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Letter from Milton Emont criticizing black student body's approach

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January 25, 1970

Dear Joel:

Although I seldom speak up in faculty meetings, I am nonetheless as concerned as more verbose members about the present problem with the blacks, and would like you to know my own sentiments on the matter.

I must first say that I appreciated very much your rational, non-emotional response to the demands. What disturbs me is that the blacks and their white champions fail or refuse to see that, once the black-power rhetoric is stripped away, the two sides are not really that far apart. I am afraid, though, that the misunderstanding is based on phrasing by both sides.

In all my years at Denison, the faculty has always quibbled for hours on the wording of motions to make sure that we all knew exactly what we were voting for. And then, every blanket proposal submitted was discussed point by point to make sure that every consequence of our vote was perfectly clear. We have before us a document that makes a number of intransigent demands without actually meaning what they say. The "clarifications" given by Shirley Dekker are much more reasonable, and show that the blacks have realized that they must show a more conciliatory attitude, but appending the clarifications to the original demands and then approving the whole package would lay the faculty open to grievous problems in the future, with the faculty pointing to one statement and the blacks insisting on a contradictory one.

I agree with you that certain demands are basically unacceptable and that others can be implemented, although not necessarily within stated quotas and time limits. Your statement, however, couched in cautious language, must certainly impress the blacks as a negative response. I do wish, despite the all-or-nothing black approach, that the faculty take up the demands one by one, discuss them dispassionately and with full consideration of consequences, including financial, and then either reject them or express officially some positive reaction to them. Unless the blacks are given a positive counterproposal by the faculty, I cannot see how they can retreat from their present militant position without losing face. Such a statement from us would make it possible for their leaders to justify the submission of a new statement, one which removed the

