THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM
AT S.F. STATE

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To understand what happened at San Francisco State College during the week of December 6th and the weeks following, it is necessary to know the events which led up to the December 6th action.

On November 7th a fight erupted in the office of the campus newspaper, the Daily Gator, between 9 black students and the editor of the paper and its staff. It is still undetermined which group initiated the violence in this particular incident (the case is being heard in civil courts this spring), but the long-term provocation came from the Gator and its editor, Jim Vasko. The Gator has consistently slandered and intimidated the Black Students Union with racist articles and editorials. Most glaring of these intimidations was an article written by Vasko last spring on Muhammad Ali. Another article, written by Vasko the day before the December 6th demonstration, predicted "snipers" and referred to black students as "guinea".

A couple of days after the Gator incident, the College administration identified 9 black students from Gator photographs, and President John Summerskill immediately suspended them. This was the first overt act of racism carried out by the Administration. Rather than suspending all those involved in the incident, Summerskill suspended only the black students, the underlying assumption being that black students had perpetrated the violence and would continue to do so in the future.

About a week after the suspensions, a kangaroo court, made up of faculty members hand-picked by the Administration, met to deliver a verdict corresponding with the sentence which Summerskill had already carried out. The closed-hearing court upheld 4 of the accusations against the students, but dismissed the other 3. The 4 suspended were well-known members of the Black Students Union. SDS picked these hearings, demanding that the suspensions be dropped and that the Gator and Vasko be suspended for its racial attacks on black students. Except for SDS, the campus, which is 97% white, remained silent.

The week before December 6th, at the initiative of the Black Students Union (BSU), members of SDS met with members of the BSU to discuss an alliance for joint action against the suspensions. During this week a new factor developed. The Administration, in a move to keep the campus clean of anything other than the "official Gator press", suspended Open Process, a semi-radical campus newspaper, and 2 members of its staff. The 2 suspended students were Blair Partridge, the editor, and Jeff Poland, author of a poem judged "obscene" by Summerskill. This added the free-speech issue and widened our base of support on campus.

On Friday of that week, SDS, the Open Process staff, and the BSU held a joint rally on the steps of the Administration Building to protest all 6 suspensions. Speakers pointed out that in both cases (the black students and Open Process writers) the sentences had been carried out without due legal process. BSU speakers put the suspension of the black students in the realistic context of the racism and oppression carried out against black people in this country. At this point President Summerskill appeared on the steps, according to the San Francisco Chronicle, to "charm the demonstraters", what he in fact did was quite calculated and vicious. Agreeing to answer questions from the demanding crowd of 1,000, Summerskill took the microphone and admitted publicly that he had "acted precipitously" in the case of the 2 white students and was lifting their suspensions. Angered shouts of "What about the black students?" and accusations of racism came from the crowd. Summerskill steadfastly refused to even talk about the black students' suspensions. After this announcement—aimed at separating the white students from the small number of black students on campus in order to isolate the BSU and prevent any black-white alliance—Summerskill talked on for an hour or so repeating the tenets of American liberalism and talking of a desire to "work with you for a change".

Although Summerskill had succeeded in pacifying some liberal elements of the crowd, a large number met after the rally to form a coalition to fight the suspensions. This group adopted the name Movement Against Political Suspension (MAPS) and formulated 5 demands: 1) Drop all 6 suspensions. 2) Reappraise Open Process. 3) Cease all harassment of students, faculty members, and staff members. 4) Faculty members had their pay docked for participating in the Oakland demonstration. 5) Ban outside cops from campus. 6) Establish student control of student affairs—for example, student publications.

It was decided that if the 5 demands were not met by noon on Wednesday, MAPS and the BSU would carry out a demonstration inside the Administration Building. The BSU had issued a call to off-campus people in the black community.

On Monday MAPS held a rally to gain student support. After the rally, 100 students marched up to Summerskill's office to formally present the demands. Vice-President Dan Garrity acknowledged the demands in Summerskill's absence. Here a noteworthy fact should be brought out: in view of all the lip service liberals give to "standing up and working things out", Summerskill, rather than offering to meet with MAPS and the BSU to discuss the demands, spent the 2 days before the demonstration planning tactics with the San Francisco cops.
A BATTLE
AT S.F. STATE
CONT.

Wed., Nov. 15th, 1968

There are a dozen batchpals waiting for the...