# About SLATE

## I. A brief sketch of the history of liberal politics at Cal.

Student politics has always been a part of the life of the University of California. In the 1930's, students picketed stores which refused to pay the Fair Bear wage of 35 cents an hour; thousands of students gathered at Sather Gate to hear speeches against war. In the '40's there was a lull during the war period, but the return of the veterans to the campus brought new political awareness. McCarthyism met bitter resistance at the University. When the State Legislature toyed with the idea of a faculty loyalty oath, University administrators decided to preserve the autonomy of the University by proposing their own loyalty oath. Students and faculty members actively fought the oath. Many left the University when it was finally adopted. (The special faculty oath was later declared unconstitutional.) The "year of the oath" drained the liberal and radical spirit at Cal, and for some years politics at Berkeley was dead. Student editors and observers of the campus scene complained about the apathy and silence of the new student generation. Sporadic incidents, however, indicated that the oath had not smothered all: a campaign around the refusal of the University of Alabama to allow Negro co-ed Autherine Lucy to register for school was supported by thousands of petition signers; thousands also signed the first petition for voluntary R. O. T. C.

In 1957, ASUC Graduate Representative Ralph Schaffer raised the issue of discriminatory clauses in fraternity and sorority constitutions. The Executive Committee of the student government refused to act. Schaffer and others organized a slate of candidates to run for office on this issue. They lost, but their success at the polls indicated that a campus political party could be successful. TASC, Toward an Active Student Community, was founded, floundered, and foundered during Spring and early Fall, 1957. Late the same year, a group of liberal and radical students, some of them members of TASC, others previously unaffiliated with it, filed for student government office and called themselves a slate of candidates, or SLATE. None of the candidates won—but they doubled the total vote in the ASUC elections and gained 40% of the vote for themselves. Encouraged by these results, a founding convention was called for SLATE, the liberal campus political party. By the Spring elections of 1958, SLATE was organized and ready to carry out its first organized campaign to win seats in the student government.

Since then, SLATE has elected an ASUC President, Dave Armor; five reps-atlarge, JoAnn Fowler, Dave Armor, Cindy Lembcke, Mike Tigar, and Ken Cloke; and three Graduate representatives, Marv Sternberg, Carey McWilliams, and Mike Gucovsky. Voluntary R. O. T. C., increased Fair Bear Wage, a voluntary health insurance plan for students with coverage for dependents, and election rules which allow candidates to distribute leaflets are issues which SLATE raised and which are now ASUC policy. The University has adopted a policy demanding an end to restrictive clauses in fraternity-sorority charters by 1964. Members of SLATE believe that issues the organization now proposes, and which are considered controversial, will also become a part of the policy of the ASUC and the University. The early stand against discriminatory clauses in the "Greek" houses led many to the conclusion that SLATE was anti-fraternity. However, when a majority of the members of SLATE felt that the civil liberties of the fraternities and sororities was threatened by a proposed state assembly bill against first year rushing, SLATE joined with them to oppose the bill as an infringement of the right of freedom of association. SLATE includes as its members students of all living groups as well as independents. SLATE has been able to be an active liberal political force because students who care about the University and the world in which they live have gotten together to try to change things according to values they hold in common. It has always encouraged students at Cal who share its liberal values to become active members.

## II. SLATE's principles of organization: majority rule, minority and individual rights.

Members of SLATE are particularly proud of and committed to the democratic character of the organization. The SLATE Constitution, the product of a long and intense period of discussion, caucusing, debate, and political infighting, guarantees that authority in the organization shall be in the hands of the members. The SLATE General Assembly, the meeting of the membership as a whole, is the sovereign body of SLATE. Only that body can speak on policy for the organization. While it is the majority that carries the day, minority rights are also guaranteed. Any group which disagrees with a decision has the right to form a caucus in SLATE. As a caucus, it can present its views to the membership in the *SLATE Newsletter*. The proportional representation system within SLATE guarantees minority representation on its Co-ordinating Committee. It has, in fact, become a tradition in SLATE for members to vote in such a way as to guarantee the presence of different views on the Co-ordinating Committee.

Not only can a minority group form a caucus and have its views presented to the membership, but an individual has the right to have any proposal he wishes to present to the members included in the *Newsletter*. He need only present his idea to the SLATE Administrative Officer and the mimeographing and mailing is done by the organization. The unity in SLATE is not the unity of one idea, but the unity of diversity—many people of different backgrounds, philosophies, and ideologies are joined together to work on what they consider to be major social and political issues facing us as students.

## III. On campus: the student government and the administration.

Early in the twentieth century, University of California President Benjamin Ide Wheeler recognized the student right of "self government". By November, 1957, when SLATE's predecessor, TASC, began to challenge the dominant trends in student government, any illusions about student government as anything other than a sandbox affair had been effectively dispelled. The candidates for student body office were representatives of this or that living group, running on little or no platform, and responsible to no defined constituency. The "issues" which dominated student body elections had come to be howdy hops, nickel ice cream (which we never got), and the like.

Those who founded SLATE had the notion that student government—students running their own affairs—was a good idea. What was needed was to make candidates responsible to the voters, and to inject some genuine issues into the campaign for student body office. Opposition to this idea came from two sources: those who held student body office and who were satisfied with "sandbox government", and the University administration. Administration response to the election of Dave Armor, SLATE candidate, to the post of ASUC President was swift. The graduate students were a solid bloc of support for SLATE; 90% of the grads who voted were SLATE supporters. Suddenly, the graduates were disenfranchised and ejected from the ASUC. The "excuse" for this action was that they had "voted" not to remain in the undergraduate student government. Actually no vote was ever taken. There was a registration line poll which presented graduates with a series of alternatives on student government. No alternative received a majority. There was no debate or discussion of the issues involved. But the results of the poll were interpreted to mean that the graduates wanted out of the ASUC. The first of the "Kerr Directives" was also issued at this time. These regulations prohibited the student government from speaking out on so-called "off-campus" issues. Other later limitations regarding student control of finances were also drafted. When student government spoke out against infringements of academic freedom at the University of Illinois, academic freedom was deemed an "off-campus" issue. In this case, under Armor's leadership, the students stood firm and refused to rescind their action.

But the concept of "self government" had somewhere been lost. In its place, the University adopted the attitude of a sort of colonial administration, granting the natives (that's us) a few "privileges" to keep them satisfied, but reserving the right to quash initiative when it might disturb the expansion of the empire. SLATE does not deny the power and authority of the Administration to act; SLATE recognizes that the administration has the right to act in matters of administrative concern. But SLATE has maintained that the student government, democratically elected and deriving its powers from the electorate, ought to be free to: speak out on all issues where student interests are at stake; plan and execute the spending of student funds in a manner calculated to serve the interests of the student body; and exercise some influence in educational policy. It is on this basis that SLATE candidates have compaigned and will continue to campaign for student government office.

## IV. Acting in the community: the "issues-orientation" and the "lowest significant common denominator".

SLATE's major purpose is to make meaningful politics legitimate on campus. We do not believe that meaningful politics on campus should be confined to running candidates in students elections. One of the fundamental assumptions of our democracy is that politics is not a trade, but that it is everyone's concern. For us, the American dream is not only that every man is eligible for public office, but that every man, as a citizen, plays an active role in the political life of his community. As members of SLATE, therefore, we not only seek to insure that the ASUC Executive Committee concerns itself with meaningful issues; we take an active interest in the issues of the day which are relevant to us as students. We work through committees of SLATE, such as those on the House un-American Activities Committee, on peace and disarmament, on compulsory R. O. T. C., and on discrimination around the campus and throughout the nation. We plan and present educational programs through the SLATE Forum. We participate in such activities as support picketing for Southern sit-ins, fund-raising for Freedom Riders (four SLATE members have been Freedom Riders), picketing and petitioning against HUAC, walking with thousands in the Quaker sponsored "Witness for Peace" march of last Easter. Where there is an organization directly concerned with a specific issue, we work with it. Where there is none, we have taken up the issue ourselves. SLATE has worked with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Congress of Racial Equality, the Student Committee for Agricultural Labor, the Student Civil Liberties Union, and others. Indeed, there is an overlap of membership in all these organizations, for they are part of a larger community committed to liberal political action.

Finally, through leaflets, rallies, the SLATE literature committee, and our own occasional newspaper, the *Cal Reporter*, we inform ourselves and the campus community of the issues of the day.

We call the basis upon which we work together the "lowest significant common denominator" and we link this concept to the idea of "issues orientation". It is not our purpose to develope an ideology. We deal with issues as they are raised by us or others on the campus or in the community. We seek a denominator of agreement which will allow us to pursue a course of action regardless of underlying philosophical concepts. There are Democrats, Republicans, socialists, and independents in SLATE. And there are active members who draw their inspiration for action from religious, ethical, and political foundations.

The *San Francisco News-Call Bulletin* reports the de-campusing of SLATE.

**UC Ousts Liberal Club—  
As Freedom Is Defended**

SLATE, the University of California's liberal student group, was banned from the Berkeley campus by university officials today—Commencement Day—just a few hours before Gov. Brown, UC President Clark Kerr and student speakers hailed academic freedom.

*SLATE Banned By University*

The UC group in the forefront of student protest against the House un-American activities committee was booted off campus today.

Dean of Students William F. Shepard announced the suspension of SLATE, and ruled the liberal action group "may neither use the name of the university nor utilize university facilities."

Student leaders of the organization knew nothing of the suspension until informed by the *News-Call Bulletin*.

Nonetheless, they said university administrators showed increasing hostility and "clearly were out to get SLATE off campus."

"They were searching for some kind of fig leaf to cover up their action, and I guess they've come up with it," commented Mike Tigar, former chairman of SLATE and now representative at large on the student body's executive committee.

"Apparently, the university is more concerned with the complaints of right wing cranks than with the principles of academic freedom and free speech that made the university what it is," Tigar declared.

(UC President Clark Kerr, readying his commencement speech on greater student interest in civil liberties, refused to come to the phone when the *News-Call Bulletin* called his home for comment on SLATE's suspension.

("He says he's too busy to answer the phone, and anyway he says he has no comment on SLATE," whoever answered the phone said.)

SLATE members were leaders in the organized picketing outside the HUAC hearings in San Francisco's City Hall in 1960. Pressure against the organization has mounted since, according to Tigar.

Opposition, in particular, has been aimed at the record SLATE made to refute the house committee's controversial film, *Operation Abolition*.

The record, *Sounds of Protest*, made up of eye-witness reports of the now infamous City Hall riot, has been sold nationally by SLATE.

The university, Tigar said, "has done everything possible to discourage us from distributing *Sounds of Protest*."

SLATE also blew up a storm when it sponsored the campus appearance recently of Frank Wilkinson, jailed for pleading the First Amendment in refusing to testify before the House committee.

The university insisted SLATE has been repeatedly warned about calling itself a political party.

Recognition was granted in 1958, Dean Shepard said, with the understanding the terminology political party would not be used by the organization.

During the past three years, however, the dean said, such terminology has been increasingly used by the organization, and as a result SLATE is regarded by many as a national partisan political group.

Tigar conceded his organization may have used the phrase, but pointed out SLATE was organized to run candidates for campus offices. Its name simply derives from "slate of candidates," he explained.

We are for the civil liberties of all political and social groups in our society. We oppose the House un-American Activities Committee. We are for civil rights in the South and in Berkeley. We are for a free and independent press—whether it be the *Daily Californian* at the University of California or *Po Prusto* at the University of Warsaw. We are for a reorganized ASUC student government in order to insure a democratic student government which we feel is essential to the educational process in a democratic society. We feel we have the responsibility not only to take stands on issues like these, but to act on them.

## V. The "off-campus" issue.

Time and again it is heard that SLATE takes stands on "off-campus" issues. The Kerr Directives say that "off-campus" is off limits. What does "off-campus" mean? The Administration has never made it clear. It would seem that if a student at Cal who did not violate any provisions of a scholarship lost that scholarship by any definition this would be an "on-campus" issue. When a girl at this campus was arrested during the protest against the HUAC in May, 1960, she lost a CORO Foundation scholarship. The San Francisco Labor Council, civic groups, and faculty members protested the action, but the ASUC Executive Committee was told that it could not discuss the issue because it was "off-campus". When the Executive Committee in 1957 considered the suppression of the Polish student newspaper, *Po Prusto*, (the motion was presented by members of the first SLATE) the Administration said nothing about "off-campus". It would seem that the Administration's definition of what constitutes an "off-campus" issue is not by a geographic consideration but by the amount of controversy likely to be involved.

Must we wait until there is a violation of academic freedom at Cal before we can discuss academic freedom? Do we have to have discrimination at the cafeteria before we act on civil rights? If we must submit to the arbitrary power of the Administration regarding discussion of these issues when they are "off-campus" certainly we will have to do so when they are "on-campus".

Of what value is an education if it is not applied to the "outside world", if we cannot put our knowledge to work? Isolated, education is sterile; it contributes to nothing; it benefits no one. It comes to resemble the debates of the Medieval scholastics who asked the question, "How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?" The cultivation of the mind is a fine and beautiful thing. But we cannot ignore the relationship of what goes on in the University to the world around us, for the possessor of knowledge should not only wish to see the knowledge used, but also used correctly. If the physicist is not concerned with the community, his work may be used for destruction. Because he ignores the fact that his findings are used to the detriment of society, he is not any less responsible to society.

The work of sociologists, psychologists, and political scientists is increasingly used by Madison Avenue and the firms that manage political campaigns in new "hidden persuaders"—techniques for manipulating audiences of the mass media. For the social scientists to say, "That's not my concern, I only do research in my field." is not enough. Like it or not, the products of scholarship have consequences.

The academic community, presumably composed of the most knowledgeable members of the society, has an obligation to speak to the issues of the day. We think that these issues are matters of appropriate concern for student government. SLATE started precisely because there were students who tired of seeing a group of people elected to ASUC office who spent every Tuesday debating over the installation of a gum machine in Dwinelle Hall, these students felt that student government was a place to begin to assume responsibility, not to escape from it. We cannot ignore the fact that when we enter the University we do not leave society.

## VI. Other campuses: the birth of a student movement.

The University of California is not unique in affording students an opportunity, because of mutual concerns and common social bonds, to act together. At the time of SLATE's formation, the Student Representative Party (SRP) already existed at the University of Chicago. More recently, stimulated by the sit-ins and the HUAC abolition campaign, groups similar to SLATE have sprung up across the country: SCOPE at San Francisco State, VOICE at Michigan, SLATE at Iowa, PLATFORM at UCLA, DECLARE at Riverside, POLIT at Chicago (a merger of SRP and another student party), and SCOPE at Illinois. These groups, like SLATE at Berkeley, are issue oriented. As students they are primarily concerned with student government and the campus community, but they do not hesitate to engage in direct action where they find it appropriate. Their concerns are with education, student welfare, civil liberties, civil rights, peace, and disarmament. Many of these groups began from a picket supporting the sitins, or as a group that wanted to answer the HUAC film, Operation Abolition. Groups with similar purpose, but multi-campus in membership, have also emerged: the Independent Student Union in the Los Angeles area, the Bay Area Student Committee for the Abolition of the HUAC here, EPIC and Tocsin in the Boston area, the Midwest Student Civil Liberties Committee in the Chicago area, and the Tom Paine Club in New York City.

Together these activists and intellectuals comprise the new student movement. They are joined by activists and intellectuals in the youth sections of the older political parties and pressure groups. Their growth has been paralleled by a growth of the new right: at Berkeley, the SAAT; at other campuses, the Society for Individualists, the Young Americans for Freedom, and the John Birch Society.

Well financed, these groups present a real threat to liberal values. For example, at the recent National Student Association Congress (August 20-30), they rented a hotel suite for offices, used walkie-talkie equipment for communication, and distributed expensively printed brochures. They threaten to bring a return of "red-baiting" to the campus. They are one of the many problems a liberal-radical student movement will have to face. While they have little to show for their efforts thus far, their very existence has consequences: they allow administrators such as Clark Kerr to give the appearance of the reasonable men in the middle, and to speak of the "radical left and the radical right." That the right is explicitly anti-democratic while the student movement is profoundly concerned with the preservation and extension of democratic rights is ignored by the self-stvled moderates.

The SLATE Summer Conference of July 28-29 brought members of the fledgling movement together. Students came from 40 colleges and universities to Berkeley, and agreed to co-ordinate activity in the areas of academic freedom and student rights, housing discrimination in campus areas, support for sit-ins, Freedom Rides, Negro voter registration, an end to compulsory R. O. T. C., education in civil liberties, and support for initiative petitions which would place minimum wage protection and collective bargaining rights for farm workers on the 1962 ballot in California. This activity is symbolic the movement which we invite you to join—one committed to democracy and human rights on and off campus.

## VII. Excerpt from Governor Brown's Commencement Speech at the University of Santa Clara, June 3, 1961.

Excerpt From Governor Brown's Commencement Speech at the University of Santa Clara, June 3, 1961

College administrators must face up to their public function. Gone are the good old days when school spirit meant hazing the freshmen—eating the goldfish—and raiding the sororities. May I propose that all college administrators help tell our people what college study really means—what we must demand of our students—if we hope to make them active Americans. Make our people safe for students with ideas, and you will be performing a real service for America. You will be halting the epidemic of social hysteria that is spreading across our nation under the libelous labels of secret societies.

Far from discouraging your students' social and public interests, I propose that you positively exploit them. Here is an honorable source of college spirit; here is a worthy unifying and organizing principle for your whole campus life. I say: thank God for the spectacle of students picketing—even when they are picketing me at Sacramento and I think they are wrong, for students protesting and Freedom-Riding, for students listening to society's dissidents, for students going out into the fields with our migratory workers, and marching off to jail with our segregated Negroes. At last we're getting somewhere. The colleges have become bootcamps for citizenship—and citizen-leaders are marching out of them.

For a while, it will be hard on us as administrators. Some students are going to be wrong, and some people will want to deny them the right to make mistakes. Administrators will have to wade through the angry letters and colleges will lose some donations. We governors will have to face indignant caravans and elected officials bent on dictating to state college faculties. But let us stand up for our students and be proud of them. If America is still on the way up, it will welcome this new, impatient, critical crop of young gadflies. It will be fearful only of the complacent and passive.

## VIII. "Student Political Action", an address by James P. Dixon, President, Antioch College.

"Student Political Action", an address by James P. Dixon, President of Antioch College. (Reprinted from *Antioch Notes*, Vol. 38, No. 8, May, 1961)

Many people have asked me questions about the picketing of the State Capitol by students from Antioch College, who were joined there by students from Ohio State University, and I am very happy to answer some of the questions and to explain the importance and meaning of this enterprise as far as the Antioch community is concerned.

One question that people have asked is, "Why did you permit students to do this?" The answer to this question is very simple. At Antioch we believe that it is very important in the process of education for students to involve themselves in matters of social action, that the experience of involvement produces dividends they can get in no other way—that they cannot get in the classroom, that they cannot get from reading books. For one thing, the experience of involvement requires that a person identify his position, and the process of identifying a position is an important process in putting his knowledge to work in social activities.

At Antioch the community knew all about the plans for this picketing. We have certain ground rules that we have established on the campus for such activities. One ground rule is that there shall be no secret organizations, and every organization that wants to form for an independent purpose must declare its existence and must identify its membership and must say what its leadership is.

In addition, we have certain other agreements as to how we will conduct ourselves when we are involved in demonstrations or activities away from the campus. One of the things we agree upon is that we will undertake to advise the people who will be concerned in the community where a demonstration or picketing is going to take place. In accordance with this the students themselves called the police in Columbus, Ohio, before they left the campus, to tell them they were coming and to check out with them the regulations in Columbus concerning picketing and how they should handle themselves.

They had also advised the College administration of their plans and asked the advice of the administration. They had prepared their press materials in advance and were prepared to answer questions of the press and to identify themselves to the press and to stand for the issues in which they believed.

So it is important to know that this is not a matter of keeping the students from undertaking these activities—this is a matter of knowing and believing that these activities are important to the kind of liberal education with which we are concerned.

I talked with the students after the demonstration and asked them how they felt the enterprise had gone, and they thought it had gone very well. They had discovered some of the problems that arise from taking an unpopular point of view. They discovered some of the problems involved in keeping your patience and abstaining from violence in a situation in which you are heckled. They learned a great many things that could not have been learned from any other kind of experience.

I think it is important also to realize that the College as a total community does not take positions on political matters that are local or international. Our business is education, not politics. But this does not mean that we restrict the positions that members of the faculty and members of the student body may take on social and political concerns.

As a matter of fact we believe that academic freedom is as important to the student as it is for the faculty member. We recognize that these kinds of activities are widely interpreted and, we believe, sometimes misinterpreted in the community. They are misinterpreted because they are not understood to be part of the educational process. They are misinterpreted because, not understood as part of an educational process, they are regarded as irresponsible kinds of actions.

But I think it is important to recognize that these activities are part of the total educational process that we have in our colleges, and that these are the young people who are going to be deeply involved in the political and social affairs of the next decade, that wise people believe that the problems of the next decade require us to develop leadership with sufficient courage to take positions, that one of the ways in which one learns how to do this is by doing it, and that there should be an opportunity in the educational situation to do this in a fashion that is, shall I say, somewhat experimental.

So it is important, I think, that, at Antioch College at least, we recognize that these things are true; and it is important that the community understand that these kinds of enterprises do have a sanction for their existence at the College, but that the sanction for their existence bears no relationship to how I, the President, or the Board of Trustees of the College or the Antioch community itself would feel about any particular issue that is involved.

## The Publication: On The Production of *About SLATE*

*About SLATE* is published by SLATE, an independent student organization open to any student, employee, or faculty member at the Berkeley Campus.

The final cost of *About SLATE* was $150 for paper, photographic plates, and typing. All labor except the typing was donated. All funds have been raised by members of SLATE. As in all SLATE activities, funds come from membership dues, fund raising parties, and donations from members of SLATE. SLATE does not accept donations from any political party or sectarian organization. SLATE does accept donations from its friends in the community, though its primary source of income is from the student community at the Berkeley Campus.

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