

Education in California

Consistency has long been one of the most glaring causalities of our political life; but the typical views on the mess in higher education have been hopelessly muddled even by contemporary standards. Thus, for years conservatives have been attacking the huge and swollen bureaucracies engaged in dispensing higher education, especially the gigantic and ever burgeoning state universities.

Then, two or three years ago, a profound and widespread rebellion against this educational Moloch emerged and accelerated among the students trapped in these universities. Yet, far from embracing these natural allies on the “New Left,” the conservatives reacted in horror, called for stamping out the upsurge of youth whom they found to violate their tastes in clothes and hair styling.

For their part, the New Left kids have proven to be almost as self-contradictory. For years they have instructed us all on the impersonal and subtly dictatorial factories these groves of academe have become: and for years Clark Kerr, president of one of the mightiest behemoths of them all, the University of California, has been held up as the most dangerous theoretician of this new and collectivistic “multiuniversity.”

But now that Kerr has been fired from his post, the New Left, with the honorable exception of Mario Savio, has leaped to his defense instead of breaking out with cheers of rejoicing.

Furthermore, the New Left has not realized that Governor Reagan, by moving to cut the university's swollen budget has acted to reduce the very gigantic university system that the students have properly denounced. And the New Left, in protesting against Reagan's proposal for charging tuition, has failed to understand that there is nothing progressive about forcing the taxpayers to pay for someone else's education. On the contrary, shifting the burden of payment to the student himself will give the student-consumers far more power over their own education, and ultimately over their own fate.