectly straight, they say; Henry's administration has been far from daring, as evidenced by its admission policies. It is easy to do what you want when that coincides with what the people in power want.

A master of managed news, Henry controls external relations of the University tightly. The public information director is an assistant to the president. The public information office is little more than a mailing center, spewing out release after release describing the latest feed-corn strain developed in the
college of agriculture or giving resumes of the latest assistant dean. Henry himself deals with politicians, businessmen, and others who count; he is capable of great wrath when others make outside contacts without consulting him.

In a crisis the whole information system is paralyzed; the people most resembling fact-finders or reporters on campus are officials of the security office. They are hardly in the habit of assembling releases for the public information office on short notice. When the Union incident occurred, the paralysis was evident; all releases wandered up and down through the hierarchy before going on display in the PIC. Newspaper reporters were on their own to figure out what had happened.

A few papers, notably the Chicago Sun-Times, gave recognizable descriptions of the incident. The Chicago Tribune, on the other hand, turned in a particularly and continuously shabby -- and extremely damaging, as it has become clear -- performance.

Hundreds of hours of testimony before University disciplinary boards have not appreciably changed the picture put together in the early morning hours of September 10 and distributed after 8 A.M. by a group of white students who were in the Union upon hearing of the demonstrations and violence. The grievances, they reported, were housing and financial aids; the antagonists were students from the SEOP project, other black students on campus, and local blacks, facing officials of the University housing division and central administration.

Several days of discussions had preceded the Monday gathering; Housing Division officials had attempted to redress their problem and work out compromises. Financial aids officials.

Debate between the two groups was intermittent, separated by silences and haranguings of the crowd in the black militant rhetoric which Illini -- only recently exposed to it -- still find uncomfortable (as they are meant to), and hard to interpret (as is also intended, although sometimes perhaps unwisely). Several times in the early evening, before the blacks entered the Union, there
All of these incidents seemed to have escaped the attention of the crowd. Most participants did not witness them, and many do not yet believe that they happened, or if they did, that they were associated with the grievance meeting.

A final meeting before midnight between spokesmen for the group and administration representatives was particularly acrimonious. Dean of Students Stanton Millet said later, "It was really an act of sheer bravado for me to go in there. There was absolutely nothing that I could offer, except a promise that we would investigate all the matters fully as soon as possible." Millet had not been involved in most of the SEOP planning, and was uninformed on the topics being discussed.

The students, who had convinced themselves that they had waited long enough -- four or five days -- without hearing any good news, demanded action on the spot; Millet was to get his people out of bed and get answers, they said. Would there be adequate housing for all? What would the looms be?

It was clear that there was absolutely no reservoir of goodwill or faith on which the administration could draw for time. Change has been painfully slow at the UI for all; students who want changes had been through two years with Millet and his colleagues and had been neither particularly successful nor pleased with administration postures. A 1967 free speech controversy between students and the administration ended in court with the administration defending a state law forbidding subversives from speaking on the UI campuses. The University lost the suit to its own students when the law was declared unconstitutional. Its timidity in standing up for basic American principles won it no favor with its more thoughtful students.
A Dow demonstration in fall 1967 was handled smoothly in the end, but only because a faculty discipline committee stepped in to reverse expulsions which had been handed down by a subcommittee, to the obvious pleasure of administration representatives.

Millet's stock had sunk so low by May 1968 that the Black Students Association refused to deal with him at all, talking instead directly with the chancellor. They also insisted that the new Dean of Educational Opportunity, Clarence Shelley, who was to assume his position on July 1, not report to his logical superior, Millet, but to Peltason.

Ironically, their success in both matters reduced significantly the ability of the administration to respond when things started going wrong. Millet is responsible for both housing and financial aids; because of their distaste for him, the officer ultimately in charge of operations central to the program was seriously uninformed.

Millet's ignorance of the situation on September 9 and of the university's ability to respond to it was left mercifully unexposed, however. One agitated local black -- especially upset over the sparse local representation in the project -- shouted at Millet repeatedly as he tried to speak, "God damn it you don't have nothing to say."

Understandably, Millet interpreted this as less a statement of the literal truth than an ill omen for the outcome of the evening. "I was never permitted to speak more than one or two sentences at a time," he wrote later. A tape recording of that part of the evening shows this not to be entirely accurate; nevertheless his efforts were indeed impeded.
When it was apparent to both the crowd and the administration representatives that this last meeting -- which ended after midnight -- was fruitless, some of the more vocal members of the group demanded that the chancellor come. Millet's group left for the housing division office in which Peltason and other administrators had gathered.

Shortly thereafter occurred an incident which the Chicago Tribune described so colorfully on Wednesday, September 11, that we quote from its editorial that day:

"...more than 200 entering black students and outside supporters went ape in the lounges of the beautiful Illini Union building during a sit-in... They mutilated the portraits of 12 university presidents, swung chandeliers, and tore the painting of President David Dodds Henry from the wall, scrawling the words "Black Power" across the face... As the lawbreakers proceeded in the work of destruction, they chanted, "I'm black and I'm proud." ... Not until a carnival of violence got under way did (Peltason) summon police.

In its front page headlines story the same day ("248 Held in U. of I. Riot -- Negroes Go On Rampage After Row") the Tribune reported:

Police officials estimated the damage at $50,000. The disorders were quelled when university police and city and sheriff's police entered the student union and began the arrests.

What is remarkable about this reporting is that it is utterly false except for the single detail that Henry's portrait was defaced as described.

The day before this article appeared, the mimeographed student report on the incident -- signed, among others, by the president and vice-president of the Student Senate and the general chairman of the Graduate Student Association -- had said, accurately, "(About 1 a.m.) fewer than ten individuals, some of whom were reported by witnesses to be drunk, proceeded to destroy things for about ten minutes. A chandelier and furnishings in two lounges were seriously damaged."
This account of the single, brief incident which accounts for 85% of the total damage to the Union, came from eye-witnesses -- a white Union night supervisor (who later identified one of the vandals -- a non-student, incidentally) and several black students. The supervisor said that "about ten" individuals unlocked and entered the previously empty lounge just as janitors, who had/entered it briefly, were leaving. The vandalism was committed by members of this group -- not by "200 entering black students", in an empty room away from the sight and hearing of the majority of sit-ins, some of whom had even gone to sleep.

Further, the total cost of repair or replacement of the six chairs, 10 tables, two lamps, and several dozen other smaller items damaged, and for cleaning up the lounges and replacing broken glass, ultimately came to about $3,800 (including almost $1,000 for a single plastic room divider with a small slash in it) -- a total which is 93% less than the Tribune's "estimate"!

Not only did the Tribune multiply the number of vandals by 20, misidentify them as students when there was and is considerably doubt that any students were among them, and enlarge the damage by a factor of 14 -- not to mention add a number of evocative touches, such as the black students going "ape" and swinging from chandeliers, all of them utter fabrications -- in addition the Tribune further reported in its headline story that "The students ... were to receive free tuition and free room and board." (1)

From

In that same editorial, quoted/above, the Tribune said of the SEOP students, none of whom, mind you, may have participated in any of the anti-social acts of the evening of September 9, a fact readily available to the Tribune: "They were mostly slum products on scholarships and loans who otherwise would have scant opportunity for higher education. When the university and the taxpayers try to do something for their benefit, they respond by kicking their benefactors in the groin."
Much of the present uncertainty of such programs as the UI's SEOP is due to the unfortunate prevalence of the view implicit in this Tribune's analysis: "They are too often seen as handouts to the undeserving, for which they should be grateful, and their success is measured in the quantity of gratitude received, rather than as investments in the future of the entire community, success to be measured by the degrees to which productivity and harmony are increased and welfare payments, crime, health hazards, and misery decreased. The Union Incident ought to be irrelevant to decisions about the future of such programs, even if it remotely like the Tribune's description of it. Unhappily, that is not the case.

The Union's Earl Finder says he received a call Wednesday night from another Chicago paper. When told of the $50,000 figure that the Tribune (but no one else) was printing, he was highly indignant. Hesitating to state a specific figure, Finder nevertheless insisted that the damage would never go beyond "a few thousand dollars." The next day the Chicago Daily News printed, "A university official said damage could reach $5,000." The Tribune repeated the $50,000 figure.

Also on Thursday, now three days after the event, the university public information office finally released a statement that damage was estimated "between $5,000 and $10,000" depending on replacement costs of some items, such as chandeliers, which in the end did not have to be replaced. One wonders if this rather generous official estimate was intended as some sort of concession to the Tribune. If it was, it did not help.

Fully nine days after the incident and six after the PIO release the Tribune was still its outraged readers -- whose angry letters it was printing, faithfully repeating its own distortions -- that there had been "an estimated $50,000 damage" to the Union. Apparently uninterested in the truth about the number of vandals or their identity, the amount of damage done, or the issues behind the confrontation, the Tribune was very interested in the true details of financial aids
for law student David Addison, president of the Black Students Association and a spokesman for the group in the Union. During this period it devoted an entire, rather dull, story to the subject, almost disappointed that his substantial aid all comes from a private fund for black law students. The paper also saw fit to print the names of the students arrested at 3 a.m. in the Union when police removed them peacefully on Henry’s request.

After its first distorted report, the Tribune editor and John O’Brien, the reporter whose by-line appeared on the original story, had both been contacted personally by high university officials and informed of the paper’s errors. Finally, on September 19th in another front page article (by reporter Tom Buck who knows UI administration figures well and generally reports on University affairs to their satisfaction) the Tribune grudgingly acknowledged the existence of/low damage estimate -- but not without one last repetition of the preposterous $50,000 figure: “University officials estimated the damage to the two student lounges at $5,000 - $10,000. Police had estimated the damage at nearly [sic] $50,000.”

(The Sheriff)

The Tribune has never acknowledged that the evidence points to only a dozen vandals, at most, quite possibly not students. Its readers are left with the distinct impression (and why wouldn’t they be? They even know what the "200 rioters" chanted as they sacked the Union) that the UI took in a bunch of violent, unreasonable blacks at great expense to the taxpayer and is now shielding them from just punishment for their gratuitous enormities on September 9, which ceased only when police intervened.
If a white UI student tries to tell his parents that the limited Union
damage was done out of sight of the crowd by a few vandals, quite possibly
not students, that the SEOP students hardly have a free ride, either financially
or in the classroom, and that their grievances on the night of September 9
had substance, he is likely to be dressed down, probably for "listening to those
SDS anarchists" or perhaps for "sloppy thinking." He is up against the Big Lie,
and has nothing with which to counter it.

The university has never released a detailed account of the evening,
partly, it says, because disciplinary hearings and court cases have not yet been
resolved. Reports from student or ad hoc faculty groups have little credibility.

Black students get perhaps less upset about the Big Lie than whites; they have
previous experience with it.

Since the incident occurred two days before the arrival of most students
there are even on campus an appreciable number who, having only the
press to go by, do not yet know that the actual event bore scant resemblance to
the scenario created by the Tribune. Other papers, though hardly in a class
with the Tribune (which stands alone as the "World's Greatest Newspaper" -- God
forbid!), did little better at the time in reporting the circumstances of the
meeting and the isolated and limited nature of the vandalism. Many have filled
in and corrected the story later, but hardly on the front page.

Partially as a result of the prevalence and degree of distortion of the
early accounts, white Illinois undergraduates, who were hardly in overwhelming
support of the program in the spring, remain on the whole skeptical. In May
during the King Fund drive a residence hall women's group voted not to contribute
because "these unqualified students are taking places from our qualified younger
brothers and sisters." One girl finally got the group's attention to announce that
this was mistaken; SEOP students would come in addition to the usual freshman class. The girls nevertheless affirmed their previous "no" vote after someone presented the amazing argument -- at an institution noted for its impersonal treatment of students -- that, if this were the case, then the faculty's attention would be spread out over more students, and, again, their younger brothers and sisters (this time the ones who got in) would suffer!

One student, chosen to sit on the University of Illinois Foundation student advisory board, wondered if "these people" deserved space at the university. His father had looked into the "welfare" down their way, he said. It turned out that the recipients were even buying beer with it!

Perhaps because it is really there, perhaps only because they think that it is, some of the black students have felt surrounded by white hostility. In all fairness to the Illinois students, most of them are refreshingly out-going -- more so than undergraduates in the Ivy League -- and they are often extremely hospitable. Even that can be a problem. It is easily, and frequently, overdone. Perhaps not the "Bible-belt hypocrisy" of several decades ago, such acts as wheeling up to the only black student in one's class and saying, "Hi, I'm Mary Sue. You must be in Project 500" in one's brightest voice strikes some as a bit patronizing, no matter how well-intentioned. (The girl to which this particular incident happened simply smiled and said, "As it happens, I'm not in the Project. That was very kind of you to come over, but let me give you a bit of friendly advice. Don't do it to anyone else; she might not take it the right way.")

There is a strong, sensitive, minority who seem to know "where it's at." More than 900 students and faculty have volunteered to tutor SEOP students. Among others, faculty in the college of education have donated their time to an experimental freshman program for prospective secondary teachers which involves mostly SEOP students. (The new curriculum has been so popular that other students are
pressing for admission. Ironically, it had been under discussion for some time, but it was the stimulus of the overflow caused by the SEOP students which got it off the ground. The problem, financial, is to keep it airborne without continuing to take it out of the hides of the faculty.

Other faculty, administrators, and students are spending long under- or unpaid hours trying to help with maddening financial problems, the tutoring program, and plain, homely, adjustment problems. But for every white who has made some sort of contact with the SEOP students -- most of whom would rather the constant discussion of the program would cease and that they be treated like everyone else as much as possible -- there are ten who are simply "watching." Some of the black students feel, as black students always have at the UI where they are still overwhelmingly outnumbered, that someone is always watching -- in class, on the street, in the dining hall.

Thus, not all of even the well-intentioned white interest has been welcome. Some types are particularly difficult to deal with. In the aftermath of the Union incident -- disciplinary hearings and criminal cases loomed large, the University's attitude was uncertain, and the Tribune and others were calling for expulsions. White activists, who have been unhappy with University discipline procedures since the Dow incident, approached the blacks, suggesting campus a radical/coalition.

After several weeks of tense and often silent negotiation, the white radicals holding numerous public meetings trying to demonstrate their strength, the administration watching with great apprehension, finally the radicals and the blacks decided to keep in touch but essentially go their own ways. The blacks were suspicious that they might be "used," and they saw that some of the white radicals were ready to break with the tacit ethic which all parties had held onto in the first days -- that saving the program was above all other considerations. ("Hell, it'll fail
anyway," a white radical told me. "It's an integrationist program in a black separatist era.")

"You guys are yards ahead of us," said one black leader after a speech from a white radical about how glorious a coalition could be -- like that between the Black Panthers and the Peace and Freedom Party in Oakland. "We aren't particularly interested in burning this place, or making it over; we just want that same middle-class education you cats have been getting all along."

However, ugly rumors regarding the maneuvers of administration officials behind the scenes in closed preliminary discipline hearings and in the preparation of the "evidence" which would be presented at the hearings, as well as the tone of some of the chancellor's public statements about the discipline, caused radicals to conjure up increasingly paranoid -- and very contagious -- fantasies. These were fed by the continuing public outcry: many students became convinced that, whatever the actual facts, the administration would find it necessary to sacrifice some black students to public opinion.

It was feared that leaders of the Union meeting ("spokesmen for the group" the SDS would call them) would be easy targets. They could be charged with inciting the acts of vandalism and the assaults. Even this would not be necessary for their expulsion, since that penalty is provided even for simple participation in an "unauthorized mass demonstration," the charge pressed by the administration.

Some blacks had panicked in the Union, after the vandalism had become known, and had armed themselves with anything resembling a club for defense against the police violence which they fully expected. (It had been only a few weeks, and was only about 100 miles, from Chicago.) Others now succumbed to the hysteria which was developing among white leaders. It looked for a while as if the coalition would come off after all. At one point several hundred whites marched quietly through the
administration building, under the watchful eyes of several dozen police. But the blacks soon realized how little support they would actually have if the administration betrayed them. After that the dialogue and the mass meetings ceased.

White student leaders and blacks alike pressured for open hearings, though, surprisingly, the faculty committee on discipline eventually agreed to a number of "observers" from student and faculty governments and the press, and even to allow limited questioning of witnesses. Millet and others opposed both moves, as they did the demand that defendants be allowed counsel and permitted full cross-examination. These changes, Millet argued, would transform what had always been an essentially private, informal hearing, friendly to the student, into a rigid legal exercise, costly, cumbersome, inherently lengthy, and unsuited to a university setting. "Star Chamber," said the students.

Faculty also got into the act. A motion that the University request dismissal of civil charges was introduced at the Urbana-Champaign faculty senate. University counsel had successfully suggested on September 9 that the students arrested be charged with "mob action," a relatively new offense on the Illinois books, primarily to deal with demonstrations. Usually a misdemeanor, mob action can be a felony; however it seemed the lightest charge available at the time.

Students had quickly demanded that these charges be dropped. Peltason answered, quite correctly, that once the charges had been filed only the State's Attorney could drop them. It was not in his power. The students soon were pointing to Columbia, where the administration had successfully petitioned the authorities to dismiss charges brought during its disturbances the previous spring. Why couldn't Peltason do the same thing? When he didn't, wasn't that evidence he was bowing to public opinion -- no matter how ill-informed? (And what steps had he taken to counter the misinformation?) The suspicion and paranoia was palpable well into November, and has yet to dissipate.
There were also student and faculty demands that the university disciplinary hearings be postponed until after disposition of the criminal cases. There was fear that evidence introduced at the former might be used against the students in the latter. But the University proceeded with the hearings.

It emerged after the elections that Peltason had spoken with both candidates for the State's Attorney office. Both had indicated that they would be disinclined to introduce evidence from the university hearings, but both had asked him not to make their discussions public in this "law and order" election year. When Larry Johnson, the winner, revealed this conversation after the election, one of the same faculty members who had been pressing the "drop the charges" resolution in the Senate wrote to the student paper that he was upset by this under-the-table dealing of Peltason's, wondered how much this sort of thing went on, and would have preferred no action at all to this.

While this on-campus turmoil was consuming countless hours of student, faculty, and administrative -- especially administrative -- time, out in the "real world" -- as UI students, like countless others, put it -- things looked grim indeed. As chance would have it, when the Union incident occurred a House-Senate conference was in progress in Washington ironing out differences between new federal loan bills, both versions of which contained clauses barring aid to students who disrupt campuses. Peltason was on the phone to Washington. Then angry statements from state legislators began to filter in. If the University did not clean its own house, rumbled local representative Charles Clabaugh -- author of the infamous act barring subversive speakers -- the legislature would have to step in. Further, it was the year for submission of a new biennial budget; guess which program would be in it for the first time?

Then word came that OBO money for the program will probably be cut up to 87% in 1969-70. The first year's financial crisis, not yet solved, suddenly looked
small compared with the long-term financing prospects.

The "real world" has not only angry legislators and impoverished funding agencies. It also has real antagonisms, real jealousies, real fears. Uncomfortable among their fellow students, blacks in the SEOP program have increasingly found themselves under duress from black youth in Champaign-Urbana.

Negro students from ghetto and rural areas, especially, often go through "identity crises" much more severe than those which have traditionally caused middle- and upper-class students so much pain. Is one to be black, or Negro? Does one have an obligation to "his people", or is he an individual whose obligations are like others' -- to his wife, family, and community broadly taken? Many black students, just like many whites, are untouched by these torments; but a large number have to face them, especially in a situation like that in Urbana where there is no way to put out of mind the life you left, since a few blocks away youth are still living it.

It may have been local youths who did the damage in the Union and thereby "gave the Project a bad name." On the other hand, one of the primary agitators for the program in the first place was John Lee Johnson, an articulate and, in his own black militant way, reasonable local spokesman. John Lee preaches cooperation and mutual respect; there is a lot he would like to do, and even more he would like to see the University do, in his home town.

Therefore it concerned John Lee particularly when open hostilities erupted in November between black C-U youth and members of a Negro fraternity -- symbols of the "sellout" to the establishment, perhaps -- whose social events were being crashed and disrupted.

The local gangs have been an increasing problem in the campus and union for several years. Police in the union have been doubled several times; minor
assaults are not uncommon. There have been enough attacks in the community for coeds to exercise a good deal of caution. Numerous university committees have been formed and community commissions set up, and individuals hired to work directly on the festering problems of the black community in the twin cities. Progress is painfully slow.

Just before Thanksgiving a short pitched battle 50 yards from a University residence hall between members of a Negro fraternity and local blacks left a local gang leader bleeding on the sidewalk from a wound in the head inflicted with a brick. This incident augured further fires from a long-smoldering antagonism. So frightened were a number of black students that they left early on their vacations and returned late.

For several weeks thereafter perceptive observers could detect a significant increase in the number of people carrying weapons. Knives and even guns were not uncommon. As this is written there have been further clashes, minor but occasionally bloody. Some think that the situation could worsen, even to the point of serious injury or death.

The University entered 1969 fully engaged in this nightmare of intertwined problems, all of them symptomatic of those facing the entire nation. It had gamely bit off a choking mouthful since Martin Luther King's murder nine months before, and the biting revealed a number of unsuspected loose teeth.

The questions raised are many and serious. Can the people of Illinois be convinced that education of the disadvantaged and the minorities is not a "handout", but good economic and social policy? Will they agree to this investment, now, in human resources or will they go on short-sightedly saddling their children stunted with welfare bills, crime rates, productivity, health problems, and all the other costs of wasted human talent? Will they opt to continue a middle-class
monopoly on entrance to state universities?

Can funds be found somewhere in this time of war and in a state financial crisis, to continue a pioneering effort at human resource reclamation in a distinguished research institution, whose students badly need contact with the "real world" and whose resources could be used to develop effective techniques to make that world better for all its citizens?

Will Peltason, who led the University community in May and committed his institution to this critical task, be able to persevere? Or will he begin the process of accommodation which perpetuates leadership only to see it become worthless? Will Henry finally stand up and fight for what he has wanted, what he has worked for, and what the distinguished commission on which he serves has so clearly identified as a national imperative? Or will he rest with what he can get from the dominant middle-class in Illinois (to whom his chief messages have concerned "what the University does for you" in the most immediate sense)?

WILL STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND NONWHITE PEOPLE - WHITE AND BLACK - CLOSE THEIR ATTACHES AND BROAD THEIR THINKING TO FORCE THIS CRITICAL PROGRAM TO Succeed?
There are dozens of reasons, symbolized by the performance of the "World's Greatest Newspaper", why the answer to these questions is all too likely to be "no." One of the ironies of life is that the student radicals' and the blacks' deep conviction that "no" is always the answer leads them to assume postures which result -- directly, and indirectly through public opinion -- in their pessimism's transformation into a self-fulfilling prophecy. What might have happened if the Union incident had not taken place, one might ask? For one thing, it is easy to answer, OEO funds still would have been cut by 87%.

Blacks know it from the cradle (if they have cradles), white student radicals are familiar with it -- and the American masses are too, although they don't often think of it in the same way: they call it "preservation of the American way, in which hard work is the key to success, everybody has the same opportunity at that work,
nobody deserves favors, we must resist initiative-sapping socialism..." The students and the blacks know that it is really nothing can be done—nothing can be done—nothing can be done. If you don't believe that—as I do—ask yourself occasionally, "Whatever became of the Carnegie Commission's report on the funding of higher education?"