

Department of History
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THE TRIUMVIRATE:
MANIFESTATIONS OF PROTEST AT
WISCONSIN STATE UNIVERSITY-EAU CLAIRE IN THE 1960s

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President Leonard Haas addressed a crowd of approximately 3500 students and faculty after the Kent State shootings, May 6, 1970.

Protest can be defined as a solemn declaration of opinion, usually that of dissent; it can also include a tangible act of objection, more specifically an organized public demonstration.¹ In modern contemporary society it is permissible to protest anything ranging from animal rights to abortion to the high cost of tuna. The United States was founded on the principles of protest, and in this country it is not merely considered a right but a responsibility to question our leadership. While threads of protest can be laced throughout American history, certain time periods have been imbued with more than their fair share of activism. The 1960s saw a heightened awareness, not merely as a time period, but more specifically within a particular demographic living in that time period. Students on college campuses became the epicenter of activism.

The most visible forms of protest occurred on campuses such as University of California-Berkeley, Columbia, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. The events that transpired at these universities developed into a stereotype for all college protests. However, a more subtle form lay latent in many universities that sharply contrasted with the violence and publicity at these schools. The Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire² (WSU-EC) was not the cauldron of activity that many larger campuses across the country were. The form of protest displayed on the Eau Claire campus was characterized by non-violence and a great degree of cooperation within the faculty and administration. Analyzing the triumvirate that was formed by the students, faculty, and administration is key to understanding why protest at Eau Claire differed from the norm. Also vital to this deviation is the acknowledgement of the kingpin role that university president Leonard

¹ Merriam-Webster Online [Internet]. [cited 2003 February 22]. Available from: www.m-w.com

² The university's name Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire was changed to University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire in 1971. Because the events of this paper occurred before the name change, the title Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire (WSU-EC) will be used.

Haas played. His farsighted approach to campus management fostered an environment that encouraged communication and shaped protest into a non-violent expression of opinion. On most campuses the words “student demonstration” conjured up pictures of burning draft cards, people chained to buildings, or violent encounters with police forces. Contrary to these images, WSU-EC took protest out of the realm of a “problem” or a scenario that needed to be resolved, out-maneuvered, or suppressed. Active students can be an extremely potent force when striving to generate change; it will become evident that without an equally active and responsive administration to counter this force, change can quickly develop into chaos.

A definitive answer as to why college campuses were the epicenter of protest during the 1960s would be difficult, if not impossible, to substantiate. Therefore, approaching the question from a broader perspective allows four important trends to be established. One of the most palpable factors is the environment created at a university. The three other factors include a lack of emotional ties to the university, a trend in the time period to reject authority in general, and the presence of a remote and unaccountable administration at many universities.

Environment at a University

Understanding the environment that is created at a university is crucial to seeing why protests occurred within its sphere. Sandwiched between high school and the looming reality of the “real world,” the university setting provided a haven for young radicals striving to find their place in society. Students left home with dreams of making the world a better place. The university setting offered outlets for such optimism with its

many clubs and organizations. In their innocence, students were eager to listen and even more eager to follow in their quest to make an impact.

In addition, the university setting is the last community of comradeship before students are enveloped by what is often perceived as the competitive, unfeeling adult world. In a sense, the student protest movement was a last ditch effort on behalf of the children's world.³ "In the context of the sixties, the undergraduate years on the best campuses became a time to confront the contradictions and hypocrisies in the larger society and to create new, more genuine lifestyles."⁴ Within each protest there was a great deal of diversity; one could easily find an ideal to relate to: a hippie, a reformer, an activist. Each protest could therefore mobilize a substantial number of subsidiary groups because students could find identity with the leaders. Additionally, the average college student did not have to deal with "real world" pressures such as mortgages, car insurance, or house payments. Without such worries, students had the flexibility to focus on issues an adult population would have categorized as fanciful or out of touch with reality. It is within this context that the protest stage was set. Like-minded, idealistic young people were gathered together in a sheltered environment where they hoped to make a better future for themselves and for the world.

Lack of Emotional Ties to the University

"When students do not feel emotional ties to the university, there is very little to offset its use as a means to an end, to balance its intense vocationalism."⁵ Student

³ Paul Knott, *Student Activism* (Dubuque: W.C. Brown Co., 1971), 28.

⁴ Donald Light, Jr. and John Spiegel, *The Dynamics of University Protest* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977), 13.

⁵ Howard S. Becker, *Campus Power Struggle* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1970), 21.

connection to the faculty is of particular importance. Author Paul Knott argues that student unrest is more likely to occur on college campuses where faculty-student contact is of a low quality.⁶ If there is no connection, it becomes increasingly difficult to enforce any measure of authority over the student body. The lack of power develops into a lack of control; if protest erupts there is little that can be done to stop it.

University leadership often added fuel to the protest fires. Attempts to manage the student body came in the form of mandatory attendance policies, male/female visitation guidelines, and curfew hours. More often than not, students saw these regulations as governance rather than guidance and rebelled against them. The debate over the concept of “in loco parentis” arose. “In loco parentis” can be defined as in the position or place of a parent.⁷ Since the 1930s the doctrine of “in loco parentis” had been particularly fervent. Curfews and visitation rules were just a few of the ways the university placed its hand on collegiate social life. In the late 1960s many university students began to decry this doctrine. Protests occurred as students rejected the idea that the university stood in place of parent units and therefore had the right to discipline students pursuant to such parent/child relationships.

Rejection of Authority in General

The rejection of “in loco parentis” is reflective of a general dismissal of authority that permeated the time period. Author Donald Light explains this trend by examining the relationship between the generation of the sixties and their fifties parents. He explains that the children of the Depression attempted to counter the hardship they

⁶ Knott, 177.

⁷ Merriam-Webster Online [Internet]. [cited 2003 January 23]. Available from: www.m-w.com

experienced by carving out a world of affluence and permissive values. These ideals sharply contrast the volcanic environment created by the “dirty stains of Birmingham and Saigon. They came to judge their parents’ values as false and to see their parents as hollow.”⁸ The disillusionment with the family transformed itself into disillusionment with authority in general.

Remote and Unaccountable Administration

Many college students often saw the leadership on campus as a distant, unfeeling mass that abided by its own set of rules. This view frequently developed into disgust, a sentiment Paul Knott describes as antiauthoritarianism, or a strong antipathy toward arbitrary rule and centralized decision-making.⁹ It became easy for protests to become centered around administrative action because it was a physical form, easily seen and thus easily targeted. Students believed that administrators had no accountability, likely due to their position at the top of the collegiate hierarchy; therefore, students protested. Administrations were forced to respond to these protests and often did so by enacting negative sanctions such as restrictions on the use of facilities, disciplinary action, or invoking police action.¹⁰ Repeatedly, these efforts further distanced the student body from the administration launching a cycle of protest.

The cycle of protest did not take place on the Eau Claire campus because of several key factors: its unique environment, the emotionally connected student body, the students’ willingness to accept authority, and the connected and accountable

⁸ Light and Spiegel, 1.

⁹ Knott, 78.

¹⁰ Light and Spiegel, 175-176.

administration. Before delving too deep into an analysis of these factors, a history of the campus is necessary.

History

In the fall of 1916 the Eau Claire State Normal School opened its doors for the purpose of training teachers.¹¹ Times were changing, and by the 1920s the powerful University of Wisconsin in Madison began a push to establish four-year training courses at the state normal schools. Apart of this process entailed the renaming of the schools to teachers colleges. By 1927 the changes had come to Eau Claire and the four-year courses in secondary education began, as well as a new title: the Eau Claire State Teachers College. The college thrived into the 1940s when two faculty members, Leonard Haas and Bjarne Ullsvik, prepared reports on the need for liberal arts degrees at the college. The reports showed that the implementation of the liberal arts status would be neither difficult nor costly, since majors were offered in several liberal arts fields already. In the summer of 1951 the change was implemented and bachelor of arts and bachelor of science degrees were offered. The institute was then renamed Wisconsin State College at Eau Claire. In 1965 Eau Claire established one of the first baccalaureate degree programs in nursing in the state; in 1966 the School of Business was established. One of the last significant changes of the college occurred in February of 1971 when Governor Patrick J. Lucey decided to restructure the entire state educational system due to the high costs of supporting two state systems, the Wisconsin State Universities and the Universities of Wisconsin. He called for a merger between the two systems and on

¹¹ Hilda Carter and John R. Jenswold. *The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A History 1916-1976*. (Stevens Point, WI: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Foundation, Inc., 1976) In 1976 Hilda Carter and John Jenswold collaborated to compile a history of the Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire. Their work entails a history spanning from the university's inception to events in the 1970s. The information contained in this section can be found in greater detail in Hilda Carter and John Kenwood's work.

October 8, 1971 signed the merger bill that put it into practice. The new legislation gave the school the name the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Arguably one of the most influence presidents of the university was Leonard Haas.



President Leonard Haas

Leonard Haas had a longstanding connection with Eau Claire. He was born in Altoona and attended the teachers college at Eau Claire, graduating in 1935. He then took his first job as a high school history teacher in the north-central Wisconsin city of Wausau. Haas' teaching background gave him insight into a younger generation and helped him to develop an understanding of students that would prove invaluable in his eventual position as college president. Haas' understanding of the relationship between the administration,

faculty, and student was reinforced by work he did as a graduate student at the University of Minnesota in 1946. His doctoral dissertation was entitled *The Academic Dean in American Teacher's Colleges*. It stated

The atmosphere created by the administration is a major factor contributing to the general morale of faculty and students. This, in turn, determines in a large measure the quality of teaching, the scholarly endeavor, and the degree of academic pioneering which a given faculty will undertake.¹²

¹² Carter and Jenswold, 52.

The quote was found in Hilda Carter's book but is an excerpt from Haas' thesis which was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Minnesota in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in June of 1954.

The research Haas did on the role of the academic dean would prove invaluable as his career slowly moved into the administrative realm. The future president was given the opportunity to leave the high school setting and become a history professor at the Eau Claire State Teachers College. This position provided the impetus for his role as an administrator. He was first placed as acting director of teacher training and placement and then rose to the position of registrar, which also included the duties of director of admissions. Haas eventually became the right-hand-man to President William R. Davies which gave him an inside look at a position he would eventually obtain.

Haas put his graduate research into even more direct practice when he became Dean of Instruction in 1948. It became apparent that he valued an intimate relationship with faculty members and sought to improve the relationship between them and the students. To keep the faculty not only informed, but also accountable, Haas initiated the *Faculty Bulletin*.

In this publication he brought to faculty attention matters with which he thought they should be concerned. He recommended new course numberings according to the University of Wisconsin system; he included reports on meetings and institutes which he and others attended, and integrated news of the accomplishments and other publications of individual faculty members. Haas also edited the first *Faculty Handbook*, issued June 1, 1948, and in an attempt to improve faculty and student relations explicitly stated that all members of the faculty were expected to participate in college functions.¹³ By making the faculty more visible and increasing their role in student lives, Haas helped to create a positive connection between them and the student body. When Haas became president in

¹³ Carter and Jenswold, 57.

1960 he was able to take his leadership to the next level. He rose to the position with the support of the previous president, William Davies, as well as the faculty. Davies gave Haas a glowing recommendation:

I would be remiss if I did not tell you that, in my opinion, Dean Haas has to a very high degree all the qualifications for the position as president. He has been my colleague for eighteen years, both in the role of a most excellent history teacher, and since then the leader of the administrative group of the college. In every capacity his performance has been top-flight. I believe he has the undivided confidence of the citizens of the area and the faculty and student body, and is just a sort of "natural" for the position.... He is young in years and spirit, and yet seasoned and ready to assume the heavy responsibility of the office of the president. I commend him to you with no reservation.¹⁴

The support of the faculty was demonstrated by an unprecedented move. The college faculty voted unanimously for a resolution to the Board of Regents of State Colleges requesting that Dr. Haas be named president-elect. He was to take over full time duties after Davies' retirement on January 5, 1960. The Board accepted the resolution, but contrary to expectation, Dr. Haas succeeded to the presidency before the end of the decade when William R. Davies died on December 10, 1959.¹⁵

Haas' unique opportunity to function within the realms of both a faculty member and an administrator allowed him to see the college from two vantage points. As a professor he understood the need for good communication with students. In 1991 Dr. Haas participated in a project to compile an oral history of the Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire. During this interview, the president commented on the great pride

¹⁴ Carter and Jenswold, 78.

¹⁵ Ibid.

he took in the fact that faculty members had such a close relationship with the student body. The faculty were not looked upon as enemies of the students.¹⁶

In addition from the other perspective Haas' position as an administrator before his ascension to the office of president helped to orientate him to the enormous responsibility associated with the position. He was able to see the enormous influence administrators have on the direction of the university. If an administration was weak and had no way to deal effectively with student grievances, protest would be virtually inevitable because students would be unwilling and unable to communicate within the established channels of the university. By first studying the role of an administrator in his graduate work and then seeing its workings first hand as Dean of Instruction, Haas was well equipped to deal with the challenges he would face as president.

WSU-EC: A Unique Environment

The events which transpired on the Eau Claire campus during the late 1960s starkly contrast with those which occurred at universities such as Columbia, University of California-Berkeley, or University of Wisconsin-Madison. The unique environment present on the Eau Claire campus, particularly that relating to student demographics, makes it a mistake to compare it to these larger schools. At WSU-EC the size of the campus and the nature of the student that attended were distinctive. In 1960 at the start of Leonard Haas' term as president enrollment at the college was 1,009. By 1963 it had climbed to 2,909 and by 1970 had reached 8,282. Despite the growth in enrollment

¹⁶ Leonard Haas and Richard Pifer. *An Oral History of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire: A 75th Anniversary Publication*. (Eau Claire: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire McIntyre Library, 1991) 28:1.

numbers, the Eau Claire campus had a relatively small student body from which to draw protest movements.

Furthermore, Eau Claire's location removed it from many of the racial and social pressures associated with larger cities. The vast majority of students attending the college came from middle-class, Midwestern homes in which a higher education degree was considered a mark of personal achievement.¹⁷ In May of 1970, *The Spectator*¹⁸ reported that students from rural areas had the tendency to be less militant, which helped to account for the relatively violent-free protests on the Eau Claire campus. Dr. Richard¹⁹ Marcus, a faculty member, described the student body as "upwardly mobile, paying for their own education and not in a position to disrupt it."²⁰ System director Eugene McPhee felt that the students attracted to the university at Eau Claire were somewhat different from those attracted to larger universities and urban campuses because of their small town background. This in turn perhaps helped explain why they were not as prone to challenge authority.²¹

While student demographics were an important part of the unique environment at Eau Claire, they merely laid the foundation for other factors. On many campuses there was a feeling that students were separate and sheltered from the "outside world." In

¹⁷ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Alumni Association. *The View*. (Eau Claire: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire McIntyre Library, spring 1969), 11. Beginning with a winter 1964 issue, the university began publishing a quarterly magazine first called *The View from Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire*. It was to serve as an alumni newsletter to inform graduates of alumni news and academic and curricular events at the university. The magazine eventually shortened its name to *The View*. The publication featured original writings, but also experts from outside sources such as speeches and student and local newspapers. This particular quote is from an editorial featured from the community newspaper the *Eau Claire Leader & Telegram*. The editorial was originally published on June 2, 1969.

¹⁸ *The Spectator* was a student newspaper that was first published in 1923.

¹⁹ The paper this name was derived from stated the professor's name as Kenneth Marcus; however the University only had record of a Richard Marcus.

²⁰ Jamie Haas, "Dissent, A Study of Student Dissent at UWEC 1968-1970" (History 489 final paper, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, 1992)

²¹ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 21 May 1970. page 2

contrast, graduates of WSU-EC had a solid connection with the milieu outside the university walls. Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Richard Hibbard, gives confirmation of this in his commencement address to the graduating class of 1969. He described the typical graduate student as one who left the campus with an acute awareness of the problems facing society.²²

The connection with the “outside world” worked to create a grounded campus that was not prone to revolutionary activity. Evidencing this trend is the role, or lack thereof, of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) played on campus. The organization began in June of 1962 when forty-five young people gathered at Port Huron, Michigan.²³ The group issued a sixty-two page manifesto entitled “The Port Huron Statement,” drafted by Tom Hayden, a University of Michigan student. The document proclaimed, “We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking forward uncomfortably to the world we inherit.”²⁴ SDS opposed the war in Vietnam and claimed and received credit for much of the campus protest of the decade. The organization grew in popularity and influence with the growth of the anti-Vietnam War movement. SDS demonstrations opposing the war drew thousands of protesters and often evoked police action. For example, a protest at Columbia University ended with the arrest of more than 700 protesters. In the spring of 1967 a proposal for founding an SDS chapter at Eau Claire was introduced after a combined effort by students and faculty. There was much debate over whether or not the organization should be granted a charter. At the heart of the issue was not whether SDS had the right to organize, but whether it should receive chartered status because of its revolutionary

²² *The View*, Fall 1969, page 9.

²³ Kirkpatrick Sale. *SDS*. (New York: Random House, 1973), chapter 4.

²⁴ Carter and Jenswold, 104-105.

agenda. The benefits of chartered status included the use of university facilities to hold meetings, a mailbox in the student center, and listings in appropriate university publications. The charter had to go through specific channels such as the student senate in order to become legitimate; however, President Haas had the final say in the matter. On March 23, 1967 President Haas denied the SDS organizers for four stated reasons:

- practices on other campuses that have made a mockery of law and orderly change
- the advocacy of means and procedures that would destroy the freedom of others
- the practices of anarchy rather than freedom within the rules
- the resort to coercion and force in the settlement of social policy which subverts the meaning of the free university²⁵

Reaction to the president's decision brought letters of both praise and protest. A number of community members commended his actions, but the student senate, which had backed the charter, was not pleased. They appealed to the Board of Regents requesting that Haas' decision be overruled. The board refused to consider the matter and the petition died quickly and quietly.²⁶ Aside from the appeal, there were no protests or demonstrations reacting to the denial. *The Spectator* provided little to no meaningful coverage of the event. An organization which had such potency on other campuses had not even a marginal impact at WSU-EC. The mediocrity of the organization is reflective of the overall environment of the campus that tended to shy away from revolutionary activity. In the oral history of the university, Haas credited the organization's extreme nature as the primary cause for its lack of popularity on campus.²⁷ What little support there was for the group was not condemned by the president. In fact, he diplomatically pointed out that there was nothing prohibiting the group from buying space on campus in

²⁵ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Office of the Chancellor. Correspondence and Subject File. (Eau Claire: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire McIntyre Library) Archive Series 1, Box 99, Folder 13

²⁶ Carter and Jenswold, 104-105.

²⁷ Haas and Pifer. *An Oral History*, 27:11.

order to conduct their meetings. Haas also stated that the organization could receive charter status if it modified its constitution to be in accordance with the bylaws dictated by university standards.

SDS was an organization with immense popularity on other campuses. However, at Eau Claire the organization left no noticeable mark. The lack of interest on campus is reflective of a student body that was not willing to use revolutionary means to effect change. The environment at Eau Claire was not one of chaos but rather of order and control. Haas' handling of the charter shows that there were limits to his renowned flexibility. He had no fear of making an unpopular decision if he thought it was in the best interests of the student body. The lack of protest on campus illustrates that the student body respected his efforts.

WSU-EC: An Emotionally Connected Student Body

The student body's respect for President Haas' administration and faculty is reflective of the connection that was present in the triumvirate. An event took place that, better than any other, illustrates this connection. In the spring of 1968 the university began to evaluate who they would hire and rehire for fall faculty positions. Two professors from the English department, Neal and Elizabeth Resnikoff, were denied tenured positions and their contracts were not renewed. The stated rationale for not rehiring the Resnikoffs were not rehired had nothing to do with their merits as professors, but was rather reflective of a trend to hire faculty members with PhD's. "He [Neal Resnikoff] was non-retained because he did not get his degree. It had been in agreement

when he came that he would not get tenure unless he had the degree.”²⁸ While ostensibly the event may seem like a routine administrative decision, the student body reacted to it much differently. The campus was flooded with discussion about the situation and protest soon erupted. However, like most protest at Eau Claire, it was done diplomatically.

On February 15, 1968 *The Spectator* reported that “Fifty-five students presented University President Leonard Haas with a resolution Monday night asking that Neal and Elizabeth Resnikoff be granted contracts for next year.”²⁹ The resolution had a two-fold purpose. Its primary goal was the renewal of the Resinkoff contract, and its secondary purpose was to get the university to state explicitly and make public criteria for granting tenure. The students suggested a three-tiered approach in determining retention:

- Teaching ability (judged by the students, to count one-third)
- Actual or potential scholarship (judged by the faculty, one-third)
- Academic training (factual, one-third)³⁰

Before presenting the resolution to Haas, seventy-five students had met to discuss and strategize their tactics for dealing with the Resnikoff issue. After presenting him with the resolution they met later in the week and planned a vigil to take place in front of the Haas residence from noon until one p.m. and again from five until six p.m. daily for an indefinite period of time.³¹ The students’ efforts did not end there; a week later, the front page of *The Spectator* headlined, “500 Students Rally For Resnikoffs.”³² Two faculty members and eight students spoke, championing their cause of tenure reform. After the rally, 102 students again picketed the Haas residence. The article affirmed that

²⁸ Haas and Pifer, *An Oral History*, 33:4.

²⁹ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 15 February 1968. page 1

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

since Tuesday, February 13th the Haas home had been picketed for two hours daily. Such resolve and determination does not reflect a student body that had no emotional tie to the university. On the contrary, the intense protest for the retention of faculty members reflects a connection to the campus.

Furthermore, the students' willingness to approach President Haas makes it clear there was a respect for the administration as well. When the student body presented Haas with their resolution he spoke with them for forty minutes about the situation with the Resnikoffs. His personal attention to the students showed them that he was willing to listen to their grievances. Haas further illustrated his willingness to provide open communication by meeting with a group of thirty five students at an on-campus coffee house one evening to give them the opportunity to ask questions.³³ Despite the students' moderately radical means of protest, namely picketing his home, Haas still supported them. "I don't think there is any question about the right of these students to picket. I've raised no questions about their right to rally." Haas further added when questioned regarding his views on them targeting his residence, "I have no feeling of antipathy or resentment toward the students. I am sure the students are sincere in their methods of protest."³⁴ On other campuses protest aimed at such specific targets were often met with threats and/or administrative action. Haas' willingness to allow student voices to be heard fostered open communication and prevented the cycle of protest prevalent on other campuses. The amount of personal time and attention Haas devoted to the situation showed that he took student opinions seriously and carried a great deal of weight on

³³ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 7 March 1968. page 6

³⁴ *ibid.*

campus. The students evidently had some level of respect for the system, or they would not have used its given channels in hopes of remedying the situation.

A further illustration of the distinctive connection between the administration, faculty, and students is the series of teach-ins that occurred on campus in the late 1960s. At Eau Claire, teach-ins were student organized gatherings that included a variety of activities, including public debates, films, discussion sessions, and community education projects. The events were organized to increase awareness and educate students and the public. Ad hoc panels were made up of both students and faculty members that promoted discussion on topics such as racism, student rebellion, religion, university structure, drugs, and the Vietnam War.³⁵ Although the teach-ins were student led events, they were always conducted with the full consent of the administration. For example, a teach-in held on October 15, 1969 was fully sanctioned by the president. *The Spectator* reported that the CIA, the Campus Independent Action group, had asked for Haas' permission to hold a teach-in centered around the government's action in Vietnam sometime during the year.³⁶ Haas not only gave students permission to conduct the teach-in, but showed his support by attending the event. In the oral history of the university Haas reflected, "We sat with the students, and we, I think, took a position that we weren't going to be surprised or naïve at their language or some of the thoughts they expressed that you might expect would be quite diametrically the opposite of our philosophy."³⁷

Although Haas supported the teach-in, he still had an obligation to keep the university fully functional. In a memo to the faculty, Haas mentioned the impression the students had made on him due to their seriousness and responsible approach to the event.

³⁵ Carter and Jenswold, 105.

³⁶ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 25 September 1969, page 3

³⁷ Haas and Pifer. *An Oral History*, 28:2.

He went on to say that the students were attempting to issue a statement that was meant to be an interruption of normal classroom work; however, these events did not need to constitute a disruption.³⁸ The president stated that faculty had an obligation not only to the students, but also to the Board of Regents to hold classes on the day of the teach-in. In diplomatic fashion he reminded the faculty that although classes must be held, they had the right to teach what they wished on that day.³⁹

The teach-in on October 15th was a success; approximately 2,000 students participated. A local reporter who had attended commented on the relationship he saw between the administration, faculty, and students:

There was not only a chance for students to feel their views were aired and listened to by the faculty and administration, but there was also the chance for the faculty and administration to learn what the students really felt and to prove by their diverse comments that they too were divided on the correct solution to the complex problems facing institutions of higher learning, as well as society.⁴⁰

The active involvement of the administration and faculty in student-led teach-ins demonstrates the emotional connection between the three groups. Students welcomed the presence of authority and were willing to work in cooperation with the system.

WSU-EC: Accepting Authority

On many campuses, the concept of “in loco parentis” was a source of continual conflict between students and the administration. Similar to many schools, the concept had an honorable history at Eau Claire. When Eau Claire was still a state normal school, it had accepted students as young as fourteen. There was an expectation that the school

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 2 October 1969, page 1

⁴⁰ Carter and Jenswold, 105-106.

The quote is an excerpt from the *Chippewa Herald Telegram*.

would act as a surrogate parent.⁴¹ During the 1960s students on campus began to criticize this doctrine. The most hotly contested issues revolved around student housing. In 1967 some 200 students protested university policies by marching from the Council Oak on the southern part of campus to Schofield Hall. Once there, they rallied in the rain as speakers championed their cause.⁴² Students objected to the rule that stated that all single men and women students not residing with their parents were required to live in a university residence hall provided that accommodations were available.⁴³

Characteristic of Eau Claire protest, the gathering did not result in violence of any



Director of University Relations G. Willard King held an umbrella for speakers during the protest.

kind. Furthermore, the students showed their acceptance of authority by working alongside the administration in their efforts to enact change. Director of University Relations G. Willard King held an umbrella for student speakers

standing at the podium. If students would not have been willing to work with the administration it is doubtful that his presence would have even been tolerated. In a further demonstration of their openness, president Leonard Haas was allowed to speak in defense of the university. "In a spring rain, President Haas told the demonstrators that the previous year the [housing] rules had been 'liberalized' because of a shortage of dormitory space."⁴⁴ *The Spectator* provided little follow up to the protest; however, it is

⁴¹ Carter and Jenswold, 99.

⁴² *ibid.*, 102.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 101.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 102.

evident that some understanding was reached because after the 1967 protest there was little disturbance regarding the issue. By 1970 the conflict surrounding “in loco parentis” was a distant memory. Director of housing, Douglas Hallatt, affirmed that, “The old idea of ‘in loco parentis’ is out and the emphasis now is shifting toward a richness of life in the residence halls with cultural and special events taking place within the context of dormitory living.”⁴⁵ Hallatt’s statement reflects the administration’s ability to work with the students.

This flexibility is perhaps the main reason students at Eau Claire were so accepting of authority. With such cooperation the student body had very little to rebel against. Furthermore, the student body had an outlet to express any grievances they did have, namely the student senate. President Haas was renowned for his desire to give power back to the students. At the beginning of his term he established a judicial board composed of students who were elected as representatives. The board heard cases and recommended solutions to the Vice-President of Student Affairs, Dr. Ormsby Harry. Dr. Haas once said, “I have no desire to keep the reins of authority in one administrative office on the campus. I hope that I will be here long enough to witness dispersal of authority over the entire faculty and the entire student body.”⁴⁶ In 1968 President Haas was able to act upon his desire to disperse authority. There was an increased demand for more power in student government and inadequacies of the student senate were subsequently examined. The student senate therefore set in motion plans to revise their constitution. A three-fold committee was formed to deal with different aspects of the organization. One group was responsible for the actual structure and duties of the student

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 102.

government, a second group was concerned with the creation of a student court to deal with disciplinary matters, and a third group was to take on the task of student and faculty relations. Dr. Marshall Wick, one of the committee members stated, “We are trying to come up with a scheme where students and faculty can work together. In the past, there was no provision for the faculty to officially react to the Student Senate action, nor for the Student Senate to officially react to faculty action.”⁴⁷ By 1970 the evolution of the student senate became complete. On April 21 the Student Assembly voted unanimously to call for a student referendum to vote on a bill declaring the assembly autonomous. The proposal included several key ideas:

- The Student Assembly and student body oppose the “in loco parentis theory of university administration” and do not want the “guidance of the administration or faculty in self organization.”
- The Student Assembly “absolutely renounce(s) any form of faculty control over the independence of the students, their methods of organizing their internal affairs and their representatives.”
- Recognizing that ultimate control lies in the hands of the university president, the Student Assembly hopes to “influence that office by independently representing student opinions, perspectives and fact to it.”⁴⁸

By providing students with their own authority, at least part of the motivation to rebel against the administration was removed and a favorable environment that fostered communication was created. Students accepted the administration’s power above them because it was willing to give authority back to the students.

WSU-EC: Connected and Accountable

The students’ acceptance of authority on campus helped to cement the idea that the administration and faculty were entirely connected and accountable. President Haas sought to enforce that connection, “We deliberately sought those [faculty] who will relate

⁴⁷ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 7 March 1968, page 7

⁴⁸ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 23 April 1970, page 1

to students. They are the biggest single strong point we've got....We must always remember – the university does not exist for the faculty, but for the students.”⁴⁹ In an effort to stay connected with the students, Haas took leadership with a hands-on approach. In order to get more acquainted with the students Haas and Vice-President of Student Affairs, Dr. Ormsby Harry held a two-day freshman orientation every year to help smooth the path to matriculation. In a speech given to over 2,500 freshman and their parents at an orientation in 1970, Dr. Haas focused on three themes: freedom, responsibility, and concern. He highlighted the freedom of expression the university could provide, the responsibility students had to take an active role in their education, and the concern the administration and faculty had for the students. Haas expressed his desire to keep the small school atmosphere despite the growing number of students at the university. He ended his speech with the statement, “The university stands firm that it is the right of every individual to have a university experience that is characterized by quality instruction, individual attention, rich campus experiences, and growth through participation.”⁵⁰ President Haas’ active participation in freshman orientation helped to foster open communication with the student body. Freshman received a positive first impression of the university and the administration. Haas’ desire to create an intimate college atmosphere facilitated a connection between the college and the student body.

In addition to making his campus connected, Haas also desired to make it accountable. In 1968 the student senate proposed the implementation of a teacher evaluation plan. The senate proposed the program in hopes to have to have all teachers evaluated by their students. As the program got off its feet teachers were asked to

⁴⁹ *The View*, Spring of 1970.

⁵⁰ *The View*, Fall of 1970.

volunteer, but eventually the procedure was to become a mandatory procedure for all professors. The evaluations were to be conducted with complete anonymity so that students could be completely honest with their reviews. *The Spectator* stated that “to reward those instructors with the highest ratings given by their students, the instructors in the top 25 per cent [sic] will have their results published and distributed to the student body.”⁵¹ The implementation of faculty evaluations is a clear sign that the Haas administration and the faculty were willing to be accountable to their students. Posting the results of the evaluations publicly brings that accountability to another level. Faculty members were able to see who was ranked in the top twenty-five percent. It became easy to identify who the students thought were good teachers and who consistently did not make the list. The visible recognition of achievement provided incentive to become a better teacher in the eyes of the student.

By giving the students a say in the evaluation of their professors, Haas helped to create accountability between the student body and the faculty. Perhaps one of the best examples of this accountable campus were the events surrounding the Kent State shooting on May 4, 1970. On May 4th four students were shot and nine wounded by national guardsmen at the Kent State campus in Ohio. Across the country campuses erupted in rallies, strikes, and protests; over 300 universities were forced to close.⁵² The impact of the shootings was dramatic. The event had the potential to trigger a great deal of unrest on campus, but instead it demonstrated harmony that was characteristic of activism at Eau Claire. WSU-EC reacted with equally emotional involvement and numbers; however, violence was left out of the equation. On March 6th an estimated

⁵¹ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 18 April 1968.

⁵² Scott L. Bills. *Kent State/May 4 Echoes Through a Decade*. (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1982), 163.

3,500 students, faculty, and staff gathered on the Davies Center lawn to participate in a kick-off rally. Since the total enrollment on campus was approximately 4,789 the number of participants was substantial. The rally opened with a minute of silent prayer for each of the Kent State students slain and continued as several professors spoke. Years later, in the oral history of the university, Haas recalled of the rally:

One of our professors got up and gave a great talk. He was respected by the students who were leading the demonstration and had been accepted by them. He said, "We need to show by every way that we can that we are against the use of force, whether it is in Vietnam or at Kent State. We need to publish it, and the world needs to know it, and there should be no misunderstanding about where we stand..." There wasn't a stone thrown on that march, it was completely orderly, and they accomplished their purpose.⁵³

Across the country campuses went on strike in response to the Kent State shootings, but while many administrators responded to the protests by clamping down their authority, Haas allowed the dissent. A flyer distributed by the student body entitled *Strike!* called for the boycott of classes.⁵⁴ President Haas showed flexibility in his response when he said, "If your conscience dictates to you that you can best express your position...you have the choice open to you to boycott classes."⁵⁵ He further added that the university would continue to function as normal and classes would be held for those desiring to attend them.

The protests on campus never elevated to violence. At the rally on March 6th student Mike Simmons affirmed, "I'm not asking for violence, but for you to take your responsibility...by some action on this campus."⁵⁶ Later in the evening on March 6th

⁵³ Carter and Jenswold, 109.

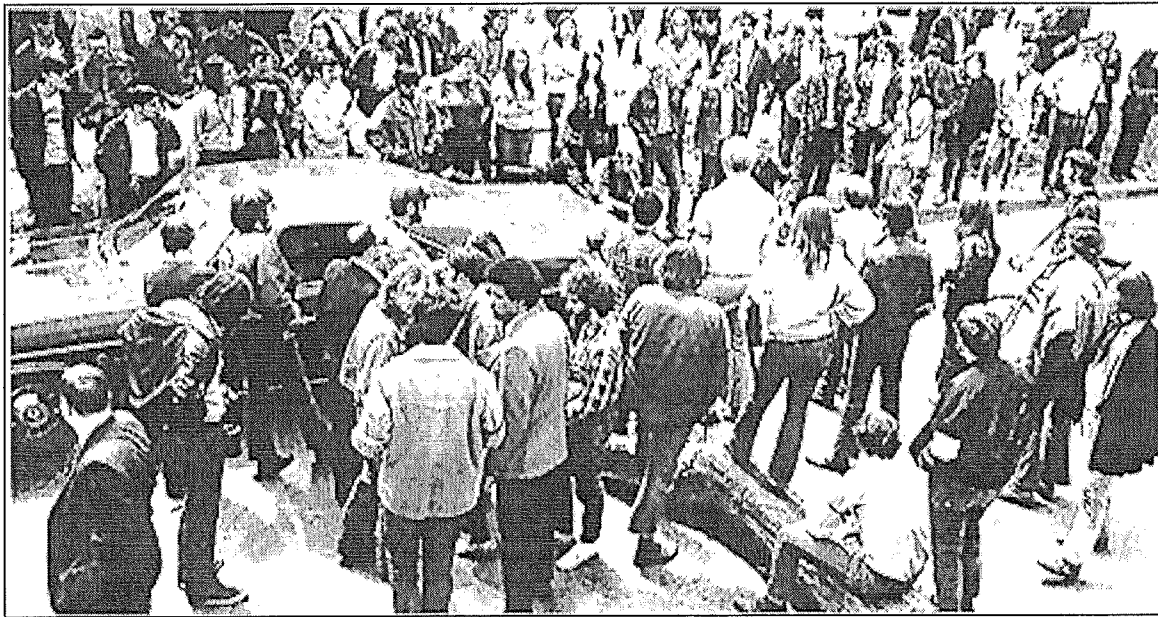
⁵⁴ Carter and Jenswold, 112.

⁵⁵ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 7 May 1970, page 1

⁵⁶ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 7 May 1970, page 1

there was another rally and associate chemistry professor Stephen Sawin echoed the call for non-violence. He wanted all those who had gathered to join in the march but qualified that wish by dramatically taking the stand that at the first rock thrown at a building he would “leave the group and stand against the wall the rocks are hitting.”⁵⁷ He went on to say that if policemen were harassed, he would “go and stand with them and be called a pig.”⁵⁸ Other activities related to the protest of the Kent State shootings included a makeshift memorial composed of rubbish from the Eau Claire Area. The memorial was erected on campus and displayed a sign declaring, “Stop War Now!” Students were able to find non-violent means to express themselves.

The Spectator also briefly touched on an event that had potential to cause a great disturbance. Students carried a large log across the footbridge and placed it in the middle



Students attempt to stop traffic from entering the university, May 1970.

of Garfield Avenue in an attempt to stop students from entering the campus in vehicles.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

Cars were allowed to leave the parking lots, but all incoming traffic was barred. The only other mention *The Spectator* gives to the events was to say that “Strike marshals later had the students remove the log.”⁵⁹ The lack of coverage suggests that the incident did not escalate. If violence was the students’ objective, this episode would have provided a prime opportunity. Rather than violence, the students were clearly trying to make a statement and were willing to cooperate with officials.

A week later *The Spectator* noted that almost all remnants of unrest on campus had dissipated. Their coverage of events on campus was splashed in a headline, “Strike ends, but plans, apple trees remain.” Four apple trees were planted in a memorial for each of the students slain in the Kent State shootings. The calmness on campus surrounding the Kent State affair is reflective of the administration and faculty’s ability to keep their finger on the pulse of the student body. The willingness of the administration and faculty to allow the student body to express their opinions freely is perhaps the primary reason why protest did not erupt into violence.

It is evident that people outside the university had the same sentiment. After the Kent State affair, letters from the community poured in expressing their appreciation for the way the university responded. Teachers from Black River Falls wrote to President Haas

We were very pleased and thankful to hear your reaction to the Wednesday boycott of classes. It was also a tremendous boost to observe those students and faculty in mutual respect and concern....It has been our observation that it is a rarity to have this much harmony between students and administration in this tragic time of controversy.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 14 May 1970. page 9

⁶⁰ University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Office of the Chancellor. Correspondence and Subject File. (Eau Claire: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire McIntyre Library) Archive Series 1. The letter to president

Haas was commended on campus as well. Student body president Robert Jauch and vice-president Randy Surbaugh expressed their gratitude in a letter to Dr. Haas, “You showed a great deal of respect and sympathy toward the students, which was felt and appreciated by all.”⁶¹ Based on the letters written to President Haas both from students and from the community it is evident that many felt the stability on campus during the volatile Kent State incident was directly attributed to his leadership abilities.

Despite Haas’ popularity, not everyone supported his leadership techniques, particularly the tight hold on his faculty. In an interview with *The Spectator*, system director Eugene McPhee touched on what some of the expectations were for faculty members when protests on campus arose. “One thing was made crystal clear, and that was that any faculty member who failed to meet his class would have his salary reduced.” This strict approach was taken because WSU-EC had a relatively young faculty and Haas did not want them to get swept away with any protest.⁶² An assistant professor in the English department, Roger Murray, expressed his opposition to the Haas administration in an open letter to *The Spectator*. He announced his resignation and expressed several grievances.

In short, the WSU-EC administration is fundamentally misguided in its understanding of the appropriate role of administrators in curricular and personnel matters.... I have noticed something there that I never expected to see in a university—fear, even in senior faculty members. Fear, I suppose, of reprisal for whatever transgressions are credited to them in secret files or administrative minds.⁶³

Haas from Louise Kutz and Barbara Creely, dated May 7, 1970.

⁶¹ Carter and Jenswold, 109.

⁶² *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 21 May 1970. page 2

⁶³ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 17 March 1968. page 2

Roger Murray's resignation was not a reproach of the administration or a huge flaw in the way Haas handled the faculty. Rather, it allows several insights: firstly, every administration will have its critics, both inside and outside of the university. Secondly, Roger Murray's willingness to place his career on the line in order to hold true to his convictions evidences an extremely dedicated faculty. Furthermore, the incident offers additional proof of the Haas administration's willingness to make itself accountable to the student body. Several weeks after Roger Murray's open letter, *The Spectator* published an article entitled "Administrator Answers Criticisms." John Morris, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences wrote a full page article in defense of the recently attacked administration. The article acknowledged that the university had its share of problems, as do all universities, but encouraged students to steer clear of becoming polarized at the university. Morris insisted that there was no "administration" but merely *administrators* and further went on to say,

I ask that we reject the fallacious and destructive notion that the university is divided into three hostile camps—the students, the faculty and the administration. There are valid and proper differences in the roles of these three groups, but we share a common purpose—the educational well-being of the student.⁶⁴

The willingness of Morris to address the student body on behalf of the administration helped to further the idea that the administration was accountable for its actions. His article did not speak with arrogance but rather displayed an effort to connect with the students and make it clear that the administration was listening and was willing to defend its actions.

⁶⁴ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 25 April 1968, page 7

Kingpin: Dr. Leonard Haas

The open, understanding relationship between the administration, faculty, and students at the Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire helped to shape the way protest was manifested on campus. As president, Dr. Leonard Haas was in a unique position to mold that relationship. From the onset of his term as president, Haas handled the power implicit in position with care. At his inauguration he stated, "To be chosen as President of Wisconsin State College at Eau Claire and to provide leadership...is an honor that I covet.... But I assume these responsibilities in a spirit of humility too. I hope that I may earn the confidence that has been placed."⁶⁵ His humbleness is a character trait that did much to influence the methods of protest at Eau Claire. He was approachable and took great strides to connect himself with the student body.

Haas' background prepared him well for the challenges he would face as president. He understood the vitality of a balanced and connected relationship within the triumvirate. The primary reason Haas was key to this relationship is because of his experience in each position. Few presidents had the luxury of being a student, faculty member, and administrator at the same institution. Haas was able to take his understanding of each role and apply the knowledge when he became president. Haas maintained close ties with the faculty and the student body by being a visible presence that was sincere and approachable. Dr. Haas once said, "If I were building an administration building, I'd have my office located right on a visible corner, all glass, and let people know that I was in there and the door would be open. You might as well be

⁶⁵ *The View*, Spring of 1970. *The View* was quoting an article also published in *The Spectator* celebrating the 10th anniversary of the inauguration of president Leonard Haas.

free and open with people.”⁶⁶ He strove to create an approachable administration on campus.

Furthermore, Haas managed student affairs with care, and maintained a level of respect for students even if their activities did not work in total cooperation with his administration. For example, when asked about student protest on campus, Haas stated, “If students protest, this doesn’t mean we can’t carry on a dialogue. We always have facilities for dissent.”⁶⁷ Haas’ intimate relationship with the students mirrored his relationship with the faculty. After music professor Dr. Walter May resigned from the university in 1968 he stated, “I had no quarrel with President Haas. In fact, our relationship was a very pleasant one.... While I personally disagreed with him in some areas, I could see that his positions were taken according to his convictions....”⁶⁸ One of the reasons faculty members had such respect for Haas was due to the personal relationships he was willing to cultivate with them. From 1953 until 1965 prospective faculty members were entertained for meals, and often overnight, in the president’s home.⁶⁹

It is apparent that Haas’ leadership provided great stability because the Wisconsin State University-Eau Claire did not suffer from the violent protests that campuses across the nation had to endure. As a testament to his excellent in leadership, a banquet was held in Haas’ honor on the 10th anniversary of his inauguration as president praising him for the work he had done for the campus. *The Spectator* reported, “Over the years, he had gained the respect of both students and faculty. Though they may have disagreed

⁶⁶ Carter and Jenswold, 110.

⁶⁷ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 4 April 1968, page 7

⁶⁸ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 18 April 1968, page 6

⁶⁹ Carter and Jenswold, 91.

with his decisions at times, most admit he has provided the thoughtful, progressive leadership necessary at a rapidly expanding university.”⁷⁰ Moreover, the student senate passed a bill commending Haas for all the work he had done to make WSU-EC a better institution. The bill further noted that he displayed a genuine concern for the welfare of college and the students who attended.⁷¹

President Leonard Haas’ farsighted approach to leadership should be emulated by this university’s current administration. The events of the 1960s, particularly those associated with the Vietnam War, are hauntingly similar to contemporary events. If the administration, faculty, and students can form the connected triumvirate exemplified by the Haas administration this campus should have no trouble avoiding any violent outbursts related to current events.

⁷⁰ *The Spectator* (Eau Claire), 30 April 1970, page 3

⁷¹ *ibid.*

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