

President Strider's response to Chapel 18

(As printed in the Colby Echo: March 6, 1970)

March 3, 1970

To the Student Organization for Black Unity:

The document you asked to have delivered to me and others has been received, and, with members of the faculty and administrative staff, its implications have been explored. I have a few comments to make to you.

All of us at Colby, I am sure, appreciate the genuineness of your concern. There is no need to relate to you the accomplishments of the past few years, but under these circumstances I believe it worthwhile to note that these have shown positive movements toward the ends you seek. Please bear in mind, too, that the college is committed to work toward still more significant achievement. For example, the Board of Trustees is even now forming a Commission of Equal Opportunity whose deliberations will establish priorities and hopefully bring results; the offices of Admissions and Financial Aid have given the objectives of more black students and more financial support for black students high priority and have been devising means to hasten their realization.

But there is something else that I am sure you must realize. Valid and workable decisions on complex problems are reached, especially in an academic community, through rational discussion and in an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect among those involved in making decisions. Without these ingredients constructive discussion is hampered. The trouble with "demands," as I have observed before, is that they close doors rather than open them. The college can respond better to requests and proposals.

Furthermore, the college cannot engage in the most useful kinds of discussion under the present circumstances. The occupation of a building occasions the disruption of normal college activities, and, as long as you are obstructing the normal use of Lorimer Chapel, you are engaged in illegal trespass.

If it is approach to your stated goals that concerns you most, you can signal this by leaving the chapel and talking with some of us about real approaches to these goals.

If you remain in the chapel, it will appear that your concerns are more with the notoriety of your action and with the atmosphere which could easily be established through continued occupation.

Sincerely yours,

Robert E.L. Strider
President

Close this window to return.