

Political Activities Rise In Big Eight

Editor's note: The following story by Steve Lough is a depth report on party politics on college campuses in the Big Eight. The reporter interviewed leaders from every campus political group; political science, economics and history department heads; and 300 members of formal political organizations on campuses.

By STEVE LOUGH

National political leaders all claim him. Party spokesmen woo him. It's the rage to write about him.

Who?

The fledgling voter on the nation's college campuses. In the Midwest much attention focuses on the Big Eight — Colorado, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Kansas, Kansas State and Iowa State. What is the political profile of this future voter of mid-America?

Interviews with his campus political group leaders, a survey of the membership of his organizations, and the opinions of his instructors indicate:

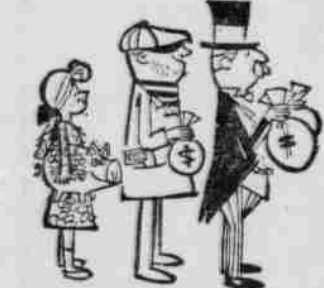
Conservatives Rise

1.) Conservative activity is on the rise with the organization of at least five conservative groups on Big Eight campuses within the past year.

2.) There is increased political activity on the campuses, but not necessarily an increase in numbers. As one professor put it, "more noise from the same people."

3.) Students will accept a political label — Republican, Democrat, Conservative, Liberal — but most of them won't accept all of the philosophies for which that label is generally believed to stand. For example, 30 out of 35 members of two conservative groups were for low tariffs.

4.) A majority of the students contacted seem to inherit their politics, despite the often-popular theory that Junior comes down to college and switches political parties.



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But, though they may inherit their party, most of them don't inherit straight tickets.

National Affiliation

5.) Grown-up politicians at the national level don't seem to know much about their budding counterparts at the campus level. Young Republicans on the campus are not even organized nationally, and Democrats at national headquarters confess to lack of such specific information as names of campus Young Democrat presidents.

These indications are the result of:

—Interviews of leaders (22 in all) of every Big Eight that could be discovered and contacted.

—Interviews with most of the heads of political science, history, and economics departments on all eight campuses. Because of varying departmental organization, the total was 21. In some instances the department heads referred to other professors in their department whom they felt were more informed.

Survey

—A survey of more than 300 students, most of whom are enough interested in politics to belong to a campus political group.

The leaders and professors were contacted in person or by telephone. The survey was conducted by mail with student leaders passing out questionnaires to their group members.

These were the sources. Their opinions could not add up to answers in clear-cut blacks and whites. But their answers could provide indications — indications that help answer questions being asked about the future voter on Midwestern college campuses:

Is there an increase in political activity among the students?

Increased Activity

Apparently, yes. A majority of the professors and student leaders indicated that they felt there was an increase in political activity. Most thought the increase was slight at the present time, but would pick up as the elections move nearer.

However, those at Kansas State University disagreed. Both student leaders and professors feel there is a general air of apathy towards politics. Philip M. Rice, chairman of the department of political science and history, said, "Students at Kansas State are unpolitically minded."

What is the cause of this increased political activity? Those who feel there is an increase think that the students have a greater awareness

of the issues than they have had in the past. They attributed this awareness to the gravity of the international situation.

Number Increase?

Is this increase in numbers?

Carl Schneider, acting chairman of the department of political science at the University of Nebraska, answered the question this way: "There is more discussion, but I don't think that it involves more students."

A majority of the others interviewed echoed Schneider's sentiments with the exception of those at the University of Colorado. All of the individuals interviewed there feel that the increase is in numbers as well as activity per capita.

No Increase

Membership figures obtained from some of the 16 Young Democrat and Young Republican organizations support the view that there is no increase in numbers. Of the membership figures available, only the Young Republicans at the University of Colorado show an increase. That organization had 169 members last year compared with 258 for this year. The Young Democrats at the University of Nebraska and Oklahoma State have maintained a steady membership the last two years.

Most of these groups had records that go back only for a year which was a presidential election year. Therefore, observers point out that membership would naturally be greater last year than it is this year.

Is there increased conservative activity?

Definitely, yes. Within the

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last year, at least five conservative groups have organized on Big Eight campuses. Iowa State, Kansas and Kansas State have organized Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) chapters. Missouri now has a Young Conservative club. These clubs have between 25 and 50 members. Bruce Vanderburg, one of six students organizing a YAF chapter at the University of Oklahoma, says he expects to get 1,000 members in his organization.

Nearly all of the professors and student leaders interviewed feel there is an increase in conservatism. They feel that the presence of Senator Barry Goldwater, the recognized leader of the conservative movement, was largely responsible for the activity and that opposition to policies of the Kennedy administration also added coal to the fire.

Glenn B. Hawkins, chairman of the department of political science at Oklahoma State, said, "I think students are far more liberal than they were 10 or 20 years ago on almost every issue." Hawkins can find support at every Big Eight university that there is more liberal activity but not in large proportions.

Liberal Increase

Most professors and students feel that there is an increase in activity on both the conservative and liberal sides, but the liberals are not as pronounced in their actions and are becoming active only because they must combat the rising tide of conservatism.

Two groups whose title includes the word socialist were reported. One was a Fabian Socialist group at the University of Missouri. The other was a Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) at the University of Colorado. Thomas Milstein, president of YPSL at Colorado said that his chapter is the second largest west of the Mississippi River. He estimated he had 50 to 60 members.

Do the students follow the general stereotype of a liberal or a conservative philosophy on issues?

Apparently not. In every case a majority of the members of four conservative organizations voted in favor of low tariffs. Low tariffs are generally recognized as a liberal approach.

YR's Favor Low Tariffs

In the Young Republican organizations a greater number of students favored low tariffs over high ones. Several were satisfied with the present tariff or didn't give an answer.

Equal numbers of Young Republicans favored more federal aid to education as opposed federal aid. A few were pleased with the present aid. A large share of the conservative groups had no objection to extended social security provided it was done on a voluntary basis.

In every case a majority of the members of the Young Democrat organization were consistent with the policies of the Kennedy administration. However, there were many students among these organizations whose answers were inconsistent with the label they had given themselves. For example:

A Missouri Young Democrat tagged himself a liberal Democrat but he wanted less federal aid to education, less power for the executive and less coverage under social security.

Liberal Democrats
Another liberal Democrat at Missouri wanted high tariffs, was against federal medical care for the aged.

A liberal Democrat at Oklahoma State wanted less executive power, less social security coverage and was against federal medical care for the aged.

A Young Democrat at Kansas State tagged herself a conservative but voted straight liberal ticket on questions about tariffs, federal aid to education, executive powers, social security, and federal medical care for the aged.

Many other students who tagged themselves as conservatives voiced liberal opinions on three or four of the issues.

Will students cross party lines when they vote?

Seventy-seven percent of the students interviewed in all political groups combined said that they would split their ballot in a general election if they did not like their own candidate.

Do students inherit their politics from their parents?

In every political group, with the exception of the Young Republicans at the University of Nebraska, a majority had the same political philosophy as their parents. Every professor and student leader interviewed agreed that students inherit their politics.

Where do the campus political groups fit in with the senior party?

Democrat Affiliation

The Young Democrats on the campus claim to be a part of the national organization. But a telephone call to the college director at Democratic National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. produced the name of the president of only one Young Democrat club in the Big Eight. The respective clubs on each campus carried on no correspondence with each other. The president of one club did not know the names of any of the presidents of the other clubs. However, the Young

Democrats do appear to be in the organization of the party within each state.

The Young Republicans on the campus don't even claim organization on a national level. They extend only to the state level. As was the case with the Young Democrats, the Young Republican leaders did not know each other and apparently carried on no correspondence.

The only way campus leaders of any political faith could be found was through the campus newspaper at each school.

What do these students feel is the political philosophy of their parents?

There were no surprises in the answer to that one. It made no difference what the professed political faith of the student. Of those who had a clear-cut opinion, they believed by a whopping, top-heavy majority that politically mom and dad are—

"Conservative."

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